

Waikanae Estuary Newsletter No 99 May 2015

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The Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve is a Nationally Significant Reserve

Waikanae Estuary bird tours 9051001



Photograph Mik Peryer

Little Black Shags

Little black shags are the vandals of the estuary and hunt the river in packs of up to sixty birds at a time, herding the little fish against the shingle banks, where there is a frenzy of feeding. When the first birds get overtaken by the ones in the rear, they pop up and fly to the front and dive again. It's difficult to tell the difference between the little black and the little shags. It helps by taking note of their beaks. The little black's is longer and darker than that of the little shag which is smaller and yellow coloured. The little shag may also have some white patches and is more of a loner, while the little black like to be in family groups. They are congregating on the little wharf by the weir on the Waimanu lagoon. The shag tree, adjacent, which the little shags, the little black as well as the pied shags and the odd royal spoonbill like to roost on, has become rotten and great branches have broken off. The whole tree may have to be felled as it has become quite dangerous. This could be a problem for these birds as they spend a lot of time roosting on the bare branches.

White-faced Heron

A white-faced heron has been sheltering from the strong southerly gales in the shag tree on the northern lagoon. The south side branches have been whipping this way and that. On the northern or the lee side it's quite sheltered. Birds are aware of this and are able to sit out the gales there, in relative safety.



Roger Smith Photographs.



Black Panther spotted at the Waimanu Lagoon.

Pukeko

When driving between Waikanae and Te Horo there are young pukeko to be seen on the road verges, some being fed by their parents. This is a good breeding ground for these birds as there are plenty of wet paddocks and grasses for them to feed on. Over the last few years they have increased in numbers on the northern side of the Waikanae River and the Waimanu and Waimeha lagoons.



Everyone loves a pukeko as with feet out of kilter with its body, the youngsters are quite comical and ungainly until they mature. Then their feet come into play as they paddle through the wet lands.

Photographs Roger Smith

Dabchicks

I observed a dabchick on the Waimanu lagoon feeding in the water beside two mallard ducks, diving under the water right beside them, then popping up to the surface. There was a disturbance in the water to one side and quite away from where this bird was feeding. The dabchick flew swiftly to where the water was rippling and dived under without



stopping. I couldn't see what the problem was as when the bird surfaced, it swam back to where the ducks were and again started feeding. Once more there was another disturbance some way off and straight away, off flew the dabchick, again diving over it. It transpires that the problem was another dabchick. This other bird was very wary of our dabchick and when surfacing only just broke the top of the water, then swam underwater away from the approaching bird. There are three dabchicks on the Waimanu Lagoon and this may be the problem. Perhaps a third bird is one too many!

Hits last Month—Twenty Four Thousand Seven Hundred & ninety nine.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking