



Note the kingfisher on the top of the chair in Laurie's photograph of the Waimanu lagoon.

Kingfisher

Kingfishers tend to spend time away from the estuary and return for the winter months. They have been fishing the edges of the river and using the fence around the weir on the Waimanu lagoon as a perch, from where they dive into the water and get their food. Kingfishers not only like small fish, crabs and water insects as their tucker but have been known to perch on the high deer fences around the farmer's paddocks and dive into the rank grass and take insects and mice out of there. Then slowly work their way around the fence. My friend Laurie spotted a kingfisher sitting on a chair devouring a skink taken out of his garden. It had the skink upside down in its beak and after a little while threw it into the air and changed it around the right way so it would slide down better. Then put its head in the air and had a good shake. The skink is quite long and the kingfisher took its time swallowing its dinner. Next it hopped into the bird bath to have a drink.



Photographs Laurie Petherick



Kingfisher

Kingfishers nest in holes in the trunks of trees but also like to nest in banks where they drill holes in the earth and create a burrow with a small opening. They may have two or three youngsters, who clamber to the small opening to be fed. This at times, causes a problem, with the strongest fighting its way to the front and taking all the food with the other birds in the nest perishing.

We had a swallow dive-bomb a kingfisher that had invaded its patch. It dived at the kingfisher, then swooped into the air and down it came again and again until the kingfisher took off. The swallow is half the size of the kingfisher, flew very fast and was very persistent.



Roger Smith Photograph



Nga Manu Image

Harrier hawks

This last summer we experienced a rare occurrence with the hawks having a really hard time of it. Just north of here, in Otaki, the local bodies have been hard at it on the farms, eradicating the possums, to the extent that there have been very few road kills. Hawks live on road kills and are often seen ranging over the roadside scouring the berms for food. The farm animals were not calving; it was not lambing time, so there were no after-births for the hawks to feast on. The ducks were having ducklings and the hawks were taking these whenever they could. A paradise duck had a large brood, a hawk harassed the parents by dropping down in the paddock by the ducks and over time slowly taking all the ducklings even though the parent birds tried very hard to defend their brood. The hawks became so hungry, the younger

Roger Smith photograph



Erwin Lutz photograph

hawks were starving and dying in the paddocks. Things may get back into kilter as the season progresses. This is the way nature works, if the food isn't there then death threatens. Here, on the estuary this doesn't happen very often, as the hawks find sufficient food within the reserve.

Hits last month—Thirty two Thousand three Hundred & Twenty

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking.