



Photograph Shiraz Mulholland.

The Aussie has come home

Meeting a lovely lady down at the estuary, she informed me she had just returned to Waikanae from Australia, back to where she went to school many years ago. Her daughter is a keen photographer [watch out Roger Smith] and not only were they pleased to be back, but their Australian dog "Bruce" just thinks this is Christmas especially as there are no snakes in the grass and he loves chasing a ball in the river. He's not sure what to make of some of the bird life and had never seen a horse in his seven years.

When I take my tourists through the long undergrowth to the river I tell them to beware of the snakes. I had some Aussies out the other day and they told me there are no snakes in New Zealand. I told them there are land agents and car dealers --one happened to be an Australian car dealer!

Jenny the Aussie's thoughts

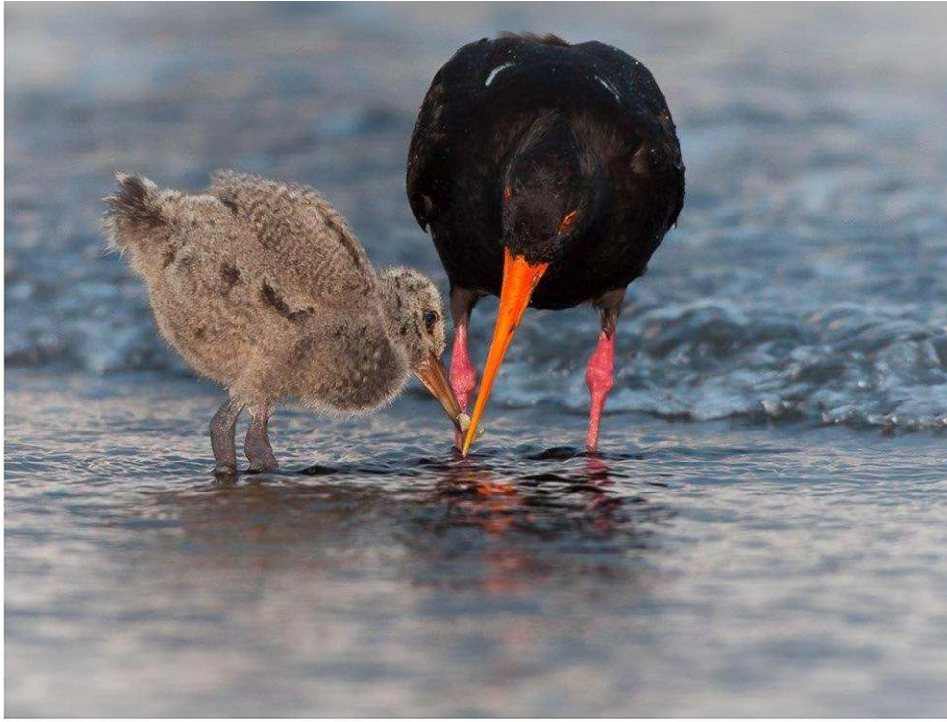
"My thoughts on returning from Australia are around the sounds of the bird life in the area. My observations are that Australian birds make quite intense noises, whereas here, there is a calmness to the sounds. This area has so many varied bird sounds, it is beautiful and I am so grateful to be back."

She has picked up on what us locals love about Waikanae and the Estuary, in particular, the calmness and beauty we are surrounded in. The birdlife is just a bonus.



Photograph Shiraz Mulholland

Variable Oystercatcher



Photograph Gavin Klee

The oystercatchers breed on the sand spit raising one or two chicks. They have a hard time as the sea washes right over the sand bar into the river and they lose their eggs on a very high tide or when a storm surge arrives. The sand spit is only a meter or so above the high tide level. In the above photograph the parent bird is teaching its young how to feed off the sea's bounty, having opened a shell fish and offering it. Notice that the colouring of the young bird is the same as the sand on the spit. When danger is about the young bird is taught to freeze and not move. Hopefully the danger may pass, although, due to inconsiderate owners, the oystercatcher does lose a few to the marauding dogs off the leash. The parent bird will screech and dive-bomb, as well as do the broken-wing ploy to lure any danger away.

Celine the Canada goose and the white goose.

Celine the Canada goose that was shot about three shooting seasons ago and was captured with the help of Liz with her canoes, taken to the vets and nursed back to health, was returned to the Waimanu lagoon minus part of its wing. It can't fly but has mated up with a white gander. These two can be found together on the lagoon to one side of the gaggle and almost inseparable. However, of late the Canada goose has been seen with the gaggle and the white goose by himself, has been chatting up the campervaners who have been staying overnight. They get back together most of the time but obviously need a little time out, away from each other now and then.

Blankity Blank

I am having a really hard time with my newsletters of late. After nine years, 109 newsletters with 218 pages I am running out of stories.--I have a blank. The stories are still out there but the scribe is losing the plot. If anyone can help me out with photographs or true stories--silly little things that the birds or animals have been up to, I would be forever grateful.

Averaging—Thirty two Thousand Hits per month.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae

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