



What happened to my other leg?

Pukeko

Around forty starlings were feeding on the grass verge along with six pukeko. All seemed in harmony until one of the starlings invaded the puke's space. Up went the pukeko's tail and with a loud squawk it lunged at the starling, and chased it. The starling flew up onto a fence post but was chased off that by the puke, who then went back to feeding as though nothing had happened, as did the starling, but a little bit further away from it's tormenter.

It's tucked up under my feathers

Pukeko have, over time, made their way from the Southern side of the river to the Northern. They can be found in the corner of the river by the weir. When you climb the bank from the roadway to look down onto the river, there may be a dozen of these birds hiding in the bushes. They are quite kittenish and will run out of the brush flapping, with their white backsides showing. Then, with that comical stride of theirs, run across the mudflats towards the water. Stopping to see what the danger may be they then quieten down, bunch up and continue foraging as before.



Pukeko will communal lay in the same nest - around a dozen eggs can be in one nest.



So you thought pukeko were swamp hens - they are - but also like to roost and forage on the top of leafy trees and shrubs .

Photographs Erwin Lutz

Swans Life on the lagoons is really tough.

The pair of swans with the six cygnets have lost one so they are down to five. These cygnets can't yet fly and are just now shedding their baby down. The parents have again started to nest in the same place as last time at the northern end of the Waimanu lagoon. Going from loving parents to aggressive parents they are beating up the young cygnets, trying to get them away from the new nest. The cygnets can't make it out as they still need their parent's protection, it must be very confusing for them. Susan popped in to my place to tell of one of the cygnets, injured and huddled up on the grass edge of the lagoon. I rang the SPCA and their inspector arrived, picked up the cygnet, opened it's wings, checked it's legs and body and couldn't find anything wrong. He concluded the bird was traumatised, as not only had the mature swans been beating this one up, but the four other cygnets had also been really mean, chasing and pecking it as well. Putting the bird back into the water it looked OK and swam to where it's siblings were, so it appears that squabbles between siblings are not only a human trait but occurs elsewhere in nature.



Photograph Ralph Bolton

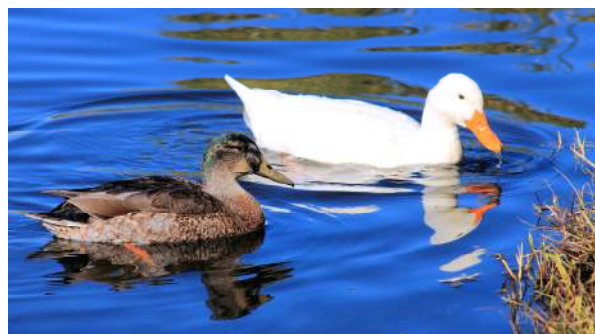
Now that's a decent sized nest



This is the cygnet being chased out of the water and bullied by its parent who will peck it on the backside if it catches it. The cygnet has yet to get it's flight feathers and can't fly.

Orphie the peking duck is doing very well. Still with it's companion the mallard duck, it's settled into life on the Waimanu lagoon, being the only peking duck left alive on the lagoon.

See last months newsletter.



Photograph Molly Marshall

Hits last month—Twenty-four Thousand nine Hundred & forty six.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking