

## Waikanae Estuary Newsletter No 123 May 2017

<http://www.kapitibirdtours.co.nz/>

### Waikanae the wild bird Capital of New Zealand



#### **Twenty-six American university students enjoying our Estuary.**

Starting out with a scenic train ride from Wellington, they were picked up by Brent from "Adventure Kapiti" to be taken on a bike ride up the new express-way cycle path, then through Camelot subdivision and over the Waikanae bridge where they stopped to have a bite to eat. Then off they went down the Northern Waikanae side of the river and ended up with me, at the Estuary. I took them on a tour of the lagoons then out to the beach where they all had a paddle. They then cycled to the Tuatara brewery sampled the wares then back to the train station and Wellington.

The feed back was very positive with everyone having a wonderful time and their coordinator Hannah indicated that like Macarthur "they will be back."

#### **Swans**

There is an influx of around twenty young swans on the lagoons. The mature older swans don't like this one bit. They have paired up, claiming their territory and looking to nest. These younger birds are a real pest and the older cob spends a lot of his time chasing them around the lagoon. When he catches them he grabs them at the base of their neck and hangs on tight. If you look at the young birds you can see the ones that were too slow to get away as they have marks at the base of their necks which in some cases stay with them as they mature. The cob can be seen swimming purposely towards the young birds who realise that he's heading their way and start swimming away. As the cob closes in on them at the last moment they speed up and fly just above the water away to the other end of the lagoon. Sometimes the cob will fly after them and they will scramble up the bank with the cob pecking their behind as they get away. Then the cob will swim back to his mate and raise and lower his neck. Its mate does the same, and they talk swan talk as much as to say "We will get rid of them eventually." The swans haven't been breeding on the lagoons quite like when Henrietta was alive.

By the way, Thomas the goose is still alive at Craig Shepard's' Establishment at Johnsonville. Although blind, he is doing very well. He is taken from his sleeping quarters every day to the pond where he spends his time with a blind duck: they both get on very well together.



### **Kindy kids from Grafton Private Kindergarten**

These kindergarten kids enjoyed me telling the story of Sammy the seal. We then went on a stroll around the lagoons to see what we could see. Sammy the seal was nowhere to be seen, however, there were lots of birds to see and the shags were nesting in the shag tree. Over the last week or two it was very satisfying to be able to take from pre- school children to university students on a educational tour of the Waikanae Estuary lagoons.

### **Dabchicks**

The dabchicks are on both segments of the Waimanu Lagoons as well as on the Waimeha. They are nesting and on the Waimeha lagoon have been seen with a baby riding on mum's back, they are like little bumble bees and will at times tunnel under mums feathers and if you didn't see it do it you would never know it was there . These birds are quite rare and we are very privileged to have them at the Estuary, for everyone to see, although at time they don't cooperate and can't be found, then up they pop, as they spend a lot of their time foraging under water.



The smallest water bird on the Estuary. They have a russet coloured chest, bright eye, white rump and their feet are right at the back of their body. As a result they can't walk on land like ducks can: they also don't have webbed feet, just loose webs. In the photograph by Roger Smith it looks like mum has a baby tucked up under her feathers!

**My new book "Kapiti adventures of Sammy the Seal" has now been launched with many sales. Now available at Paper-Plus or direct from me.**

**Hits last Month--Seventy two Thousand one Hundred and Fifty Nine.**

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