



If you study this photograph of a young hawk by Roger Smith you can see the beauty of its plumage---Isn't it a handsome bird! Shows how healthy our Estuary and lagoons are. A credit to the Waikanae Estuary Care Group and all those other groups and people who care for our environment.

Harrier hawk

The harrier hawk has its nest within the Estuary Reserve where it has been nesting forever. In the mating season the hawks do aerobatics, flying high up then doing flips as they swoop down then up high into the sky again twisting and turning. This is to impress their mates and show what great partners they would make. The young birds have quite colourful plumage but as they get older, a bit like us humans they tend to get greyer and lose the sheen on their feathers. At last light they like to do a sweep around the river and lagoons before retiring for the night. All the birds are weary of the hawks as although they are mainly scavengers they are also opportunists and will take food wherever it's available. This is why the birds have to be on their toes and keep a weary eye skywards when on the water especially if they have young. The best way for the adult birds to protect their young, is to dive under the water and swim underneath to any cover near the banks. A hawk has been known to clunk down on a hunter's duck decoy, it must have got one terrible fright. When hunting, hawks like to work in pairs and high up in the sky you may find one hawk slowly gliding around and around in a thermal with its mate way below not far above the ground doing the same. They call each other with that kee kee sound of theirs until they come across some tucker when down they will go together. However they mostly like to hunt singly and silently. Looking at their wings they have that upturned spread of feathers on the tips as do most birds of prey; this gives them silent flight.

Around forty black backed gulls rest on the shingle banks on the river and if they lift off as a group if it's not dogs or people that has disturbed them you can bet it's a hawk. One hawk will lift every bird off the river. I think as a group the gulls spook each other. However, one gull on his own will attack a hawk. If the hawks are doing well, being top of the food chain, it shows that the Estuary is in good health!

Welcome Swallow



Another Roger Smith beauty!

The swallow is so acrobatic that it doesn't have to stop to quench its thirst. If you study this photograph, the bird's beak is just breaking the surface of the water as it has a drink. We are very lucky to have wild-life photographers of the calibre of Roger Smith along with Gavin Klee and a host of others from the Kapiti Coast Photographic Society keeping an eye on the Estuary birdlife.

Goldfinches

The goldfinches are in the estuary at the moment, with around twenty in a flock. What a beautiful bird they are, introduced by our early settlers to remind them of home. These birds like most, come and go following the food around, so we must have an abundance in the Estuary at the moment. If disturbed as a group, they all fly up and away with that distinctive jerky flight of theirs.



Photograph David Mudge

Hits last Month--Fifty-five Thousand two Hundred and Thirty one.

Mik Peryer the Birdman of Waikanae
Sponsored by Chris Lee Sharebroking

My Children's book "The Kapiti adventures of Sammy the seal" is now available at local bookshops, Paper plus or direct from me.