

### Spur-winged plover

It was in the 1950s when I first came across a spur-winged plover. The bird had a nest on the river bank amongst the boulders. At the time I didn't realise what the bird was and it did the broken wing ploy to entice me away from its nest. These birds are rather special as they are very brave when nesting and looking after their young. They usually nest in open ground on the



farmers paddock or any rough ground -just a indentation in the earth. Cows and horses in the paddocks like to check out the nests and the plover will stand up to them. The cows or horses, looking down at the nest, must look gigantic to the plover. My friend who has a little holding at Te Horo was telling me of a spur-winged plover with a nest in the middle of the cow paddock. This bird was very brave and when a cow wandered over to check the nest out it just stood it's ground. This picture which I took off the internet shows that it's not the first time this has happened. When it's time to make a stand and when there are young to defend, bravery is to the fore. They make a loud squawking noise as they fly, and along with that distinctive undulating flight of theirs are easily identified, They are usually in a family group and can be found in the lower reaches of our estuary here at Waikanae. These birds first arrived at the bottom of the South Island and have now spread nation-wide. Note the spurs showing on its wings.



photograph by Phil Battley

### Tui



The kowhai trees have nearly finished flowering and the tuis after feasting on the nectar are looking for the next feast. My friend David has a lovely garden with a profusion of fox gloves. A tui decided the nectar within these plants would make a nice change from the kowhai, so it clung to the plant and partook in some nectar plunging its head and beak into the flower. Along came a rosella and thought if its good enough for the tui its good enough for me. So it perched on top of the foxglove and tried to figure how to take the nectar. However, the rosella is a parrot and parrots have a different shaped beak so the rosella lost out.

## Pied shag

When it's time to feed the young shags, the mother returns from the ocean with the fish she has caught and swallowed, then



alights on the lagoon at the base of the shag tree in the Waimanu lagoon here at Waikanae. The hungry young shag has settled on the water having flown down from its nest in the shag tree and gets really excited to see its food arrive. It chases the mother around the lagoon until able to catch up and baby is able to insert its head into the mothers throat and extract the food. The one with the motley chest is the youngster.

Photo by Elizabeth Taylor

## Pukeko

The pukeko have made the Waimanu Lagoons their new home and have over the last couple of years slowly moved in from the river. This year they have raised a family for the first time on the Northern lagoon. The tiny babies with out of proportion long legs and huge feet look most ungainly, but its surprising how fast they can run.



## Azolla the floating fern



These guys are not on land they are on the Waimeha Lagoon that is covered in a little floating fern called azolla- believed to be the smallest New Zealand fern- which occurs on this lagoon regularly around this time of the year. The swans and the cygnets just plough through the water as if the fern isn't there. At times both the swan and the ducks will slurp up the fern with their necks extended as they motor along in the water.

**Mik Peryer the birdman of Waikanae**

**Hits last month ----Thirteen Thousand Three Hundred and Nineteen**