



This is the shag tree on the upper Waimanu lagoon. See if you can count how many pied shags are either nesting or roosting in this tree.

Notice how the acid droppings are denuding the tree of its foliage, on the very top right is where the royal spoonbill like to roost; there are none there at the moment. On the far left are some little black shags and some little shags. Elizabeth Taylor photograph.

There are kingfishers greenfinches, goldfinches, starlings, sparrows, rosella and even the white heron visits at times. All in all it's a very popular part of our Waikanae Estuary. Pity it pongs as much as it does. But Its beauty is that you can walk up to these wild birds, see their nests and how they feed their youngsters and how they progress into adults, make it into the air and fly off with their parents to sea, to fend and feed themselves.



Scaup



The scaup aren't called a black duck for nothing. When you see them on the water they sure look black. However when the sun shines on them their true colour shows up with the different browns showing through, as well as the white feathers under their wings. These birds have proliferated over

the last few years with none documented in the reserve fifty years ago. There are a couple of family groups like this one in the photographs on both segments of the Waimanu lagoon and at times there could be sixty to eighty birds.

Sleeping swans.

These two swans are having a snooze. They look as if they are asleep however if you look closely both have their beady eyes watching you, if you have a dog they are ready to jump up and defend themselves or make for the water.



Paradise ducks

The paradise ducks are back in the lagoons- some with their adolescent brood. These young are conspicuous especially around their necks where in the case of the female, their white colouring to their neck and head starts to show through.

This young female paradise duck had been hanging around with the white-baiters a year or so back. It was very tame so probably has been reared by someone and is exploring, now that it is old enough to fly.



Tours



A beautiful Sunday dawned with no wind and a clear sky. What a day to do a tour of the estuary with two New Zealand resident Germans. You know when I take tourists out for a stroll around the lagoons and estuary I have to have tales to tell, because my tours, are not just about the birds

and animals, they are about what these animals get up too. A lot of people don't know their birds and relating stories of what they do in their normal day resonates with them. A tour guide has to include a little bit of this and a little bit of that, like when going through the long grass --look out for the snakes-- and don't forget that its me [Mik]who puts the white stripe across the black swans beak, and as for the swallows our ones are very intelligent as they make their nest the other way up to their cousins in the Northern Hemisphere. It pays to be a little discriminate, not like a guide from up north who told his tourists that the pied shags in his tree were "Tree Penguins"! Mind you, you can tell them all sorts of things because if you are a guide you should know everything. I say, don't ask me any technical questions!

I have to inform you all that I have lost my wife and sole mate, Moira after 63 years, to cancer. I haven't felt like doing anything and the last thing on my mind is my newsletters. However life goes on and I am sure Moira would have wanted me to continue, so after having missed the January letter here is a belated February one. Unless you think I have done enough and need to put my pen away. Regards Mik

What a success my children's books have been with my four "Sammy the seal" series show casing around fifty of our estuary wildlife and my "Lost cows of Kapiti" show casing the 42 lost estuary cows. {How does a farmer loose 42 cows?}

Hits for the December Newsletter were Fourteen Thousand Five Hundred & Nine.

Mik Peryer the birdman of Waikanae