

Waikanae Estuary

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Waikanae the wild bird

Capital of New Zealand



Pukeko, paradise duck, black swan, royal spoonbill, and mallard duck!
on the Waimanu Lagoon

Covid has put paid to lots of things!

However it has made New Zealanders think about their own country!

I had a lovely couple on a tour the other day, they had spent most of their retirement house sitting around the World, especially France. With the lockdowns they, like a lot of people, had to stay home. Staying a week in Waikanae, they first went to Nga Manu Nature reserve for the morning then over the Akatarawa hill spending some time at Staglands. Next came a day trip to Kapiti Island, then Wellington and a trip to Zealandier, back to Waikanae and a tour of our estuary They were amazed to get up close and personal with around twenty eight different species of wild birds.

These people were ecstatic about the wildlife that they found here in the Wellington district. What a pleasure to take out people who really appreciate what we take for granted!

Pukeko

The pukeko are really making their presence felt. These birds are quite ruthless and chase the other birds out of their way and love to partake in the odd little duckling. We had a pair of coot make their home on the lagoons and they were here for quite a number of weeks ending up nesting and having two babies. until the pukeko plucked them up and away. They lost both their brood. This was too much for the coot, they took off for pastures new. Lets hope they come back one day as they were the first of their kind to nest in the Waimanu lagoon. The pukeko have been breeding where they had never breed before-in the northern Waimanu lagoon-along with some rabbits who have not been seen to breed in this area for a long time. A lot of these animals slowly make their presence felt over time and before you realise it they have become a real pest. The pukeko, as they are native birds, feel they have a right to the area. Next come the Canada geese - now these birds have been introduced to New Zealand as a game bird and are making their presence felt through out the area much to the detriment to our pristine parks. The pied shags are also a native bird so people have to put up with the ponging shag tree as this is their home and its wonderful to be able to get up close and personal with these magnificent birds.



I wonder where else you can get up close and personal to nesting wild native birds?

The Sand Spit

The sand spit is home to several species of birds. The black-backed gulls are in attendance as are the white fronted terns and the Caspian terns with the oyster-catchers nesting with chicks, along with the New Zealand dotterel. It's very important not to run the dogs in this area as the birds and the nests are very hard to see. The river- run upstream from the sand spit is home to many different species, however, the wading birds are in great danger as the encroachment of the shingle is slowly suffocating the muddy bottom of the river which is the wading birds feeding ground. This can



be seen with the scarcity of the royal spoonbills. These birds have reduced in number from twenty to forty birds a few years ago to maybe five if we are lucky, on a good day. If the shingle is allowed to reach the large bend in the river opposite the sand spit then our Scientific Reserve will be no more.

It's a long time since we have had eight royal spoonbills in the shag tree.

Harrier hawk.

The harrier hawk is showing off its flying skills by soaring high into the sky then doing cart-wheels, diving down then up it goes again, showing off. The hawk doesn't do this very often its only to impress its mate! Our local hawk is again nesting in the rough ground on the south side of the river where its has had its nest for quite a number of years. If the large number of black-backed gulls resting on the shingle banks in the river take off as a group, its not people or dogs that have spooked them, it will be a hawk. One hawk will scare all the birds off the water as they, as a group, spook each other not knowing where the threat is coming from. However one black-backed gull will, on its own, attack a hawk.