

River Estuary Watch

River-Estuary Care: Waikouaiti – Karitane

JULY 2014

River - Estuary Care



R E C W K



Waikouaiti - Karitane

Haunui Waka



Haunui Waka berthed in our awa/river Waikouaiti for several days in April during his historic haerenga/journey through the coastal trails of Te Waipounamu/the South Island of New Zealand and Rakiura/Stewart Island.

This is the first time in several centuries that such a voyaging waka or large double-hulled canoe has sailed in our waters. The journey marks the rekindling of the voyaging traditions and cultural understanding of the first arrivals of humans to this part of Polynesia.

Haunui followed in the wake of the wakas Takitimu, Araiteuru and Uruao as he sailed down the east coast of the South Island, connecting people and communities with their seafaring origins and their ocean.

Along with seven other traditionally-styled waka, the waka Haunui has recently completed a 25,000 mile voyage across the Pacific Ocean, as part of Te Mana o Te Moana.

The purpose of the 18-month voyage was two-fold: firstly- to continue the ancient traditions of celestial navigation and way-finding and, secondly- to promote awareness of the threats to our oceans. These include pollution, acidification and sea level rise, and are issues that every coastal Pacific community needs to consider.

Based in Auckland's Viaduct Harbour, Haunui waka continues to promote this message of environmental awareness and to connect Pacific peoples through his voyaging, giving young and old alike the opportunity to sail on a craft which blends traditional and modern sailing history.

We were fortunate to host this most beautiful

vessel and crew in our small community during his three month circumnavigation of New Zealand and we look forward to his return in the not too distant future.

Tēnā koe tāku waka Haunui, tēnā koe

—Brendan Flack



From my Deck

How lucky am I to look out on the river mouth in all its moods, every day?

The constant changes of the foreshore brought about by tides, shifting sands, waves and winds. The waterborne objects – boats, logs, kelp, human – all seen in sunshine and in storm.

I observe the natural inhabitants of the sand spit take their opportunities to use this space as a haven - sea lions haul out to roll and rest; birds flock to develop strength for more distant travel; shags hang out their wings to dry and black oystercatchers do their best to breed, despite the intrusion of humans, dogs, and larger birds of prey.

I am pleased to see the people who congregate to share this lovely environment. There are commercial fishermen still and the holidays are always busy - boaties launching and retrieving their boats, families picnicking, collecting cockles, searching for crabs and fishing from the wharf. “Having a lovely time – wish you were here.” The surfers are out when the conditions are right and the dog walkers are there every day, in all weathers. It all goes on in front of me.

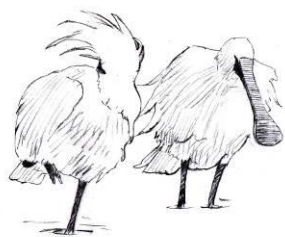
It’s a very special place. A place where the river meets the sea. A historic place where the local Maori people lived, and where the European whalers and other settlers came. Now, with its groomed grass, sealed car park and ankle-tripping chain, it looks rather ordinary but, when the setting sun lights up the headland or when twinkling lights guide the late boat up the channel and you can smell the sea in the air, it’s the best place in the world.

—Ailsa Johnson



White Heron

Over the last few months I've been rung a fair few times by people living around Karitane and Waikouaiti to say there's a white heron in the area, often adding that this is the first time they've regularly seen one since the 1990s. Unfortunately, far from being deservedly thanked for bothering to call and report it, they are hit by a barrage of questions: "where was it, what was it doing, how big was it, what colour was its beak, its legs?" No one has yet said "It was a white heron dammit!" and rung off, which is very tolerant of them. It's a good thing, because once or twice the interrogation has revealed that what was seen was more likely a cattle egret than a white heron and in one case possibly even a little egret. So how do you tell these white herony birds apart?



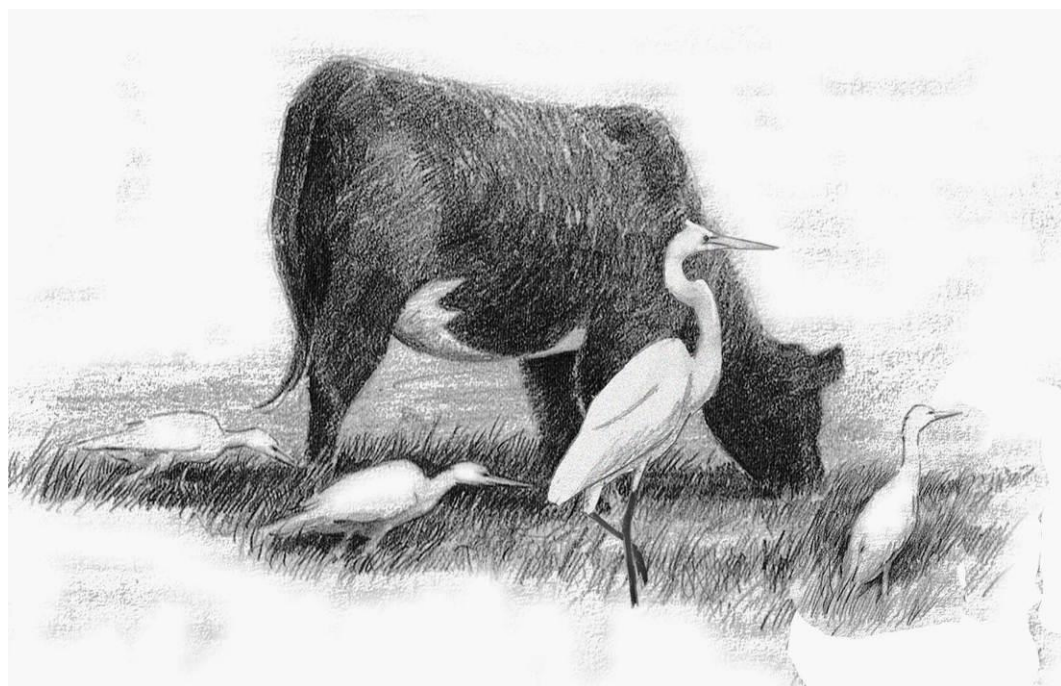
First of all you have to eliminate spoonbills. This is not difficult if you see them close up: big black spoon-shaped bill! It's a bit harder at a distance but compared to other herons, they have relatively short necks and legs and spend most of their time asleep, bill irritatingly tucked under their back feathers, or feeding by walking through shallow water, head down, wagging their bill from side to side. They fly with their neck and bill stretched out in front and legs trailing behind, and have relatively shallow,

faster wing beats than white herons. All the other herons have deep, slow-rounded wing beats and fly with their necks tucked in, except when they get excited during the breeding season. Part of their display includes flying around croaking and grunting with neck outstretched.

So this leaves the white heron or cattle egret and possibly the rarer little egret.

For once the names are a help. If you see a white heron feeding amongst cattle, even nipping in close around their hooves to pick up disturbed insects or squashed worms, then it will be a cattle egret. Elsewhere, the best way to tell cattle egrets from white herons is by size. White herons are big and have very long skinny necks. You are unlikely to see a white heron alongside cattle unless there is a decent water filled ditch nearby, as was the case last year on the Waikouaiti racecourse. But if you did, it would easily reach half way up a cattle beast's flank, whereas a cattle egret would barely reach its belly. White herons would not deign to stoop to associating with cattle, but stalk their prey slowly and sedately among reeds or along the edges of rivers and ponds. However, they have been known to demean themselves by grabbing silvereys from bird tables.

During autumn and winter, when white herons and cattle egrets are in Otago, they both have yellow bills. Little egrets have black bills and, as their name implies, are about cattle egret-sized but are slimmer and longer necked; and more like a white heron in shape. Little egrets feed in much the same places as white herons but are less sedate, skittishly chasing after fish with their wings half open.



Our white heron is likely to be a bird from the breeding colony at Okarito, on the West Coast. Individual birds disperse from there throughout New Zealand during autumn and winter, often to the same place year after year. Last year however, an unprecedented number of white herons, accompanied by the odd little egret, arrived from Australia and, at one stage, there were six together at Tomahawk Lagoon in Dunedin. They left over summer, to who knows where, but a few have since returned and maybe the local bird is one of these?

The lone cattle egret that has been around the area, may well be the one that was first seen two winters ago at Seacliff. Cattle egrets also come over from Australia in the autumn. At one stage in the late '70s and '80s thousands would fly across the Tasman to New Zealand each autumn, part of a world-wide colonisation that started in Africa earlier in the 20th century. The Cherry Farm dairy herd attracted up to 70 in the early '90s. They never colonised New Zealand however and only a couple of flocks of that size now visit the country. Our cattle egret is either along-term survivor from the '90s or a more recent arrival from Australia which lost its way.

Please continue to tell me of any sightings of white herons. (derekonley@yahoo.com or 03 4822831). Hopefully I'll no longer have to subject you to an interrogation - though come to think of it I might have to check that you haven't seen an Intermediate Egret.

Derek Onley

Ki Uta Ki Tai: From the Mountains to the Sea Volunteer Week 11-14 April 2014

Ki Uta Ki Tai: From the Mountains to the Sea volunteer week took place 11-14 April with the four environmental groups: Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka, River Estuary Care: Waikouaiti – Karitane, East Otago Taiāpure Management Committee and Hawksbury Lagoon. This year they welcomed around 13 student volunteers from the University of Otago and the Otago Polytechnic, alongside many helpers from the local community.

The student volunteers were an awesome bunch of people, enthusiastic and eager to get their hands dirty with some hard work! They were accommodated at Puketeraki Marae in Karitane which was a positive addition to their overall volunteer experience. Student volunteers ranged from disciplines such as Forestry, Physical Education, Science Communication and Outdoor Education, each with a passion for the environment, the outdoors and working with communities.

The volunteers came to ki uta ki tai as individuals but left as a whānau, meeting new people and making new friends along the way. The beauty of this program is not only the incredible work that is done by the volunteers, but what they themselves get from it also; friendship, kinship, family, and a sense of belonging.

Image across: Volunteers meet and greet over some plant potting up with the rūnaka.

The student volunteers visited one of the community groups each day in the field. On Friday they were with Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka, Saturday they worked with River Estuary care, on Sunday they were with Hawksbury Lagoon and Monday was work with the East Otago Taiāpure.



Volunteer and Karitane local Waiariki Parata-Taiapa joins senior students from Karitane School to carry out meter square surveys with East Otago Taiāpure. Tamariki and volunteers learnt about the different wildlife in our estuary identifying what kinds of things could be found at three sites of the estuary.



Feedback from Volunteers

“There is a unique beauty about the ki uta ki tai program. Twice a year it brings together four community groups each with their own objectives and goals, but who come together for the one kaupapa of reviving our whenua (lands) and moana (seas). Adding to the mix we welcome a group of volunteers each with their own agendas, passions and backgrounds. The beauty of our volunteer week is how well all these different people are able to come together; work as one and develop a real sense of belonging and connection both to place and to people. I feel blessed to meet new and likeminded people, developing new friendships and solidifying old ones”. –Nā Chanel Phillips



“I really enjoyed working in the rain brought back good farming times and it reminded me more of home to be honest”. –Nā Tracy Finlayson

“I’ve just got some values that I would like to share that I thought were expressed today. So the first one is kotahitanga cause we all came together and worked well as a team, was real rewarding to see and once again no one complained. The second one is manaakitanga for the hospitality that was provided for us and the kai that we all helped to make just before it was beautiful and the third one is just, or not a value but Tangaroa for the time

that we spent out in the ocean today. I love feeling how fierce he is but then really kind and playful when we got to catch the waves and the last one is just aroha cause my heart is filled to the brim”. –Nā Jess Massey

“The more important point is that we’re creating that aroha and that community that kotahitanga and yea we’re looking after the environment. Suppose it’s just being aware and maybe just trying to think how we can make it better in the future”. – Nā Tom McFarlane

“This weekend’s just been such a great opportunity especially because growing up in the city I never had ever planted really anything”. –Nā Moyra Bell

Article by Chanel Phillips: Coordinator

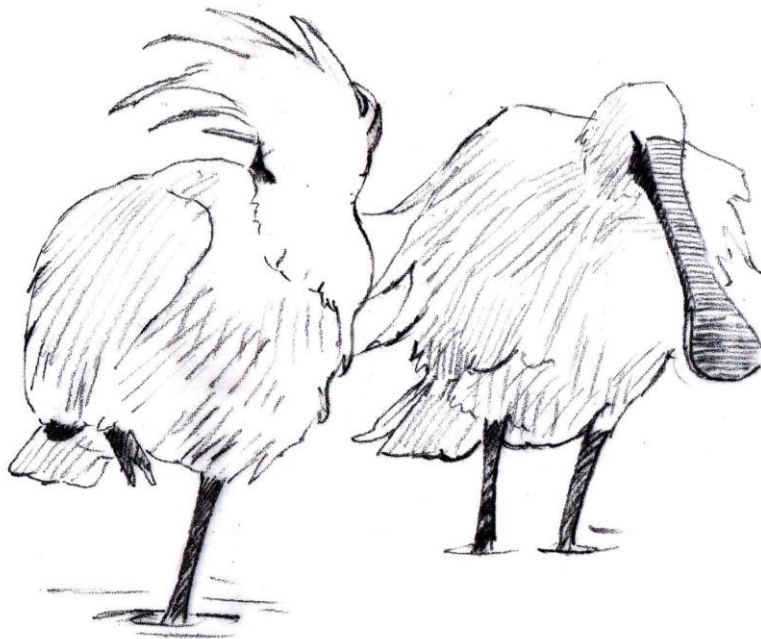
Orbells Crossing



Orbells Crossing under normal river conditions

Orbells Crossing during the floods at Easter 2014





To become a friend of the River and Estuary Care: Waikouaiti—Karitane	Should anyone friends wish to become a friend of the River and Estuary Care: Waikouaiti—Karitane, details are available from Brad – 03 4658334 or email brad126@xtra.co.nz
Should you wish to kindly make a donation	<p>Online:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enter our name: Waikouaiti-Karitane Rivercare Group Inc) (this will appear on your statement) ▪ Enter our bank account number 060942 0190792 00 ▪ Enter your name and reason for payment e.g. donation to friend of Waikouaiti-Karitane Rivercare Group (Inc) (this will appear on our statement) <p>or post donation to 1333 Coast Rd Karitane</p>

River-Estuary Care Waikouaiti - Karitane

Active since 1999 – Incorporated in 2001

Coastal Otago Conservation Award for 2005

Objectives

- To restore balance to Papatuanuku (Mother Earth).
- To have a well informed community about our river and estuary.
- To have our community participating in sustainable resource practices.
- To have a healthy, productive river and estuary ecosystem (fishing, biodiversity, general health).
- To promote an understanding of the inter-relatedness of our river and estuary ecosystem with adjacent ecosystems.

Anyone interested in supporting the above objectives may join!

Would you like to help with a project this year? Then contact

- Newsletter – Hilary Yeoman ph 465 7687.
- Revegetation project – contact Andy Barratt ph 021 890 048.
- Education, information and advocacy project – contact Patti Vanderburg ph 465 8113.
- Birdwatching – contact current convener Brad, phone 465 8334.

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