

# Flight

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OCTOBER  
1999

ISSUE 101



**DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC.**

For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

# BASIL

*We're desolate! Basil, our pet duck, has flown. It's like heartstrings being snapped.*

Basil started life near the motorway in Lower Hutt - too near, as it happened. His mother was squished and Basil was orphaned with his brother and sister. While walking Dan, our 10-year old son, home from the school bus one day, we saw Basil and siblings race across the road to cover. Dan found one of the two- or three-day-old ducklings, but after an hour of searching we gave up on the others for that day.

Over the next two days, searches failed to find any sign.



*Dan's relationship with Baz was wonderful.*

## The Mitredale Duck Club Cookbook

By Di Pritt

A selection of many fine duck and goose recipes, tried and tested over the years on the hundreds of members and guests of the Mitredale Duck Club.

The cookbook is a must for any cook keen to venture into game or looking for a fresh twist. An excellent Christmas present for duck hunters to give their partners.

**\$15.95**

**Available from Paper Plus and independent book stores or from Halcyon Press, P.O. Box 360, Auckland.**

Meanwhile, Basil lived in a cardboard box for several days to acclimatise. With eight acres to roam, and our having been brought up on farms, we felt Basil had a good chance of survival. He was fed on bread in water, insects and wheat. He soon progressed to a new home in upturned trailer sides. We stapled green garden netting across the top. A water bath and plenty of greenery completed the nest.

Our intention was to keep Basil and let him fly away when the time came. The relationship he built with all of us was so special. Basil had a new Mum in Dan, and within 24 hours was following him everywhere. He would swim with Dan in the swimming pool (yes, we knew it was unhygienic) and play with him underwater. He liked to weave in and out of our legs in a game and when Dan warmed up in the bath, Basil also enjoyed a hot swim. Dan's relationship with Baz was so wonderful - Baz used to sift through Dan's hair and play soccer with him. Dan would roll a tennis ball to Baz who would roll it back with his bill. By about 10 weeks Baz had been having concentrated flying lessons from Dan and was able to fly just over 10 metres. I'm sure he was flying at least a month before he was supposed to...

As he grew, he progressed to a large open-topped pen, a larger paddling pool (a large square drum top) and to worms. Oh how many worms! The compost heap is no more. Foraging became a series of forays, my weeding in the garden while Baz foraged at the same time as I protected him from predators. Our yellow labrador Mac,

after much circumspection, decided Basil's hisses and pecks were too much and thereafter, tail between legs, avoided him.

When we went to Taupo for several weeks, Basil had to come too. His first car excursion was frightening - more for us than him, as he escaped and flew around inside the car.

At Taupo, right on the lakefront, the whole street became Baz's friends, adults and children alike. They used to meet Baz and Dan on the reserve, and Baz became very used to strangers and dogs - so much that, perhaps, it was to be his undoing. One dog got a little close when Dan was walking with Baz flying behind. Baz suddenly dive-bombed the dog and pecked it on the back of the head.

Baz flew away for the first time while we were at Taupo. For two hours Dan and I searched the lake. Just as we had given up, nearly 10 o'clock at night, I checked once more outside and there was Baz on the lawn. Heavens! That night Baz and a tearful Dan slept together. Although he went away nearly every day after that, he would return, sometimes only in the morning. He made friends with one duck on the lake, but only after days of not being sure if it were human or duck.

On our return to Wellington, Baz stayed only for 24 hours before flying off. Months later we have still not seen him. All the hundreds of ducks now look the same, of course. We're happy for him and hope he's safe. Meanwhile, Dan and his parents pine for a very special friend... - by Dan's Mum

# INSIGHT

*Graham Gurr*  
*President*

Ducks Unlimited is a vibrant and active participant in the conservation movement in New Zealand, as our 25th Anniversary has shown. Many rate it as our best for over 10 years, and in terms of income and other financial measures, they may be right. From my point of view, in terms of a coming together of like-minded individuals and a feeling of purpose, it was the best ever.

From the telling of the "official 25th Anniversary joke", if not earlier on the Friday night, to the final wrap of the Sunday at lunch time, it was a success in every way possible.

Unfortunately, we cannot rest on our laurels. Things move on and we must as well. We have been successful in obtaining \$35,000 in millennium funding toward our project to reintroduce brown teal to the Chatham Islands. Sadly, in spite of our sponsorship arrangement with many organisations, we will be faced at the end of the day with a funding shortfall. We are determined to press ahead with this project as it represents the only prospect of a viable brown teal population separate from the mainland and Great Barrier.

On another front, we have appealed against the decision of the commissioners over resource consent applications for Lake Waikare. The decision reached by the commissioners is, in our view, legally and morally wrong. (See page 11). It will take time and money to correct this. By joining with Fish and Game and other interested parties we will, I believe, prevail but not before we will need to spend a lot of money preserving what should be a recreational and environmental jewel in the Waikato.

In election year, logic deserts most politicians as they go for populist and easy targets. One group that will come under fire is firearms owners. The Board, while not wishing to become involved in politics, recognises that we should be making some representation on behalf of those of our members who are recreational shooters. It is our intention to find a way of representing those interests without compromising our organisational position.

And that's the way I see it.



## OUR MISSION

*We are a voluntary membership-based society dedicated to the conservation of New Zealand wetlands through:*

- *wetland restoration and development;*
- *conservation programmes for threatened waterfowl;*
- *advocacy and education of wetland values.*

*By these means we seek to ensure the ethical and sustainable use of wetland resources by all existing and future users.*

*Cover Photo: 25th Annual Conference wetlands tour at Lake Rotoaira, Central North Island. Photo: Alan Wilks.*

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Co-patrons	Lady Isaac, QSM, Christchurch Norman Marsh, Reporoa
President	Graham Gurr, Auckland, (09) 489 5337
Chairman	Alan Wilks, Greytown, (06) 304 9729
Vice-president/ Treasurer	Craig Worth, Box 5095, Hamilton, a/h (07) 854 0494 (07) 846 8719
Directors	William Abel, Wellington, (04) 586 2752 Ossie Latham, Auckland, (09) 483 7401 David Johnston, Reporoa, (07) 333 8453 Ross Cottle, Masterton, (06) 378 7408 David Smith, LLB, Auckland, (09) 298 4719 Dale Stevens, Cambridge (07) 839 7224 Neil Candy, Palmerston North (06) 353 6132 Tom van Dam, Te Kauwhata (07) 826 4269

OUR

# Directors



**Tom van Dam**

A member for seven years, Tom van Dam was elected to the Board a year ago. Born and educated in Wanganui, he attended Waikato University and spent nine years in wine research and the last 13 as owner and wine maker of Rongopai Wines at Te Kauwhata where he now lives. Married to Susan, Tom's interests include wine, the outdoors, wetland and waterfowl conservation and playing better golf than he does which he claims is badly.



**Ossie Latham**

Born in Palmerston North and raised on a farm near Feilding, Ossie Latham completed degrees in agriculture and horticulture and business studies. He was one of the first government scientific appointments to the field of ecology and then owned a dairy and horticultural unit. He moved to Auckland and was a senior lecturer in strategic planning and international marketing, and is now a floor coverings retailer and director of Carpet Court. Ossie and his wife Mary have two daughters and three grandchildren. They own a small farm out of Feilding and plan to retire there. A member for three years and involved in Rotary and Forest and Bird, his interests include reading, music, cooking, wine, gardening, the farm wetland and his yellow labrador gundog, Meg.

## DU Happy to Help

Ducks Unlimited receives numerous requests from students undertaking school projects seeking information on wetlands and waterfowl. As a voluntary organisation, DU is keen to provide helpful material but rarely receives any acknowledgement. It was heartening to receive a letter of thanks from a Hamilton student, Catherine Wells. Unfortunately, it is not possible to publish anything of the work she has done but she was happy for her letter to be published:

Thank you very much for your information. It was very helpful for my project. I must apologise for taking so long to return the booklets you supplied but we were doing unit standards and I had to re-submit a few times because of my autobiography.

I got a 4 on my project (which is the highest) so I was very happy with the result and I know I could not have achieved this without your information. Thank you for the free magazines. They made interesting reading for myself. One more thing I would like to thank you for is the quick reply that you gave. Other places I wrote to did not reply so that is why I am grateful for your information. It was the main source of all my project.

Yours sincerely,

Catherine Wells

P.S. Keep up the excellent work!



## ANNIVERSARY WISHES FROM AUSTRALIA

*On the eve of its July 25th Anniversary AGM, DUNZ received many letters of congratulations from DU organisations in other parts of the world, including this from DU Australia Deputy Chairman, Clive Huggan:*

Dear Graham,

This is to confirm that I will not, after all, be able to be with you at your 25th Anniversary.... I was really looking forward to catching up with DU members, five years after I had visited the 20th Anniversary meeting at Palmerston North with Tony Sharley. I had not been in DU Australia for long then, which was why all the ideas that come from people like Ken Cook, David Johnson, Jim Campbell and Grant Dumbell were enormously valuable. And the warm hospitality was marvellous.

In addition to catching up and sharing more ideas, I wanted to tell you how well DU Australia - under its trading name of Wetland Care Australia - is progressing.

Using Banrock Wetland on the River Murray in South Australia as a showcase, we have attracted large amounts of government funding.... We have become well-known for being a solid, community based organisation which can effectively apply good science and project management with plenty of community involvement in managing the wetland projects.

We are now working on a very large scale - otherwise we will never make a real difference. For example, we have just completed management plans for ten catchment ecosystems. A national contact network, linking all people and organisations interested in or owning wetlands is under way. These projects are supported by paid staff.

Our activities have now spread to three states. And we secured last week a \$75,000 corporate sponsorship with BRL Hardy Wines. All this was only a dream five years ago. It is in no small measure thanks to our New Zealand friends that we were inspired and have been able to achieve the ambitious goals we set ourselves.

I am now hoping that some of us will be able to come to your meeting next year. In the meantime, if any DUNZ people would like to come to our national wetlands conference and AGM in Canberra (24 to 27 November) they would be very welcome! The phone number is +61 8 8582 3014.

With our very best wishes for a very successful and happy birthday,  
Kind regards,  
Clive Huggan.

### GREY TEAL NEST BOX SURVEY

In this issue is enclosed a survey form prepared by Jack Worth, Project Supervisor. If you know of any nest boxes in your area, please take the trouble to complete the form and return it to Jack.

### WAIRARAPA CHAPTER

A very successful annual dinner and auction was held on 4 September at the Copthorne Resort Solway Park hotel in Masterton. Attended by 60 members and friends, auctioneer Prue Hamill entertained those present and the evening raised over \$3,500. DU acknowledges the many items donated by local businesses and members.

The Chapter will hold a sporting clay shoot at the Eketahuna Gun Club on Sunday 3 October starting at 10am. There will be a BYO lunch and sausage sizzle, 100 targets for \$40 and junior shooters will be particularly welcome at a birds-only cost. Inquiries: Glenys Hansen, Ph. (06)378 9967.

### MANAWATU CHAPTER

At the recent Manawatu Chapter AGM there was discussion about a wetland tour by bus. A trial trip with a 24 seat bus was organised for 18 July to gauge the interest of members. The bus was booked, committee members were rung and before more people could be contacted, the bus was full. Leaving Palmerston North at 9.30am (almost) the tour headed for Longburn to visit two oxbow lagoons of the Manawatu river.

At the first, Selwyn Callesen outlined the history of the lagoon. His grandfather had settled in the area in 1870 when there were only 22 settlers there.

The next stop was the Voss lagoon where Max Voss explained the background of a more recent oxbow, formed only 150 years ago. Max provided a list of the diverse bird life found there. As an added bonus, he gave a guided tour of his "hobby" room, where he displays some of his creative taxidermy.

Back on the bus the tour party needed their raincoats because it had sprung several leaks. Undaunted, the tour carried on to Dave and Ann West's property. The Wests have developed a series of ponds in a wet sand dune area. The water level here has not yet recovered from a very dry season, but members were able to visualise the normal water level.



*Manawatu Chapter members at Voss Lagoon.  
Photo: Neil Candy*



*Abels' Wetland. Photo: Neil Candy.*

The final destination was William and Jan Abels' at Waikawa Beach, near Otaki. Here William and Jan's cottage overlooks some 15ha of natural coastal wetland. Those on the tour were most impressed and envious of this beautiful setting and the lovely views of the surrounding hills.

Lunch of sausages, duck patties and bread was very welcome at this point in the day. The enthusiasm of those present showed that in future the Chapter will need to contact all its members about upcoming wetland tours, and a bigger bus will be needed.

### MANAWATU CHAPTER DINNER

The annual Manawatu Chapter dinner and auction will be held at The Coachman, Palmerston North, on Saturday 16 October. For bookings or donated auction items, contact:

Neil Candy (06)353 6132 or Anne West (06)357 5716.

### OLD QUACKER TAWNY PORT

Blended and bottled exclusively for DU this sold well at the 25th Anniversary - even the hotel staff were buying it. Limited stocks are still available from Rongopai Wines Ltd., P.O. Box 35, Te Kauwhata, at \$15 per bottle.

### LOST MEMBERSHIPS

Reports were received during the AGM that contact had been lost with some members who had not advised of a change of address. DU values its members and if members know of others who have moved and with whom contact has been lost, please ask them to contact Craig Worth, P.O.Box 5095, Hamilton.

### KNITTING WOOL

Member Peggy Wilks knits multicolored woollen hats for silent auction items and they sell well. She would be grateful for any leftover knitting wool. Please post to 98B Creswick Terrace, Northland, Wellington.

### THE MITREDALE DUCK CLUB COOKBOOK

Di Pritt was signing and selling this delightful book at the Tokaanu AGM.

The Mitredale Duck Club has no formal membership, no rules (except those of good sportsmanship), no meetings (outside the shooting season) and has set standards of excellence and good

fellowship for people from all walks of life in New Zealand and overseas.

All who have been invited have enjoyed the best sporting shooting in the North Island as well as the hospitality and cooking of Di and Audrey Pitt.

In this collection of duck and goose recipes are the best of the best, tried and tested over the years on the hundreds of members and guests of the Mitredale Duck Club.

The cookbook is a must for any keen cook and an excellent Christmas present for a duck hunter to give their partner.

Available from Paper Plus and independent book stores, or from Halcyon Press, P.O. Box 360, Auckland. \$15.95.

### Foul Play on Wetlands

*From the Unexpurgated 25th Annual Conference Report*

"On then through Ohakune to the back of Diane Pritt's farm where we climbed a hill to look down on three recently-constructed ponds. It was here that one of the highlights of the day occurred. Readers may recall a certain Manawatu Chapter member's efforts at mulled wine a year ago, and this year he excelled himself. He must remain nameless, but Phil was holding the fence down for the Chairman to step over and it is alleged he lifted the wire at the crucial moment, causing the Chairman to catch his boot, execute a complete somersault and land in the sheep poo - and someone murmured, "Fitting place." Well done, Mr Budding and no hard feelings . . ."



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# 25TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## REPORT

*Ducks Unlimited Chairman Alan Wilks reports on events at this year's Annual Conference held at the Tokaanu Hotel in July...*

I must begin with a parody of Shakespeare's Henry V:

*And members in New Zealand home a-bed  
Shall think themselves accursed they were  
not there."*

Over a hundred people attended and, apart from some problems with the accommodation because we had filled the hotel and the overflow had to go down the road to a motel, the whole weekend went incredibly well and members judged it a great success.

Maybe there is a magic at Tokaanu that lingers from the many memorable gatherings we had there in the 80s (when Honorary Life Member Keith Barnett and his wife Dulcie were managers) and the fact we had the whole hotel to ourselves for the weekend. The staff were friendly, co-operative, and entered into the spirit of the event, including dressing a dummy in camo gear holding a magnum decoy which they sat in the middle of the AGM seating.

First, I must acknowledge the outstanding job that our President, Graham Gurr, did with his organisation for the weekend. He is the most laid-back person I have ever known but early on Friday evening, as members were arriving and accommodation problems were arising, I sensed he was close to panic and bursting out with an "Oh, dear!"

DU is also grateful to the many members who gave their time and effort to assist, particularly Michelle McKay, who acted as Registrar and organised all the auction items. On Friday night her computer went down and with only four hours' sleep she had everything back on track by Saturday morning. That's dedication.

The Friday evening get-together was a cheery gathering and it was good to see old

and new members mingling and getting to know each other. Saturday morning's AGM was attended by nearly 80 (including the dummy) and, as always, went smoothly.

### Wetlands Tour

As over 70 people wanted to go on the wetland tour, another coach was hired. We set off a little late on a beautiful morning, over the saddle road from Tokaanu to the National Park road where we stopped at Lake Rotoaira (see cover photo) and viewed a lot of black swan, then on to the DOC-operated fish trap on the Te Whaiu Stream. Robert Hood, a DOC officer based at Turangi, explained the working of the trap which operates from early April to late August and has a DOC officer on site 24 hours a day to monitor the spawning trout from Lake Otamangakau.

On then through Ohakune to the back of Diane Pritt's farm where we climbed a hill to look down on three recently constructed ponds.

From the vantage point we could look across the valley to Roke's Dam, a 22-acre wetland built by the Army in 1982 at a cost of \$2,000 worth of diesel and organised by the Waimarino Ward of the Central North Island Conservancy. Constructed on Maori leasehold land, it carries a QEII Covenant. It is now a habitat for mute swan that came from DU several years ago.

The tour returned to the Pritts' Mitredale home for a generous wine tasting sponsored by Rongopai Wines and an excellent lunch of steak and sausages organised by Di and her mother Audrey. By the time everyone had drunk and eaten their fill and enjoyed the social atmosphere, it was decided that it was too late to visit the Manganui a Te Ao River to look for blue duck. So it was back to Tokaanu by 4.10pm, only 10 minutes late, with everyone agreeing it had been a wonderful outing.

### Presentations

Around 5.30pm, people started to gather for drinks and to view the impressive array of



*DU President Graham Gurr presents the Bill Barrett Trophy to Peter Russell. Photo: P. Dobson.*

main and silent auction items which had been set out by Michelle and Lois and Murray Tapp during the day. Eventually we moved into the dining-room where Graham Gurr presented a Conservation Sponsor Grey Duck Decoy to Steve Rice, Regional Manager Canadian Airlines. In further recognition of the assistance DU has received over the past 25 years. The airline carries our DU Canada auction items free of charge and in 1995 received a Foundation Sponsor decoy. DU is grateful to Steve and Canadian Airlines for their generous support.

Next the presentation of the Bill Barrett Trophy, to Peter Russell, Blue Duck Captive Breeding Co-ordinator, to acknowledge his achievement since he has managed the programme. And, yet again, Neil Candy accepted the Chapter Challenge for Manawatu for raising the most money.

### Auction Highlights

After an excellent meal complemented by generously donated Rongopai wine, we came to the highlight of the evening - the auction. Auctioneer Bob Wood has never been in better form. He is as good a comedian as auctioneer. From the moment



*The fish trap on the Te Whaiiau Stream. Photo: P. Dobson.*

he started, everyone was smiling and laughing while he extracted the last dollar from 40 items in an hour and a half for a

total of \$11,600. Thank you, Bob, for your performance, and I trust you enjoyed it as much as those present did. The hotel had



*Inspecting wetlands on Di Pritt's property. Photo: P. Dobson.*

## Minutes

of the  
**Ducks Unlimited  
 New Zealand Inc.**  
**25th Annual General Meeting  
 held at Tokaanu Hotel, Tokaanu,  
 24 July 1999.**

**Present:** Board members Graham Gurr, David Smith, William Abel, Alan Wilks, Craig Worth, Neil Candy, Ken Cook. Jan Abel (Minutes Secretary).

Graham Gurr extended a warm welcome to the over 80 members attending.

**Apologies:** were received from Clive Huggan (DU Australia), Grant and Marie Dumbell, Dale Stevens, J. and J.

Tilley, J. Glover, G. Thompson, Geoff and Gail Reid, T. van Dam, and M. Robertson.

**The minutes of the previous AGM**, as published in Flight, were confirmed (A. Wilks/K.Cook).

**President's Report:** Graham Gurr read from his report, remembering past Board Members and thanking them for their contributions. He said that this was the first year there had been a surplus. For that reason, DU was able to contribute to projects with a combined value of approximately a hundred thousand dollars. G. Hansen and K. Cook, resigning Board Members, were thanked for their contributions to DU.

**Treasurer's Report:** The 1998-99 Annual Accounts, as summarised in Flight,

recorded the All Blacks - Springboks game in Dunedin and played it to us in the lounge about midnight and put it through every room as well, so it all finished on a high.

## Members Discuss Issues

Members gathered in the lounge on Sunday morning to watch a DU Inc. video entitled "Snow Goose in Peril". This sobering documentary is about the way this magnificent bird, which is flourishing on the feed in the USA as it migrates in the autumn and then returns to Canada to breed in the spring, is eating out the tundra which is vital to its existence. It raised many conservation questions, but no answers.

David Smith then gave a resume of the Lake Waikare situation (see also page 11). He had acted for DU at the hearing to consider the resource consent for Environment Waikato to continue its water-level regime which is killing the lake. This topic created considerable discussion and the general feeling was that DU should not take the case to appeal alone because of the cost, but should endeavour to do something. Members asked that any proposals be published in Flight for comment.

The conference weekend finished at midday with the consensus being that it was the best for many years. After all expenses, DU cleared over \$12,000 and is grateful for the many donated auction items and the generosity of the members attending.

Tom Caithness, in his inimitable way, summed up the weekend: "DU has now got some fire back in its belly."

were adopted (C.Worth/G.Hansen).

D. Smith gave a brief overview of the WWT Trust funds managed by Spicers, outlining the portfolio, return and associated fees. He explained the operation of the Trust, introduced the trustees and answered questions from the floor.

**Election of Directors:** The four non-permanent directors, along with Ossie Latham, were automatically appointed because there were insufficient nominations to require a vote. The President welcomed Ossie Latham to the Board.

**Project Supervisors' Reports:** Reports for Operations Royal Swan, Wetlands, and Pateke were adopted as published in Flight. For Operation



Whio, Peter Russell reviewed the past year (see below) and outlined his trip to WWT Slimbridge in UK this year.

**General Business:** A. Wilks discussed the colour centrespread in the last issue of Flight and outlined plans to use it further in publicity pamphlets.

**Lake Waikare** - DU is supporting Fish and Game in an attempt to improve the lake.

**The Steel Shot Debate-** the Minister has appointed a committee to look at this issue. DU was not invited to contribute.

**Canadian Airlines** (S. Rice) were thanked for their generous support of DUNZ over the past 25 years.

**Life Members** - T. Caithness asked from the floor about recognising outstanding contributions from DU members and asked about the appropriateness on the 25th anniversary of Honorary Life Members being elected. This will be taken to the next Board meeting.

**Project Gretel** - J. Worth mentioned the survey forms.

**Canadian Auction Items Catalogue** - R. Cottle mentioned that the Chapters

## What They Raised

*The following are the prices realised for Feature Auction Items (published in Flight 100) at the Annual Conference auction:*

8 day duck hunting trip to USA	\$1600
1 day guided fishing trip to Nelson	\$300
2 day hunting trip to Poronui Station	\$400
Polar bear sculpture	\$320
Labrador puppy sculpture	\$160
Art prints - prices ranged from	\$210 - 400
Return trip for two to Hawaii donated by Canadian Airlines	\$1100

Also offered were 25 camouflage peak caps with DU logo and 25th Anniversary badge. This limited edition was specially made for DU and numbered 1 to 25. No. 1 sold for \$301 and the next four up to \$75.

receive black and white copies of this, making it difficult to judge. G. Gurr answered and said that he had requested more colour brochures from DU Canada but they had sent only one. Coloured brochures were available via the Internet. Mark Newcombe offered assistance with reproducing colour catalogues.

**MacMaster Trophy** - A. Wilks asked for information about schools which may

be eligible for the trophy.

**Flight** - A. Wilks asked if members were receiving Flight magazine regularly as he had evidence of some overseas non-deliveries. He requested feedback on the content of Flight and asked for copy and photographs for future issues.

The meeting closed at 10.25am.

## BLUE DUCK REPORT

### WWT Slimbridge and Arundel Visit

Seeing so many different species of ducks and geese was a highlight of our recent visit to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Slimbridge and Arundel in UK.

Anne and I were met in the morning by Dr. Baz Hughes, head of waterfowl conservation, who showed us around the complex. This included talking with Dr. Tony Richardson, Managing Director, and all the staff involved with the blue duck. They are having the same problems we are in New Zealand, with many of their blue duck laying infertile eggs. They have only one producing pair, at Arundel, this being an uncle/niece mating. The eggs are sent to Slimbridge where they are hatched and reared. The male is one of the original males sent to Slimbridge in 1986. I did see three ducklings from this pair which were only about a week old. (Since returning, I have received an email from Baz telling me that the breeding pair have an-

other duckling in the second clutch, which is a female. This is of interest, seeing that all the first clutch were males.) We had lunch with Tony and Baz and were then shown around the new administration/education/public area from where all of Slimbridge can be seen from the observation tower. We spent the rest of the afternoon looking around, so we could videotape and photograph all the different species of birds.

On the following day, Baz and Duane Green, aviculture warden, took us down to Arundel where we saw the breeding pair of blue duck plus another pair. My impression was that their aviary could have contained a bit more cover.

We had a wonderful two days, thanks to the hospitality of Baz and Tony and all the staff.

### Breeding Underway

The pair at Peacock Springs have six eggs and were about three weeks on at the time of writing. Anne is looking

forward to taking them soon for the incubator. My own pair have five eggs so far. Hopefully, all the other pairs are doing the same.

All the transfers have been made and we now have 20 pairs and one spare male in the programme. This augurs well for the breeding season and I see no reason why we should not get our 20 ducklings.

Pairs are being held at:

Auckland Zoo, Broadlands Trust, Staglands, Orana Park, Hamilton Zoo, Kowhai Park, Peacock Springs, R. Langdon, Otorohanga Kiwi House, Esplanade Aviary, Willowbank. H. Egan, C. Allison, R. Munro, J. Campbell, Nga Manu.

### Release Site

The release of the young expected to be bred will be on Mount Taranaki, most probably in February.

- Peter Russell



# Huntercraft Decoys

In previous issues of Flight readers will have noticed the advertisements for Huntercraft decoys. Invercargill business Huntercraft is now looking forward to its fourth season, producing decoys which proprietor Warren Owen knows work.

*A keen hunter and conservationist, Warren Owen lives close to the Waituna Wetlands Reserve near Invercargill. About four years ago, he saw a need for a better decoy for use in tidal or low water conditions. Huntercraft, the small-scale operation he started, now sells his special design of decoy as far afield as Australia.*



*One of the range of decoys.  
Photo: Warren Owen.*

Warren Owen's decoys are different, being photographic images of real birds - mallards, Canada geese and magpies. They are also the correct size and shape, and with the mallard, a lot of time and care has gone into producing the correct colours using UV protected inks on ultra violet protected PVC. The decoys are rugged and capable of withstanding the rough treatment gear gets in the field.

Most observant hunters will know that mallards and Canada geese do not always land, feed and loaf on the water. Mallards tend to land on small puddles and creeks out in the open ground and this offers them some sense of security. This is where the Huntercraft decoys come into their own, as they can be used in most hunting situations, including shallow water. Mallards will often land some way off from water and then walk to it. The Huntercraft decoys can be placed around the edge on open ground - a good decoy ploy for mallards. In places like wheat stubble paddocks, which are a favoured source of food for mallards in the evenings, the decoys have been used with great success,

In tidal waters, a different hunting technique is needed. The silhouette decoys can be moved as the tide comes in, or place on the tidal edge. The long galvanised metal stakes which support the silhouettes are easily placed in sand or gravel and overcome the problem of the water being too shallow for standard decoys to float in.

The Canada geese decoys are made of the same materials

as the mallard decoys but are larger and produced in three different stances - all feeding. This is because the geese spend a lot of time feeding. In a mob of them, most will be feeding at any one time, with only three sentries keeping a lookout. In field trials of the decoys in Southland and Canterbury, they have been successfully used with 12 to 18 decoys. Sometimes, a large spread of decoys has been found to put the birds off.

The Canada geese decoys can be used in water up to 8 inches deep. The long, heavy brown painted galvanised steel stake will penetrate soft sand and gravel, and there is an anti-swing stake on the nose of the decoys to keep them in the desired position. Different stances can be achieved by adjusting the height of the leg stake or raising or lowering the nose of the decoy. The magpie decoy has been the latest addition to the range. These decoys are drawn, with the basic profile taken from a photograph. Although the shape is accurate, the decoy is 20% larger than life size to make it easier seen.

Field trials of the magpie decoy have had astounding success. The prototype was placed near some large pine trees, where the magpies must have seen them being placed, and by the time the Huntercraft crew had hidden, magpies were landing among the decoys. In fact, the impression was that the magpies were not very happy about the decoys being there.



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# LAKE WAIKARE:

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## WETLANDS IN CRISIS

*The lower Waikato lake system, of which Lake Waikare forms part, with its associated swamps, provides the breeding grounds for at least 80% of the region's waterfowl. The overall decline in waterfowl numbers in the last few years is a direct result of loss of habitat.*

*As the only national organisation solely involved in waterfowl and wetlands, Ducks Unlimited is ensuring the issues surrounding this lake are recognised and addressed. David Smith, a DU Director who made the DU submission on resource consent applications affecting Lake Waikare, outlines the historical and ecological background to the disastrous condition of the lake and associated wetlands....*

Lake Waikare is the largest of the lakes of the lower Waikato Basin. Lying immediately to the east of the North Island main trunk railway and south east of Te Kauwhata, it is part of a complex of lakes in the lower Waikato Basin. This complex includes Lakes Waikare, Waahi, Whangape and Whangamarino wetland, as well as several other smaller lakes and wetlands. These form a major waterfowl habitat, and the northeastern sector of Lake Waikare is a wildlife refuge.

The lake as a whole is unmanaged. Land Information New Zealand is not funded for the management of the lake or the associated Crown lands. The Department of Conservation and the Auckland-Waikato Fish and Game Council have responsibility for wildlife and game protection respectively. Environment Waikato's responsibility is for lake level operation.

In late 1998, Environment Waikato applied, to itself, for renewal of the resource consents for the operation of the control gates on the Te Onatea Stream and the canal into the Whangamarino Swamp and on the Whangamarino River. Discussions were held with interested parties, including Ducks Unlimited. DU lodged an objection to the application because it contained no attempt to ameliorate the effects on the ecology of Lake Waikare and the Whangamarino Swamp. DU argued that the consents should not be renewed for a further five years and that there should be a one year period in which proper studies should be made and a proper management plan put in place to save the lake.

Before European settlement, Lake Waikare was inundated from the Waikato River whenever major floods occurred in the Waikato system. It was surrounded by wetlands of various kinds which were home to large numbers of bird species, both waterfowl and swamp dwellers. Waikare was home to native fish, and in the surrounding wetlands fish species such as

the black mud fish also occurred in high numbers.

### Impact of European Settlement

European settlement saw the area being opened up and the drier areas became farmland. Later, the settlers drained the wetland areas and those areas which were seen as relatively easy to bring into production.

Whenever floods occurred in this period, waters flowed from the Waikato River, through the Te Oneta and Rangiriri streams into Lake Waikare. In times of high flood, rainfall within the Waikare catchment contributed to this system as well. Flood water spilled out through the wetlands to the North - the Whangamarino wetlands. From here the water eventually flowed into the Waikato area.

The system operating in this manner was totally normal, with the lower Waikato area being inundated during periods of flooding alternating with short periods of low water and drying out.

With European settlement and development of the lower Waikato area, the demand for

flood control grew. Settler farmers attempting to create farmland from the fertile swamps and wetlands next to the river and various lakes in the Waikato suffered severe setbacks from floods.

### Flood Control

Before 1965, Lake Waikare was a natural lake within a very complex swamp system. It received water from its own catchment in the surrounding land, and also from the Waikato River via the Te Onatea and Rangiriri streams. Some water is also discharged back to the Waikato River through the Te Onatea stream during dry periods. In the flood conditions, water was also received by overland flow from the Waikato River and discharged mainly over the Te Kauwhata-Waererenga Road, which now formed a partial barrier, to the Whangamarino wetland.

In 1959 the lower Waikato-Waipā flood control scheme was initiated to control the flooding. The major features of the scheme, completed by 1965, involved using Lake Waikare and the Whangamarino wetland as a flood storage reservoir. Parts of State Highway One at Rangiriri became an overflow weir or spillway so that areas downstream of Rangiriri would have a reduced flow of water in times of flood. A canal was built on the northern outlet of the lake to convey water directly to the Whangamarino River and wetland. Flood control gates were built. The Te Onatea and Rangiriri streams were closed (in March 1965) to stop water flowing between the lakes and river at normal levels. However, the Te Onatea Stream culvert under State Highway One gave some relief by allowing



*Lake Waikare: part of a complex of wetlands forming a major waterfowl habitat.*



Control gate on a stream flowing into the Waikato River.

water to flow into the lake between April and August 1965 when water levels were apparently very low.

### Impact on the Ecology

The overall effect of flood control measures since 1965 has been the lowering of the average water level of Lake Waikare by approximately a metre, with the lake's minimum level also lowered.

Although there has been a surprising lack of formal research over time into the impact of flood control measures on the Lake Waikare ecosystem, it is obvious to observers that lowering and controlling Lake Waikare's water levels has had an impact. A significant area, particularly on the eastern side of the lake, was exposed as permanently dry land. Wetland edges were exposed to more drying than they would have experienced under the natural regime. Although there have been no specific studies, it is clear that bird and wildfowl

species on the wetland margin habitats have declined as these have become drier and their vegetation has changed.

Lowering the lake level has obviously contributed to a decline in plant life. This has in turn contributed to a dramatic reduction in the lake's waterfowl population. For example, between 1976-77, black swan numbers fell from 11,000 to under 2,000, and are now numbered in mere hundreds. The mallard population of the lake has also declined, despite this species' not being totally reliant on the lake.

Installation of control gates, and closing off streams which in the past fed the lake, has meant fewer young eels, and species like mullet, entering the lake. Commercial eel catches have fallen from 200 tonnes in 1965, to 8 tonnes in 1996. There has been an overall decline in fish life.

Farming practices in the lake's catchment have undoubtedly contributed to the inflow

of sediment via the Matahuru Stream. The stream's catchment is hill country prone to high sediment run-off. Other factors, like the use of mechanical back hoes to more efficiently clear farm drains, has meant more sediment entering the lake. Water clarity in the lake has diminished. Wave action caused by the wind ensures the water is stirred up and sediments kept in suspension in the water. This, too, has impacted on plant and animal life in the lake.

### The Need for a Rescue Plan

Without seeking to accurately quantify the effects of any single factor on the lake's ecology, the complex series of impacts has had an obvious cumulative impact. It is clear that control of the lake levels impeded re-establishment of water plants and, as a result, the wildlife population. Unless something can be done about the sediment inflow and the constant suspension of sediment by wave action, the re-establishment of water plants, and the bird life dependent on them, seems most unlikely.

Regrettably, the decision by the commissioners considering the resource consents has been that the present situation exists and we may as well live with it. In DU's view, this is contrary to the objectives of the Resource Management Act. An appeal has been lodged by DU, the Department of Conservation and the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game.

DU wishes to facilitate proper studies into the lake's ecology and to enable a rescue plan being put in place.

## Operation Pateke: A Promising Breeding Season

The breeding season is looking promising for our captive programme and wild populations, with numerous hens either sitting or currently with ducklings on both Great Barrier Island and Mimiwhangata (DOC research sites). But this is only the start and the ducklings have a long way to go before they are ready to breed.

This season we were very fortunate to have rescued six eggs from a farmer's hay barn on Great Barrier Island. We are happy to announce that five ducklings have been successfully hatched and are doing well. Thanks to Martin Bell and his zoo team.

I received two orphan ducklings from Mimiwhangata. They were rather stressed and died the same night. At a Recovery Group meeting on 19 - 20 July, we decided that we need to upgrade our captive breeding stock and that the best way to do this is first through orphan ducklings or eggs, and second, by taking 20 eggs from the wild (one per nest). This will increase

our genetic base and give us some "closer to wild" birds for future breeding.

DU's success in gaining Millennium funding for the Chatham Islands release is good news. This could possibly become one of the other most valuable sites where brown teal can be re-established. There are not many large islands of this calibre around.

With the continuing decline of existing mainland brown teal haunts, there needs to be some serious work done before it is too late. With this in mind, I have secured a release site only minutes away from my home in Northland - a 160ha deer farm with 15 small ponds and extensive swampy feed areas. It seems a great teal habitat. I am borrowing 80 Mk6 Fenn traps and covers from Twizel DOC, for which I am grateful, and am now trying to find some more radio transmitters.

The site will be a trial site where I intend to trial different release techniques in order to find the best method. Anyone who has

experience with or information on other species is welcome to contact me.

A "brown teal survival guide" to assist the public in protecting and enhancing brown teal areas is another project I am considering. If anyone has photos of teal or teal habitat I could copy, I would be very grateful.

I attended the New Zealand Conservation Management Group Co-ordinators' workshop and conference in Queenstown earlier in June. This was a very informative few days put together by a really dedicated bunch of people who are doing a great job helping to save some of our threatened and endangered native bird species.

While I was in the deep cold south, I took the opportunity to visit the brown teal breeders, to whom I would like to express thanks for their gracious hospitality.

- Kevin Evans Brown Teal Captive Breeding Co-ordinator, (09)439 2561

## BEQUESTS

You don't have to give your life for conservation - but you can make a bequest.

Something left to waterfowl and wetlands will go on working after you've stopped. If you are making a will or changing one, why not consider the Trust, of which only the income of a donation is spent, as a beneficiary of part of your estate.

The wording in your will should be:

*"I give and bequeath free of all duties the sum of (S ) to the New Zealand Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust for the benefit of Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc.*

*AND I DECLARE that the receipt of the trustees of the said Trust shall be a good and sufficient discharge to my trustees for the moneys so paid."*



## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

### Act to be Amended

Some 1500 submissions were made during public consultation on the Resource Management Act Amendment Bill. The Bill was introduced into Parliament on 13 July by Environment Minister Simon Upton. Changes to the Act are designed to reduce unnecessary delays and costs in the RMA process without undermining the Act's environmental objectives.

### Explaining the Resource Consent Process

Two educational videos on the Resource Management Act, explaining the process from both sides of the story, are available. The first is a guide for those wanting to make a submission during the process of hearings on a resource consent.

The second video is a guide for those applying for resource consents. Producer of the videos, Gus Roxburgh (Environmental Solutions NZ Ltd.), says, "Many people find the resource consent process intimidating. The videos have been designed to demystify the process and show people what they need to do if they want to participate, either by making a submission or an application."

Two copies of each video have been provided to every council and will be available to environmental groups, resource user groups, libraries, and educational institutions.

For further information: Gus Roxburgh, P.O. Box 78-245, Grey Lynn, Auckland, (09) 815 8146. email gusrox@ihug.co.nz.

*(Adapted from Update - the Newsletter of the Ministry for the Environment, June/July, 1999.)*



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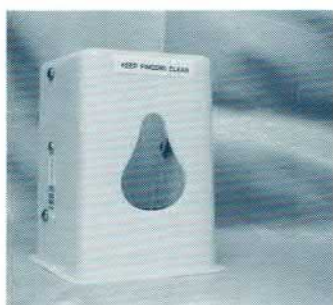


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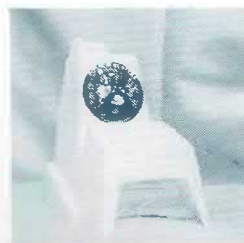
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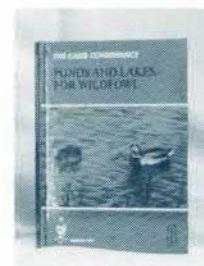
**ESSENTIAL READING**

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**PONDS AND LAKES FOR WATERFOWL**

Published in Britain by the Game Conservancy, this book covers the development and improvement of waterfowl habitat with many interesting ideas. **\$54.00**



## Scaup Colonising Christchurch Wetlands

The largest population of scaup (New Zealand scaup, black teal, papango) is now to be found in the wetland and waterway environments of Christchurch. A census in May this year estimated the Christchurch scaup population to be 20% of the world population.

The natural comeback staged by scaup, to the point where they are the third most abundant duck species in Christchurch, has sprung from a small population at and near Peacock Springs. Since the late 1980s the population has extended to some 35 ponds and waterways, including the Bromley Oxidation ponds and the middle reaches of the Avon. Predator control at the Bromley Oxidation ponds since 1996 (carried out by the Waste Management Unit in association with the Waterways and Wetlands Section of the Water Services Unit of Christchurch City Council) has seen the scaup numbers there rising from one pair in 1991 to 129 pairs in 1998.

Creation and rehabilitation of ponds has encouraged the spread of scaup. Ponds like those at Wigram East, Halswell Junction, Retention Basin, Janet Stewart Reserve Pond, the Styx Mill Basin Ponds, Lake Roto Kahatu and Westlake Lakes now have scaup populations along with hundreds of other wetland birds.

*(Adapted from "Diving Duck Thriving", The Christchurch Mail, 22.6.99.)*

## Smew and Pochard

These species were featured in the April issue of Flight with photographs by Graham Gurr who visited WWT Slimbridge.

The smew takes its name from the whistling sounds made by the male which was earlier known as the smee-duck. The drake is the whitest of ducks and are sometimes known as white nuns. A sea duck and ecological replacement of the buffle-head, it needs the larger black woodpecker to excavate the holes it uses for nesting, so its range coincides with the same well grown trees and drowned woodland preferred by the woodpecker in Europe and Asia. Smew compete with goldeneyes which will lay in the same hollow and mixed broods can be raised. Highly migratory, the smew winters on the coasts of Eastern Europe, the Black and Caspian seas, China, Korea and Japan. Due to an ability to spring suddenly from

the water, it can live in small enclosed areas shunned by other species.

Smew have increased in numbers in recent years. Some 80,000 wintered in Eastern Europe in the mid-1980s and substantial numbers inhabit Asia, especially Western Siberia where 100,000 are dispersed in low densities.

The pochard is known by a variety of pronunciations and spellings: pockard and poker, commonly powchard or poked. A red-headed diving duck, there are great numbers of pochards but the one featured in Flight was the common pochard which is somewhere between the canvasback and the redhead.

The common pochard range has expanded greatly over the past 150 years with Italy, Greece, Switzerland and Austria all colonised since the Second World War. Notable local decreases have occurred elsewhere due to wetland draining.

About 1.5 million common pochard winter in Eastern Europe where in some years 300,000 congregate in the Danube River delta. Possibly as many as a million winter in Asia where in excess of 100,000 are drawn to the Southern Japanese wetlands.

## Controlling Stoats with 1080 Eggs

A study reported in The Department of Conservation's Rare Bits newsletter found that 1080 injected eggs may be an effective means of killing stoats. Although the study was limited by the availability of only three poisoned eggs at any one time spread over



10km, the results suggested that in a further control operation more egg tunnels could be used. To be used more widely, 1080 in eggs will need to be registered with the Pesticides Board. The study involved 20 radio-tagged stoats and wooden tunnels with video cameras to record the stoats' activity. All but two of the tagged stoats were recovered dead (one was still alive and the other not recovered), including two which died of natural causes. On video, 22 stoats (including two untagged animals) were recorded eating the eggs. No animal showed any hesitation about eating eggs they broke open. Near the end of the trial, meat was placed in the egg tunnels to attract the 6 stoats which had not made a visit, and all ate the meat before eating the poisoned eggs. Some stoats returned to the tunnel to eat another egg. But the report noted that, "...On 33% of visits an available egg was not eaten. On eight of 13 occasions the stoat did not even enter the tunnel..."

The report considers the use of traps in addition to the bait but as the number of approaches to a tunnel over the course of the study was unknown, and there was no recording of how stoats reacted to traps, there is some doubt as to whether traps would be more effective than poison. *(Adapted from Rare Bits. Department of Conservation, Number 33, June 1999.)*



*Smew, WWT Slimbridge. Photo: Graham Gurr.*



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*Sanctuary Pond, Galatea. Photo: Andre Terpstra.*

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