

Flight

ISSUE 124 - JULY 2005

Spectacular Release for Pateke

Plus

Conservationists Tour Wairio • Annual Reports
Our Dogs • Award Winners Profiled
Recipes • High Value Insects



Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc

2005 Annual General Meeting

29 - 31 July 2005

Venue and Accommodation

AIRPORT CENTRA

Cnr Kirkbridge and Ascot Roads, Mangere, Auckland

(Just down the road from the airport terminals)



Dr. W. Alan Wentz, PhD.

PROGRAMME

Friday 29 July:

4:00-6:00 p.m. Registration and pre-dinner drinks

8:00 p.m. Dinner with Guest Speaker Dr W. Alan Wentz, PhD, Memphis, Tennessee

Topic: "Wetlands and their importance to endangered waterfowl, an American perspective".

Dr Wentz has held the post of Senior Group Manager for Conservation Programs for Ducks Unlimited since 1994. President of The Wildlife Society 1992-93, current Chairman of the National Resources Council of America and a member of the board of the North American Wetlands Conservation Council, the Wildlife Habitat Council, American Wildlife Conservation Partners and the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation partners.

Saturday 30 July:

9:00 a.m. AGM

10:00 a.m. Morning Tea

10:30 a.m. Field Trip to Waatarua Park and Ayrilies owned by Beverley O'Connell, BBQ lunch at the wetlands

7:00 p.m. Drinks

7:30 p.m. Annual Dinner and Auction

Sunday 31 July:

10:00 a.m. Predator Workshop with New Zealand experts Darren Peters, DOC National Predator Officer, and Scott Theobald, DOC National Predator Dog Handler and Trainer. Darren and Scott are the experts in the latest and best predator control methods, including the training of predator-specific dogs. A display of the best equipment will be part of the presentation.

12:00 noon Disperse

You should all have received an invitation to our 31st AGM & Conference to be held in Auckland this year. There is still an opportunity for you to register if you have not done so BUT HURRY - by mailing the form - IT IS ON THE WEBPAGE AS WELL - or email your details etc to info@ducks.org.nz. We are looking forward to seeing you all and having a fun weekend as always.



wetland care
NEW ZEALAND

Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is to:
"Harness community, business and government resources to restore and develop lost wetland areas within New Zealand."

Funding

Funding for projects comes mainly from the Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust, which was established in 1991 and has underwritten wetland development projects to a significant level. Extra resources have come through fundraising and corporate sponsorships like that from Banrock Station Wines. Wetland Care New Zealand actively seeks funding from private and public sources for its work.

Partnerships

Central to Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is forming partnerships with people and organisations with similar aims. Alliances are being established with conservation groups like DOC, NZ Fish and Game, Forest and Bird and regional councils.

For further information, please contact:
William Abel - Director, Wetland Care
New Zealand, phone 04 478-4335.

Ayrilies - a Conference Highlight

Ayrilies, near Whitford, owned, developed and loved by Beverley McConnell, is a 12 acre country garden begun in 1964. Despite the size of this mature garden in Whitford, repeated plantings of certain species and the use of the same materials throughout, achieves a harmonious feel. It's a private country garden with distant views of the sea. A woodland of maples graces large ponds connected by a tumbling stream and edged in hostas, irises and other damp-loving plants. There are collections of rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias and masses of old roses and other climbers twining through trees and over pergolas. Garden seats beckon to delightful vistas with surprise corners along easy wandering paths.

There are four waterfalls and three large ponds planted with waterlilies, irises, bog plants and primulas. Swampy ground has been turned into a wetlands with a lake of 3.7 hectares. Internationally famous Irish gardener and garden writer Helen Dillon is quoted in *New Zealand House & Garden March 2002* edition as saying, "I don't know why you New Zealanders travel to the United States, the United Kingdom and Ireland to see gardens when you have one like this".

Climbing roses, clematis, wisteria and *Petra volubilis*, the Mexican sandpaper vine, soften the archways, pillars and garden structures. Beverley plants for overall visual effect - she is an artist rather than a collector, but the garden maintains a strong horticultural interest.

Insight

by Ross Cottle President

With the winter upon us and the nights closed in, one turns to thoughts of warm fires and a good read. What more could one ask for than a good glossy magazine full of great photos, articles and information.

The new subscription's notices are now out and you will, I'm sure, have noticed an increase. The small rise in subscriptions was set to cover administration production and distribution of Flight. With increasing costs over the past few years income generated by your subs has struggled to meet the outgoing expenses. The introduction of colour for photos and an improved print style has increased the cost of Flight production but the Board felt that it was an extremely important step in keeping the Ducks Unlimited members fully up to date and informed while also hopefully attracting new readers to the more upmarket style of magazine.

We have always boasted the fact that all monies raised at functions would go directly towards habitat restoration and by increasing the subscription this ensures that this will remain so and that costs for the magazine will remain under the subscription banner. This decision was made after careful consideration and we trust that members will support the improvements as a positive step for Ducks Unlimited's profile.

I look forward to meeting you all at the AGM. There has been considerable effort put in by the committee to provide you all with a great weekend so be sure to confirm your registration now if you have not already done so.

CONTENTS

2005 Conference	Page 2
Reports	Pages 4-5
Our people	Page 6
DU News	Page 7
Projects	Pages 8-9
Our dogs	Page 10
Pateke feature	Page 11
Recipes	Page 12
Flight Ecofile	Page 14

Our Mission

To deliver effective wetland restoration, development, research, education and advocacy;

While supporting the preservation of threatened waterfowl and the ethical and sustainable use of wetlands

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Contributions from members and other readers, including photographs, are welcome.

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15 August 2005 please

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FRONT COVER PHOTO

Tony Sharley of Banrock Station Wines with Zena Tei, 8, of Colville Primary School, with one of the 62 pateke released at Port Charles in May 2005. Sponsorship from Banrock Station Wines enabled the venture to take place. *Photo courtesy of Nobilo Wines Ltd.*



2005 Annual Reports

President's Report 2005

At last year's AGM in the Manawatu, our just-completed Strategic Plan was presented to the meeting. In the ensuing 12 months we have been putting the plan into action. One of the items high on the agenda was not only how best to attract new members but also to retain existing members as well. While organising the Raffle over the last three years I have been surprised by the number of members scattered widely around the country that we seldom meet. This reinforced to me the importance of our Flight magazine as the main point of contact and information. Keeping that in mind the Board has decided to upgrade the magazine using more colours and a different layout to enhance the photos and articles of interest to us all and hopefully attract some casual readers as well.

The website underwent a facelift as well and the secretary reports a greatly increased interest and a good number of "hits" being recorded.

The Plan reaffirmed DU's main goal as being in the creation and enhancement of habitat for waterfowl with the aim being to develop 10 small wetlands each year and one large project every second year. The large project has been achieved through a joint venture with DOC on a 100-hectare block of land on the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa called the Wairio Wetland.

We have a five-year management contract with DOC at the end of which we hope to have a fully functioning wetland planted in native flora and filled with waterfowl. This is the first time we have joined with a government department in a restoration project and we hope it will lead on to more similar projects in the future.

I wish to thank the Board for all their hard work over the last 12 months and look forward to working with them in the coming year.

- Ross Cottle

Operation Pateke Annual Report 2005

The Pateke Recovery Group is confident that progress is being made at the two mainland sites at Mimiwhangata and Port Charles. This is attributed to good predator control regimes. The previous releases at Port Charles are well established, with broods on the ground this year.

On Aotea/Great Barrier Island, the decline has been arrested, at best. Consideration is being given to the impact that the high population of rabbits is having. Despite increased predator control, there has only been a slight increase in numbers of pateke. It is thought that the high numbers of rabbits are removing critical elements in the food chain (clover) and provide a ready source of food for predators, the combination of both these effects, impacting on pateke survival.

The new Recovery Plan is almost complete. There is nothing radical or U-turns proposed in the new plan.

Sixty birds were raised in the captive-breeding programme, a 50% increase over previous years. New bloodlines have been successfully established within the captive-breeding stock. Thank you and congratulations to the participants in the captive-breeding programme; they have responded well to the need for more birds. New participants to the programme are in the pipeline.

In 2004/05, the Banrock Station Wines and Wetland Care New Zealand partnership contributed \$21,000 to Operation Pateke. The money was used to help fund the cost of the 60-bird release at Port Charles in May 2005. It covered the radio transmitters, vet fees and transportation costs.

Ossie Latham

(see story on Pateke at Port Charles - page 11 and cover photo)

Manawatu Chapter

The meeting place was the Ashhurst Domain where 18 DU members gathered in the rebuilt viewing platform to look over the wetland and to witness the installation of a DU partnership sign.

From there we drove up the Pohangina Valley to Gordon and Anne Pilone's property to look at the wonderful job they are doing, creating a series of ponds. A large spring supplies water to the top pond which in turn flows down through the rest. They have just built a small pond in the next phase of their plans and remembering that this was the rainy 6 March, it was full in two days so water was no problem.

Our next stop was Tim and Carol Luttrell's property, 50 metres across the road where the group wandered through native bush, in particular a stand of very impressive kahikatea, past wetland areas then on to the main wetland. Walking around this very attractive lake we arrived at something even more impressive. Tim and Carol have a museum of old farm machinery, cars, tractors and a lot of stuff I can't now remember (must be starting to show my age) and some I had never seen before.

The day concluded with a lovely late lunch at the Waterford café and we all went away with lots of enthusiasm!

If you are ever in the vicinity of these DU members' properties please make the effort of visiting because they are well worth the time.

Sporting Clay Shoot

In conjunction with Hunting & Fishing Manawatu this event took place on Sunday 13 March at Grant Barber's Himitangi property. Saturday was set-up day and the crew completed two interesting and at times challenging fields.

Sunday saw 112 shooters test their skill and some good scores posted. I would like to thank for their generosity Alpine Hunting for the venison, Craig Merritt Butchery for cutting up of said beast, Coca Cola for their trailer, Hunting & Fishing Manawatu for the prizes, the cook tent staff, the office staff, the setting-up and taking-down crew and anyone else who helped in any way.

Neil Candy
Manawatu Chapter Chairman

Wetland Care Report

It's been a busy period this quarter - we have completed Neil Candy's development in Woodville and it is filling slowly just in the way the walls need. We completed the Gladstone Vineyard wetland just in time for the extensive rains that occurred earlier in the year, but unfortunately the rains damaged part of the wall.

We have been involved with Ken Barnes on his wetland, very close to Mt Bruce - another situation where our work will be very beneficial to the adjacent area.

George Blair in Huntly has had assistance with the repair of one of his dams. He has added 25 teal boxes to this dam as well. Full reports on the individual developments will be in further Flights.

William Abel

Director, Wetland Care New Zealand

New Zealand Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust Report

The NZ Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust financial year ends on 31 December each year.

As at 31 December 2003 the Trust balance was \$292,122.01. On 31 December 2004 the value was \$316,924.21, a return of 8.49% for the year.

As indicated last year the trustees have been keeping a close eye on the fund but, with fingers crossed, decided to stay with Spicers. The result of the 12 months has vindicated that decision but it is still one under constant review.

Since the end of the financial year the Board has advanced a further \$50,000 to the Trust which is on bank deposit. That, to some extent, takes the market variations out of the overall return to the Trust, as well as currency fluctuations.

There have been no requests from the Board of Ducks Unlimited Inc for any funds during the last year.

David Smith

Chairman

2005/2006 Subscriptions

A Big Thank You to all those who have paid their subscriptions. To those of you who have received a reminder notice, please pay promptly as they were due 1 April 2005 and if not paid the next Flight will be your last.

Sandra Pipes

Membership Secretary

Whio Report 2005

Another year of breeding and releasing whio has come to an end with pairs having a rest before they start all over again. We had four successful breeders in the last season, which were Auckland Zoo, Peacock Springs, Orana Wildlife Park and Jim Campbell - among the four of them producing 19 birds. Of the 19 birds, 16 were released into Egmont National Park in two lots. The first release was of 11 birds in February and other five in March. At this time all of the released birds are still alive. This makes over 40 whio now at Egmont National Park so we are hoping for some breeding attempts this coming season.

I would like to thank all the breeders and Peacock Springs for all the work they have put into rearing and hardening of all birds for release. Auckland Zoo have had their Whio filmed from hatching to being released and will be shown on TV at a future date.

Blue Duck Technical Review

The Whio Technical Review recommended at last year's Recovery Group meeting has now been completed, the main reason for the delay being lack of money for the recovery of this species. The review team was headed by Shaun O'Connor who had visited most parts of New Zealand where whio still exist, and talked with DOC staff and managers. It soon became obvious to the team that whio are in big trouble and in the near future may become extinct in the South Island, with the North Island not far behind, if nothing is done NOW.

The Recovery Group with the DOC review team spent 3 ½ days in Wellington discussing the document which makes 54 recommendations towards saving this iconic species. This will only happen if adequate funding is granted for predator control. Because it is not possible to save whio on all rivers, sites that have good numbers as well as predator control will be the sites concentrated on.

One of the recommendations for increasing whio numbers is by captive breeding in the North Island, then releasing the young birds into rivers and catchments, which have predator control in place. But to enable this to happen, eggs or ducklings will have to be brought in to improve the quality of the captive population.

In the South Island, a different method will be used - Operation Nest Egg, so as to boost populations in the different sites. The costs for doing this will not be cheap, as females will be fitted with transmitters so their nests can be found and eggs taken before a predator finds them. But most of these sites will be where there is no predator control. As underlined above, these projects will only eventuate if adequate funding is provided.

DU needs to support this enterprise and do all we can to save this special species, our wonderful whio.

Peter Russell

Captive Management Co-ordinator.

Financial Report

Income

AGM	\$23,903
Chapter Donations	\$13,476
Membership	\$22,025
Projects	\$14,500
Other	\$16,259
Total	\$90,163

Expenditure

Administration	\$11,054
AGM	\$21,865
Flight	\$18,576
Projects	\$ 994
Donation WWT	\$50,000
Other	\$ 3,626
Total	\$106,115

Assets

Cash on hand	\$69,666
Debtors	\$11,000
Total	\$79,666

Liabilities

Pateke	\$21,000
Wairio	\$ 5,000
Wetland Care	\$ 9,500
Unpaid Accounts	\$ 5,242
GST to pay	\$ 1,375
Total	\$42,117

Please note: A full set of accounts will be available to members on request once the audit has been completed, approximately mid-August.

- Graham Gurr, Treasurer



OUR People

Howard Egan, Winner of Akura Conservation Centre Lifestyle/Small Farm Award

By now many of you will know that founding DU member Howard Egan, of Canada Flats, Carterton, became the inaugural winner of the Akura Conservation Centre Lifestyle/Small Farm Award at the ceremony of the Ballance Farm Environment Awards in April.

Howard has spent the past 14 years, following 54 years of city and international living, transforming the swampy, gorse-covered 20ha block of land at East Taratahi into a private wetland and small farm. With no farming experience, Howard came to this new venture with a lifetime's interest in things environmental. As a syndicated member of Windermere Game Conservancy at Whangamarino Swamp, a founding director of Ducks Unlimited, Howard spent some time as a Board member in the 1990s and was Chairman of both Wellington and Eketahuna Chapters of Ducks Unlimited, but not both at the same time.

As a councillor with Fish and Game and an advisor to the Ministry of Forests, it was no surprise that he threw himself passionately into the development of Canada Flats, which he named after the Canada geese he loves. He has observed them over the years with interesting results. For instance two pairs in particular return year after year to the same spot to nest and lay their eggs. One pair consistently lays about six eggs and the six healthy goslings thrive. Another pair, in its own regular annual nesting spot, lays five or six eggs, and each year, one sole gosling emerges to die days later. "Bad mothering, genetics or bad choice of nesting spot – who knows?" he muses. He notes that they all rush to Lake Wairarapa in May to spend the winter, returning in the spring to his ponds and others. *(Editor's note: during part of my early life in Canada I remember thousands of them all during the autumn in V-formation heading for Florida from Ontario - hardly the same thing!)*

Howard is working with the Greater Wellington Regional Council on his wetland maintenance and removal of willows.

His interest in fieldsports runs in tandem with his passion for the environment. Howard says he acknowledges the great help of his friend Pearl Pike who worked hard with him for over seven years planting and developing Canada Flats.

Canada Flats has become a breeding ground for tuis and bellbirds, as well as dabchick, white-faced heron, spur winged plover, pukeko, shoveler, kereru, grey teal and mallard ducks and, of course, the Canada geese. Geckos also thrive in a fenced-off totara reserve. Bellbirds, fantails, goldfinches, greywarblers – in fact almost 40 species of birds thrive on his property. Council traps are being used to reduce predators. Howard has had to be brutal about predators: cats are killed, and even pukeko are discouraged as they can feed on ducklings.

The thousands of trees planted include flax, cabbage trees, kahikatea, lacebark, kowhai, totara and titoki.

The judges of the Akura Conservation Centre Lifestyle/Small Farm Award praised Howard's "exceptional vision and commitment" and "structured long-term planning and resource management".

The prize of \$1000 worth of trees will be donated by Howard to the Wairio project at Lake Wairarapa.



Howard in his grove of Eucalyptus Nitens. He planted them for coppicing purposes but found himself loving their grace and beauty and has just let them be, beside one of his ponds.



Alan Wilks, Howard Egan and friend Pearl Pike in Howard's trophy room



Howard Egan and Bairn at Canada Flats, Carterton. winner of Akura Conservation Centre Lifestyle/Small Farm Award

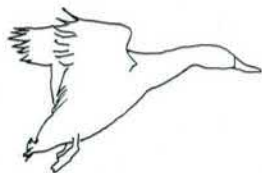
Flight Editor

Di and Alan Wilks of the Flight Editorial Support Team, write:

We were sorry to farewell our last editor Juliet Oliver as we enjoyed working with her and reckon she did a great job. But one door closes and another opens, and we welcome Gail Isaac to the position. She's an experienced editor, has a wonderful sense of humour and is a delight to work with and we look forward to many interesting issues.

As new Editor of this wonderful publication, I invite you to inundate me with stories, ideas and photos you'd like seen in Flight and send me photos with captions of your dogs for our new Our Dogs section. As I divide my time between Greytown and Wellington, please use this address:

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Welcome! to our New Members

Paul Rayner - Featherston
Robert Cuff - Palmerston North
James McKay - Masterton
Andrew Marriott - Upper Hutt
Grant Williamson - Feilding

Home is the Hunter - with the QEII Farm Forester of the Year Award

Ducks Unlimited long-time member and QEII covenanter James Hunter of Rangitoto, Waipukurau, has recently won the Hawkes Bay Farm Forester of the Year Award.

Tree planting on his 658 ha farm is a tradition started by his grandfather and father in the 1950s. In the past 10 years he has planted about 6000 willows and poplars. James has said that only 3% of lowland Central Hawkes Bay is in bush, and that this is in pockets on farms such as his. His sheep and cattle farm has a reticulated water system using troughs and fenced springs and a series of dams fenced off to protect wildlife. The birdlife on his wetlands include dabchick, bittern, grey teal, grey duck, mallard, black swan, geese, heron, pied stilt, shag species, spoonbill and scaup. He is ambiguous about the Canada geese. Eels are fished commercially every three years from a dam.



James Hunter.

The judges of the Award were impressed by the achievement of the 41ha of bush and riparian protection and the wetland enhancement work. They stated that it was a good model of what could be achieved in the Hawkes Bay by other farmers.

The Hawkes Bay Regional Council has been a key part of the protection work on the property, helping throughout with soil conservation plantings and helping with funding, says James. It is helping with possum control and rat control, as well as helping clear willows in the catchment. James expressed his gratitude to the QEII Trust and the Regional Council and "it's an important aspect of protection because it ensures that in my absence the bush remains protected, and there's no potential for rule changes".

Bachelor James, 43, told Flight he relies upon regeneration of carex and sedges along the islands and the shore edges. He includes some exotics with flax and cabbage trees, and he will be adding more natives in due course. James' father John Hunter built the first dam in 1969 in a summer dry creek bed, at a cost of \$350. The wall was rebuilt in 1994 with islands added annually, as and when diggers and bulldozers passed, as happens on farms. The cost of the diggers and bulldozers, however, was substantial and funded by the family farm.

Wetland Care assisting project in Mt Bruce area

Ken Barnes, the retired chapter chairman of the Wairarapa Chapter, is restoring a wetland close to Mt Bruce in the Wairarapa, reports William Abel, Wetland Care Director.

Wetland Care has contributed to this year's stage with advice and help to create approximately 3ha of habitat. Ken's block is a natural wetland that has become overgrown, probably due to fertiliser runoff, and is fed by permanent springs. It is in the middle of a pine plantation with no domestic neighbours.

One of its boundaries is the Ruamahunga River and this area has a permanent colony of nesting black-backed gulls. Canada geese and swan breed regularly along with parries and grey teal.

Ken is cleaning out the excess vegetation and creating open water and islands to enhance the desirability of the area to waterfowl. The area also has a significant number of kahikatea, totara and native vegetation is also being encouraged and preserved in the works. This development has a neighbouring 2ha wetland and being close to the sanctuary at Mt Bruce also has the wood pigeons, tui, etc visiting.

It is in the buffer zone for predator control and Ken treats this seriously knowing that the whole area benefits from any work done in this way. There is one more stage of mechanical work to be done next year and it is then down to ongoing planting and maintenance to finish off.

DU officials explain significance of new Wairio development in wildlife conservation

Public access and longterm commitment stressed

A Ducks Unlimited contingent at the end of April met representatives of the Conservation Board at the new Wairio Wetland restoration on the eastern shoreline of Lake Wairarapa, the important new partnership with DOC, environmental agencies and the Wairarapa community. The agreement is one of the first of its kind in New Zealand.

A group from the Department of Conservation led by Derrick Field, Area Manager DOC Wairarapa, was present. The occasion was designed to explain to Board members the ramifications of the development and its effect on local conservation.

"It's opened my eyes", said Diane Anderson, Chairman of the Conservation Board. The meeting at the development on 30 April began with an outline of the scheme (*See Flight 123 April 2005*) by DU President Ross Cottle and Board member Jim Law and Patron Jim Campbell.

They outlined the origins internationally of Ducks Unlimited and the organisation's aims and intentions in New Zealand.

Questioned by Conservation Board members on the extent of DU's responsibility for the Wairio Development, Jim Law explained that the commitment was long-term, and DU was involving other conservation interests in the life of the Wairio Wetland.

"Further groups are being included in the management future of the project," he said.

The local Conservation Board was particularly anxious about the 100-acre development's openness to the public at large. Jim Law took up this point with enthusiasm and emphasised that a key theme to the development was the very fact that it was close to the Wellington metropolitan area whose citizens, along with everybody else, would have open access to the development.

Members of the DU group outlined to the members of the local Conservation Board the context of the project in the overall endeavour of restoring to New Zealand depleted wetland resources and thus the habitat of endangered species of wildfowl.

The familiarisation event included an overall tour of the new site and its dam wall and its relationship to Lake Wairarapa.



Bill Carter and Bev Abbot (seen from back), Tony Ahipehe-Mercer, Derrick Field, Jim Law, Ross Cottle and Sonny te Maari in discussion at Wairio.



Te Arapikirangi Arthur and Helen Algar of the Wellington Conservancy



Wairio Wetlands Visit by Department of Conservation Groups

**This statement was contributed to Flight by Derrick Field, Area Manager
DOC Wairarapa, following the visit to the Wairio Wetlands in April**

Freshwater wetlands are a nationally threatened ecosystem type in New Zealand and Lake Wairarapa is a freshwater wetland consisting of a large shallow lake 18km long and 6km wide. It is a lake with a large area of shallow margin and a sizeable complex of wetlands of varying size, depth and habitat types mainly along its eastern edge.

These wetlands are traditional areas for food gathering by Maori and have important cultural, recreational and ecological qualities. Lake Wairarapa contains wetlands that are regionally and nationally important as wader bird habitat.

Lake Wairarapa supports plant communities comprising up to 50 different species, some of which are nationally endangered. The lakeshore is a diverse and dynamic habitat for both plants and animals with ever-changing channels and ponds.

The Wairio Block is part of the Department of Conservation-managed Lake Wairarapa Wetland Stewardship. The Wetland Stewardship includes the lake bed and a wetland complex that includes the Donald, Kumenga and Wairio Blocks.

The 186ha Wairio Block is found on the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa and comprises mud flats with native turf plant communities, low lying wetlands. The eastern lake shore is an important wader bird feeding habitat as waders need open areas with a mixture of mudflats and shallow water.

The Department of Conservation and Ducks Unlimited have agreed to a five-year restoration plan that aims to restore the Wairio Block wetland. The restoration work, estimated to cost around

\$130,000, has begun with the establishment of stopbanks surrounding the original wetland.

The project's goals are to recreate some of the natural habitat lost through drainage, grazing and invasion from weeds and pests. The Wairio Block is currently dominated by tall fescue, alders and crack willows.

DOC Wairarapa Area ranger Garry Foster believes that the partnership project will achieve a large gain for the ecology of this site by creating more habitat for native species and reducing pressure on the natural values by controlling weeds.

"This is a fantastic first step for the community to become involved in achieving tangible conservation outcomes."

Some of the gathering at Wairio Wetlands pictured below:

Jim Campbell, Patron of Ducks Unlimited; Jeff Flavell of DOC; Jim Law, Board Member of DU, (behind him see only the gumboots of DU President Ross Cottle); Kaumatua Sonny te Maari; Bill Carter of Wellington Conservancy; your Editor; Derrick Field of DOC; Bev Abbott and Robert Logan of the Wellington Conservation Board; Allan Ross of DOC, Maggy Wassilieff, Botanist; Te Akaipikirangi Arthur of Wellington Regional Council; Helen Algar, Wellington Conservation Board; Diane Anderson, Chairperson, Wellington Conservation Board; Geoff Doring of the same Board and various others; Garry Foster of DOC; Ray Ahipene-Mercer of the WRC and Tony Silbery of DOC.



Our Dogs

Avian Aversion Dog Training promotes bird safety

Hunters in the Opotiki area will have an opportunity to get free avian avoidance training for their hunting dogs thanks to a Department of Conservation (DOC) initiative. Two courses funded by DOC were offered by Approved Avian Aversion Dog Trainer/Certifier Tiki Hutching in April. Dogs on the courses receive avian aversion training, a behaviour assessment, and if they reach the appropriate standard will be certified as being Bird Safe.

The need for Bird Safe Certification is a new requirement for hunters in the East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservancy who wish to take dogs into any Scenic Reserve, Conservation or Forest Park, named Conservation Area or Te Urewera National Park, according to DOC Community Relations Manager Brett Butland.

"In recent years there has been an increase in kiwi deaths caused by dogs. In the East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservancy we are lucky enough to have other rare native species such as weka and blue duck but these, too, are vulnerable to dog attack."

In response to this threat, DOC is reinforcing that apart from a couple of exceptions, no dogs may be taken into public conservation areas in the East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservancy.

"The exceptions are guide dogs, dogs used for special activities such as search and rescue or conservation management and hunting dogs which are certified as being Bird Safe and for which a permit has been obtained. All other dogs are banned," Mr Butland said.

To be certified as Bird Safe, a dog will be required to have successfully attended avian avoidance training, met a minimum behaviour standard and be identifiable with a tattoo or freeze brand or local authority microchip. All pig hunters and deer stalkers using a dog and wishing to hunt on public conservation land must obtain a permit to

hunt with dogs as well as a permit to hunt.

Permits are available from DOC offices in the East Coast Hawke's Bay Conservancy

Hunters who wish to take advantage of the free training courses need to book a place as numbers are limited to 30 dogs per day. Bookings can be made at the Opotiki Area Office, phone (07) 315 1001. A brochure detailing the new hunting dog requirements in the East Coast Conservancy can be obtained from local DOC offices and the information is also available from the DOC website: www.doc.govt.nz.

MY STORY - Jess

I'm a yellow labrador called Jess and nearly two-and-a-half. My first 18 months weren't much fun; I had three owners and was tied up most of the time and the last chap was very kind but realised after three weeks he couldn't give me a life and last August he rang the SPCA looking for a good home.

In the meantime, my new owners had been in touch with them because they'd just had to put down their much loved old yellow lab Purdey and the whole thing fell into place and, boy, did I land on my feet!



I'd never been in a house before: it was paws on the bench, I jumped on the beds and widdled everywhere but they were very patient and I learned quickly. I hadn't seen a fire before but soon found that's a good place to lie on a cold day.

The old codger who looks after me, and thinks he's the boss, takes me for a run morning and night no matter what the weather and he takes me for swims in the river which I love. I get groomed every day, good tucker, but not enough, of course, because I'm a labrador. I have to have a nap with him on the bed in the afternoon which is a bit of a pain and they make me sleep in a cosy dog-bed in their bedroom. I run free all the time and they have an orchard where I chase rabbits so I'm in heaven and I didn't have to die.

I nearly did, though, a couple of months ago. I got into some possum baits next door, stuff called Pestoff which they say is an anti-coagulant and there is an antidote if taken immediately, but the boss didn't know and the stuff didn't seem to have any effect but three days later I was a very sick dog, it took two blood transfusions and was touch and go but fortunately, unlike my old codger, I have youth and clean living on my side!

I've bounced back and I'm a lucky, happy, contented dog - just wish I could stop wagging my tail, it's a bit tiring.

Yawn, Jess.

TECHNOLOGY - A DOG'S WORST FRIEND - Cassie's story

The Wonder Duck decoy was a revelation when it first appeared in the country. "Have to get one of these," was my mate's first thought. "The ducks won't be able to resist". With a fair dose of scepticism and mirth we went along with it. First year out it appeared to show promise but with the on/off switch on the decoy itself, and no one prepared to row back and forth to turn the marvel of decoy technology on and off it wound itself down flapping incessantly, not to mention forlornly, among a group of plastics that showed no interest in the newcomer.

"I know," my mate said. "It needs a remote switch!" Sound idea, so the next opening arrives with Wonder Duck dragging a substantial length of wire and the switch gear carefully moved to the end of the wire works darn well is the prognosis. The day before the opening Wonder Duck is painstakingly positioned, the exact height off the water, post well secured, cable hand fed on the vegetation, invisible from the sky just below the water level. The switch is secured in the maimai, new battery, all tests proved perfection. There it is, five metres away operating efficiently to the switch command.

They won't stand a chance in the morning now, eh!

05.30: slightly cold, a clear day obviously coming though, the anticipated row out to the maimai and Wonder Duck, tests conducted again, marvellous again the result.

06.30: the switch is pushed, Wonder Duck comes to life, bit dark though, wings not all that obvious. We wait another 10 minutes, birds in the air, turning towards Wonder Duck, technology at its best, in they come, shots ring out, the first bird of the year falls dead, very close to its plastic moving Judas.

Cassie is off like a rocket, this is her best moment, a year of having to shake hands with the girls in her house and being spoken to in sickly tones forgotten, this is what life's about, outside, retrieving, first pickup of the season, boy isn't life great!

A 50 metre swim, teeth shining through the grin, near to the maimai now, scenting for the bird, still a bit dark to see. Can't find it easily, 25 kg of thrashing eager labrador immediately turns the cable to Wonder Duck into spaghetti, the switch is ripped from the maimai and an agonised cry comes from the shooter. The resultant bad language and agitated yelling is not what Cassie expected and is certainly not what she gets from home. It gets louder and the tone more shrill.

Cassie hesitates. "If that's how you feel, get your own bloody duck!"

A 50 metre swim back and she is ready to help another more grateful shooter. The day dawns its usual beautiful opening morning but was there a black cloud over a certain maimai till we went back for lunch?

"Hah! thought of that possibility eh?" said my mate.

Technology at its best.

William Abel May 2005



Cassie in her special hunting collar

Banrock Station flies sixty-two Pateke from the South Island to Coromandel

Sixty-two pateke (brown teal), the rarest waterfowl in New Zealand, were flown into the tiny Northern Coromandel settlement of Port Charles in late May in the third of 5 releases.

They arrived at the release site courtesy of Banrock Station Wines who sponsored \$21,000 towards this year's travel, quarantine and transmitter fees.

Tony Sharley, Manager of Banrock Station Wine and Wetland Centre, said that "Banrock contribute a percentage of each bottle of their wines sold throughout the world, to wetland care, but being part of this release gives a greater appreciation of the bigger picture – the forging of relationships between community, environmental groups and sponsorship initiatives".

The local human population grew to about 120, as community members, school children, tangata whenua, and people from Hamilton, Great Barrier Island, Auckland, Wairarapa and Australia gathered to welcome the birds and take part in the release. Our own Ossie Latham of course was there.

Rebekah Caldwell, DOC pateke monitor since 2004, assisted in preparing the pateke for the journey north and escorted the birds from Peacock Springs in Christchurch (a water fowl quarantine and breeding centre) to their new home in Port Charles.

A combination of factors makes Port Charles an ideal place to establish a breeding population of pateke. Community is high on the list. Local people are keen advocates for the project. Landowners are happy for duck feeders to be installed on the stream bank, to supply pateke with kibbled maize until they learn to fend for themselves, and for predator traps to be placed to protect the birds.

Residents are actively involved in predator control and monitoring the birds. Before being ready for the journey a health check is done and transmitters and bands put on the pateke so their progress can be monitored when they are released into the wild.

The 62 pateke released this year will join the small wild population and 50 pateke from two previous releases in the area. All the released birds are captive-bred and have been supplied by breeders from all around New Zealand.

(edited from DOC press release May 2005)



Rebekah Caldwell, DOC pateke monitor, leads the way with the boxes of pateke from the 'copter



Susan Tate, contract Brand Manager Nobilo Wine Group for imported brands, welcomes a newcomer



Tony Sharley of Banrock Station Wines presents One Big Sponsorship Cheque for \$21,000 for the pateke release.

Home and Hosed

High Value Insects

This article by Organics freelance writer Hannah Zwartz has been reproduced and abridged with her kind permission – Ed.

There are two lakes in New Zealand named Rotoiti – the South Island one surrounded by virgin forests has clean, clear water. The North Island one is surrounded by farmland and baches and the water is dangerously murky.

In summer, algal blooms turn it milky green, swimming is not advisable and some people develop rashes from the water. The algal blooms are caused by surplus nitrates in the water, some seeping from septic tanks, but most coming from dairy and sheep farms within the lake's catchment area. When animals have free access to streams and rivers, their manure pollutes the water. And when too much chemical fertiliser is applied to the land, the excess runs off into rivers and lakes. Our fertiliser use has increased exponentially since the 1950s. Half of all the commercial fertiliser ever produced has been applied since 1984.

Around northern Lake Rotoiti, where Government has allocated funds towards cleaning up both Lake Taupo and the Rotorua lakes, measures are being taken to fence off streams from stock and plant these riparian areas with reeds and flaxes to filter the water. But this is not considered enough to repair the damage in a hurry.

Modern, high-input farming methods have greatly increased farm yields, but social and environmental costs have been high. Short-to-medium-term efficiencies have harmed long-term productivity. Sustainability means using practices like intercropping, mulching, spreading manures, minimising ploughing, keeping land fallow, planting trees and integrating crops and livestock. Soil should be seen as a living entity, rather than simply a medium to hold the roots of crops while fertilisers are pumped at them.

Soil organisms and beneficial insects are seen as high-value mini-livestock.

Did you know about the bird-catching tree?

The parapara tree, *Pisonia brunoniana* is called the "bird-catching tree" as its sticky pods attract insects which are predated upon by small birds such as silvereyes, grey warblers and fantails. In one instance a morepork had to be rescued. In its December 2004 issue of "Kokako", the bulletin of the Wildlife Society of the New Zealand Veterinary Association, Volume 11, No 2, examples were given of rescuing and cleaning birds, found mainly in the Kermadec Islands, the Three Kings Islands and occasionally along the northeastern coast of the North Island and on some offshore and outlying islands, as far south as East Cape. Only six birds in one year have been officially recorded, but it is an interesting phenomenon. Detergent is the best way of removing the sticky residue.

It is recommended that owners of a parapara bush or tree check for sticky seedpods in winter and clip them off, wrapping them and disposing of them. Any bird found in a sticky state can be taken to a veterinarian.

Wildfowl as Food

This recipe is reproduced with apologies to those whose sensibilities will be touched....

Roast Canada Goose

Recipe:

Soak goose overnight, adding 1/3 cup salt and 3 tbsp baking soda. Dry well and lightly season cavity with salt and pepper. Fill cavity with your favorite stuffing. If you are stuck, the supermarkets have various stuffings.

Brush goose with a mixture of olive oil and butter, then season with salt and ground pepper and a mixture of garlic and onion powder. Cook goose for approximately 90 minutes (unstuffed or twice as long if stuffed) at 400F or 200C, in a very tight roasting covered dish containing at least 2 1/2 cm of water. This will steam-roast the bird (the big secret) and it is important to not remove the cover during this time. Remove the cover, baste the bird and then "brown" it uncovered for approximately 20-30 minutes. The drippings make an excellent gravy.

Note:

The above recipe refers to a goose that would dress out at approximately 3kg.

These recipes are from Ducks Unlimited in the United States and look easy but tasty, the best kind of recipe.

Great Grilled Duck

8 duck breast fillets

2 tablespoons finely minced fresh rosemary leaves

1 tablespoon finely minced fresh thyme

2 large cloves of garlic finely minced

fresh ground black pepper

Soak duck breasts in a brine solution overnight. Remove breasts and rinse, then grind fresh black pepper over both sides of the duck. Add extra pepper if you prefer your duck spicy. Next, rub the minced spices thoroughly over both sides of the breasts and let the duck sit for an hour. Grill to desired doneness, medium-rare for many. Slice the duck breasts into thin strips across the grain and serve with a rice or potato side dish. A hearty red wine goes well with the duck. (Banrock, of course!)

Shanghai Duck

1 duck

1 cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons sherry

1/4 cup sugar

1 tsp ginger

Pinch each of anise and cloves

4 spring onions, cut into three

Wash duck, pat dry inside and out. Place breast side down in a small baking dish. Mix remaining ingredients in bowl, pour over duck. Bake, covered, 350 or 170C for 40 minutes. Turn breast side up. Bake, covered for another 25 minutes. Increase temperature to 400 or 200C, and bake uncovered for 15 minutes. Remove duck, skim gravy and remove spring onions. Serve with rice.



Ducks Unlimited to the Rescue: Result Otaki Wetlands

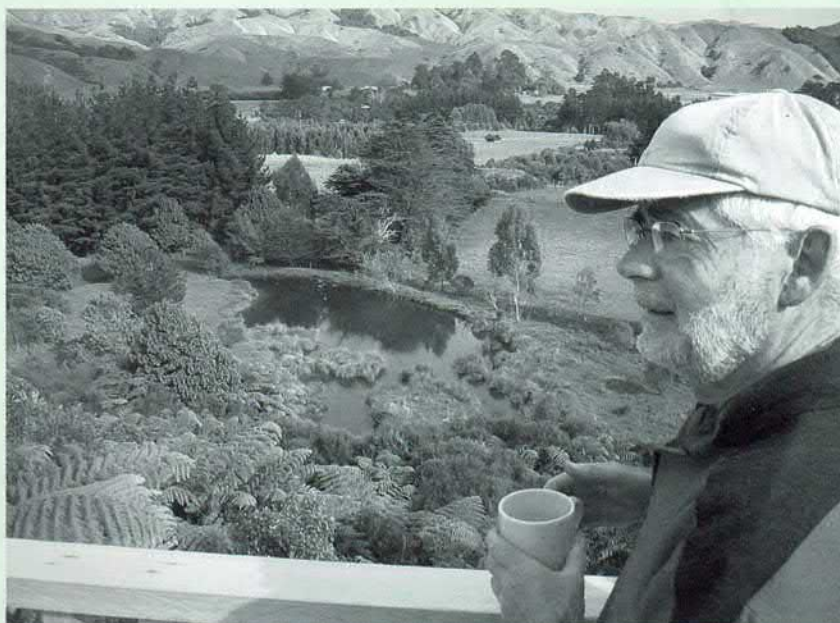
When Otaki Forks resident Peter Quinn decided he could improve the use of some marsh land on his estate, he turned to Ducks Unlimited.

"It was swamp. I had lived here for several years, and it was time, I felt, to do something useful with it," said the Wellington lawyer who had already landscaped much of his extensive property on the upper level of his plateau over the past 15 years.

On an impulse, and on advice, he got in touch with Ducks Unlimited's Brendan Coe who put him in touch with Les Gibson, an earthmoving specialist with a long association with Ducks Unlimited.

"In a day and a half Les had turned the swamp into a wetlands reserve," recalls Mr Quinn enthusiastically. He particularly liked such touches as using excavated spoil for making ornamental islands.

"You knew Les knew what he was doing. He didn't put in a liner - and it's never needed one." This was just over a decade ago.



Peter Quinn on the lookout platform he had built to admire his new wetland area.

Altogether a two and a half acre wetland reserve was created at the foot of Mr Quinn's escarpment which looks to Otaki town and the sea.

"I've seen as many as 140 ducks on the reserve," comments Mr Quinn, "among them mallards, paradise, a few shags, and quite a few domestic ducks that have crept on from neighbouring properties."

Bumper Season for New Zealand Dotterel

Despite indications from a national survey of New Zealand dotterel late last year that the species is declining nationally, Tauranga has had a bumper season. Thirty chicks were fledged from Matakana Island itself with a record 43 breeding pairs residing on the island.

"We are delighted with the number of chicks this year," said monitoring and education officer Gill Palmer. "The final result is excellent considering this summer's large swells and extreme high tides washed over the nesting areas claiming 72 eggs. This resulted in a loss of almost 50% of the eggs on Matakana Island, much higher than previous years."

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has been running a protection programme for 13 years on Matakana Island which is one of the strongest breeding sites in the country.

New Zealand dotterel are not migratory so they can be seen around the coastal Bay of Plenty over the winter.

Local counts done over this summer have shown that New Zealand dotterel numbers have doubled on the Western Bay of Plenty mainland in the last eight years with pairs of birds nesting in a number of new locations. Unfortunately none of these mainland pairs have managed to breed successfully due to pests and disturbance which enforces the benefits of the protection programme on Matakana Island. (abridged from DOC press release)



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"Dirty Dairying is alive and well"

- Fish and Game New Zealand reports

Despite the TV ad campaign by the dairy industry saying that it wants to be loved and appreciated dirty dairying is alive and well, Fish and Game New Zealand reported in April.

"Fifty seven percent of dairy farmers taken in a recent sample in one of New Zealand's most important dairying regions – the Waikato – have been found flouting rules regarding the spreading of effluent on land according to the local regional council," says Bryce Johnson, Director of Fish and Game New Zealand.

The Environment Waikato audit also found that 16 % of farmers were seriously non-compliant. This finding when extrapolated across the whole of the Waikato will mean that 720 of the 4500 Waikato dairy farms are seriously non-compliant. According to reports, Environment Waikato is only prosecuting two or three dairy farmers a month, meaning that it would take 20 years to prosecute all offenders.

"This finding makes a farce of the 'Dairying and Clean Streams Accord'," says Mr Johnson.

"It is a clear case of failure by this Regional Council to protect the environment. It is a failure of the dairy industry to clean up its act.

Instead of wasting money on expensive TV ad campaigns, and running public relations events to crow about their alleged success with the 'Dairying and Clean Streams Accord', they should be spending money on stopping their poisoning of the environment with nitrate and bugs.

"This appalling result shows that the soft-peddling approach of regional councils and dairy industry's apologists, Federated Farmers, of using education with farmers 'leading to voluntary change' doesn't work. It appears that some dairy farmers are still slow learners.

"Regional councils need to be taken to task for their failure in many cases to deal to the problem, and the dairy industry as well.

"If anyone doesn't think there is a problem I suggest they read the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment's seminal report 'Growing for Good' released in November which irrefutably demonstrates the effect nitrate poisoning is having on our environment.

"The rest of New Zealand have a right to expect that a public asset - natural water - is clean and unpolluted and not abused by one commercial group who are allowed to get away with pollution by lax monitoring agencies."

For more information:

Bryce Johnson (04) 499 4767, 021 397 897

Graham Ford (04) 499 4767, 04 3844 275

Two NZ bird species among world's most endangered

Two New Zealand bird species have been included on an international list of birds threatened with extinction

Environmental group BirdLife International said at its annual meeting in Johannesburg in June that New Zealand's orange-fronted parakeet, and the yellowhead, or mohua, had joined a list of 1212 of the planet's bird species facing extinction as humans venture further into their habitats and introduce alien predators.



Orange-fronted parakeet

In Wellington, Forest and Bird spokesman Geoff Keey confirmed that the orange-fronted parakeet has been the subject of a Conservation Department bid to build its numbers up but "one bad year could finish them off completely."

Meanwhile the mohua was sometimes disappearing from afforested valleys completely but in other instances its numbers might be recovering, he said.

Both birds are found mostly in South Island beech forests and were vulnerable to predators if the beech had a good fruiting season and predator numbers increased as a result of an ample diet.

In some cases both species were threatened in forests where there had been extensive use of 1080 poison to control predators.

Mr Keey said 1080 was a vital tool to protect these birds.

BirdLife, a global alliance of conservation groups, said in its annual assessment of the feathered fauna that the total number of world

bird species considered to be threatened with extinction was now 1212.

It said 179 species were categorised as critically endangered, the highest level of threat. They include the Azores bullfinch, one of Europe's rarest songbirds that has fewer than 300 left.

"Two of New Zealand's species have moved closer to joining five others that are extinct there, largely because of introduced rat population explosions in 1999 and 2000," the group said.

These resulted in the loss of two populations of yellowhead and almost wiped out the orange-fronted parakeet, reducing its numbers to tens.

Habitat destruction and the introduction of alien predators are among the biggest threats to bird populations globally.

"One in five bird species on the planet now faces a risk in the short or medium-term of joining the dodo, great auk and 129 other species that we know have become extinct since 1500," BirdLife said.



Yellowhead, or mohua.

Snipe take a step closer to Mainland

Thirty snipe/tutukiwi took a crucial step closer to the Mainland in April when they were successfully transferred by a Department of Conservation team from the Snares to Putauhinu Island. The birds were welcomed to the island by the local muttonbirders led by Jane Davis and Rongo Spencer, who have both muttonbirded on Putauhinu for over 50 years.

"This is a great day for the island and for conservation, with another species of bird being returned to their rightful home," said Mrs Davis. "The island has flourished since the rats were removed and having the snipe will top that off."

Snipe are a small wading bird, just slightly larger than a blackbird. Their Maori name of tutukiwi gives an indication of how they look - with their stout legs and long bill making them appear as a mini kiwi. Snipe were once widespread around the New Zealand mainland and offshore islands, but rapidly disappeared as rats and other introduced predators invaded their sanctuaries.

"If disturbed they would rather use their legs and run away than fly!" said DOC Programme Manager of Outlying Islands Pete McClelland. "Unfortunately this made them a tasty meal choice for hungry, introduced, predatory mammals, but it also makes them an interesting part of New Zealand's fauna."

The snipe has a distinctive courtship display. At night, males dive vertically from considerable heights. Their tails vibrate and make a sound like a bird many times their size. This noise led to the stories of the hakawai, a huge mythical bird that swooped down on bad children, not unlike the "bogey man" used by many parents to get their children to bed even today! While Snares snipe have never been recorded as making the hakawai noise, the team found strong evidence that they do in fact carry out the special courtship flight, and that it was probably a case of no one being on the island at the right time to hear it.

"Rongo can remember hearing hakawai and seeing snipe on Taukihepa (Big South Cape Island - off the southern end of Stewart Island) so it is fitting that the first place they will return to is nearby Putauhinu Island," said Mrs Davies.

The last population of Stewart Island snipe on Taukihepa became extinct in the 1960s after ship rats made it to the island. Pacific rats/kiore were on Putauhinu but were eradicated by DOC and the muttonbirders in 1996, allowing the islands existing wildlife including insects, lizards and birds including the endangered saddleback to flourish, and other species which had been wiped out by the rats, such as fernbirds and robin to be reintroduced.

"This is a big day for snipe conservation as it brings them back closer to the mainland and restores their role in a muttonbird island ecosystem," said Colin Miskelly, who co-led the trip and has worked on snipe for over 20 years. The transfer has also allowed development of catching and transfer techniques that can be used on other rarer snipe, such as the recently discovered and critically endangered Campbell Island snipe. These birds were only discovered in 1997, but there was encouraging news just last month that at least one pair has flown from their tiny island refuge to the main Campbell Island and has bred there."

"The next step for snipe is to eradicate the rats from Taukihepa next year" said Pete McClelland. "Hopefully this will allow us to try and reintroduce the snipe along with many other species, but the presence of weka, also introduced to the island but now an important taonga to the muttonbirders, may stop them establishing." Other sites, including Fiordland islands which have been cleared of introduced predators, will also be considered as future homes for this species once the Putauhinu population has built up to the level where it can be cropped. This project could not have been carried out without the help and support of Colin Hopkins and his boat the Aurora, which transported the catching team and the birds, South West Helicopters who sponsored the transfer and the National Parks and Conservation Foundation which contributed financially.

"The hakawai has not been heard on the muttonbird islands since the snipe disappeared 40 years ago," said Mrs Davies. "We hope that with the return of the snipe, the hakawai will also reappear."

For more information please contact Pete McClelland at the Department of Conservation, Tel: (03) 214 7525; Cell phone: 027 696 3895.

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