

Flight



ISSUE 125 - OCTOBER 2005

**Wetlands Destruction Blamed for
Global Catastrophes**

Second Release of Campbell Island Teal

**Contractual Work Central to Australian
Wetlands Cultivation**

New Members

Otago Regional Assistance

Our Dogs · AGM · Brown Teal Roundup

Directors Meet

Lifetime Achievement Award



List of Projects

This is a list of the projects Wetland Care and Ducks Unlimited are involved in at present:

Howard Egan, Wairarapa
Neil and Julie Candy, Woodville
Gladstone Vineyard, Wairarapa
Matt Wyeth, Wairarapa
Ken Barnes, Wairarapa
Graeme Berry, Raetihi
Turoa Lodge, Ohakune
George Blair, Huntly
Ian Moffatt, Wairarapa
Wairio Wetlands, Lake Wairarapa
and the Banrock projects which
Ossie Lathem is dealing with



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.



Ken Cook receives Lifetime Achievement Award

At the 2005 AGM held in Auckland in July, Ken Cook of Palmerston North was presented with the Ducks Unlimited Lifetime Achievement Award for a lifetime of service to DU, first at chapter level, then as a member of the board and currently as a trustee on the Waterfowl and Wetland Trust.

He is pictured on the front cover with his wife Jan, receiving the Award from President Ross Cottle in July. Some months ago, Jan was presented with the challenging task of keeping the presentation of the trophy a secret from her husband and, more importantly, persuading him to attend the AGM, which he had been reluctant to do. Thanks to some clever negotiating with grandchildren in Tauranga, and pleading the need for a little holiday, Jan won Ken over and off they went. Little did Ken suspect what was in store for him.

Thank you to our Sponsors



Carpet Court
YOU'LL LOVE THE LOOK



Insight

by Ross Cottle President

The AGM in Auckland has come and gone and a great success it was. I was delighted to meet a large number of first-time attendees and hope to renew acquaintance with them in the future.

While speaking to various people not only at the AGM but at a Conservation Week meeting held in Masterton in August, it has become apparent to me that Conservation is having a resurgence. There was a large cross-section of Wetland, Forest and Bird and tree planters and propagators all heading in the same general direction trying to re-create or enhance what is left of our natural areas. Government departments as well as local government are all becoming pro-active in encouraging conservation groups and individuals in endeavours with both advice and, in some cases, money. So while the going is good and conservationism is fashionable let us all get out there and do as much as possible.



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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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Directors and Colleagues meet in May

Photo on front cover shows from left to right: Patron Jim Campbell, Graham Gurr, Di Pritt, David Johnston, David Smith and Rachael Mitchell on the bike, Leader Ross Cottle, Graeme Berry, Ossie Latham, Chairman Neil Candy and John Dermer. They were on their trip around Mangaone during the May 2005 board meeting.



Contractual Work a Central Feature of Australian Wetlands Movement

Australia continues to have lessons for New Zealand in the matter of using specialist external organisations in comprehensive wetlands care. This especially applies to the application of WetlandCare Australia and its resources to improving national wetlands on project schemes both large and small.

WetlandCare Australia (WCA) has forged new partnerships in recent times, at the local, regional, and national level, and it is these that help new wetland projects. With a long history of wetland operations (since 1991), WCA has a strong network of supporters and advisors, and this continues to develop.

An important scheme is to further develop their volunteer programme to cater for the continuing demand to work for wetlands. Head office is in northern New South Wales, and using standard technology members can easily keep in touch.

An example of a project is the one funded by the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (NRCMA). The Wetland Assessment and Prioritisation project used available spatial data to assess the condition (conservation values and impacts) on priority freshwater wetland complexes at Cobaki, Cudgen, Belongil, Newrybar, and Tuckean and Bungawalbin in northern NSW. Wetland condition was also assessed in the field to calibrate the desktop assessment.

WCA is providing a key technical role to Conservation Volunteers Australia in delivering the \$2m Coastal Wetland protection programme which is funded by the Department of Environment and Heritage, Canberra. Note also in this context Fish Unlimited's scheme in which WCA is also closely involved. It is a pointer to a possible route for New Zealand to take.

Funded under the Federal Government Sustainable Regions Programme, the project was designed to improve the health and extent of fish habitat (target 130ha) in both estuarine and freshwater reaches of the Richmond, Brunswick and Tweed River catchments in northern NSW.

A further aim, which proved to be a serious challenge, was to make this project self sustaining through long term sponsorship from local industries. Over the 18-month start-up period, the Fish Unlimited (FU) project has successfully implemented one Stewardship Agreement and nine on-ground projects covering a total of 151ha of fish habitat.

Still another area of interest for New Zealand observers will be the way in which Wetlandcare work dovetails into local bodies. In 2004, Greater Taree City Council (central coast area, NSW) purchased 460ha of land

containing extensive wetlands that were impacted, in part, by acid sulfate soils and agricultural drainage, and which were previously identified as needing restoration. Some high conservation value wetlands also occur on the property, which also has significant aboriginal cultural value.

Council commissioned WCA to develop a management strategy and to explore the potential to turn the property into a wetland and biodiversity education and interpretive facility.

A continuing preoccupation in Australia, as it is here, remains grazing and riparian management trials in the Burdekin area of north Queensland. Here WCA monitoring is expected to continue for another year. The trials are investigating the impacts of grazing regimes and stock type (cattle, goats, horses), and the inter-relationship with fire regimes, weed control, and to a lesser extent, water quality.

Indeed, New Zealand observers might be forgiven for envying the close contractual relationship that exists across the Tasman between WCA and the whole realm of state agencies.

One recent three-year project is funded by NSW Environmental Trust, and work commenced in January 2004. WCA is providing contract services to the Bungawalbin Catchment Management Group to deliver this project.

WetlandCare assists farmers with on-ground riparian assessments, planning, and restoration. Actions include fencing and extensive weed control.

Similarly, some generous endowments are worth noting.

The Myer Foundation funds Wetlandcare Australia in developing management plans, with farmers, to improve creek water quality by decreasing black water events and the negative effects of the oxidation of potential acid sulfate soils.

Detailed elevation surveying, an essential part of hydrological assessment, has determined the area to be "dished" in the middle with drains artificially lowering the water table.

One scheme under evaluation is that drains could be potentially weired to high tide level, with the approval of affected landowners, and effectively contain up to 80% of current acidic discharges.

Community-based programmes are still

another element trans-Tasman worth taking a closer look at.

WetlandCare Australia recently completed the community-based programme of Fencing Incentives, funded by the Northern Rivers CMB, to enhance or conserve identified aquatic and marine ecosystems.

The project was successful in promoting and directing landholders to the various options for funding and management assistance. Ten individual management plans were negotiated separately with all landholders affected by the plans and other stakeholders involved.

The contractual aspect, though, for many, will be the most interesting area of funding.

For example, WCA were contracted by East Ballina Landcare to assess the East Ballina wetlands and to teach the Landcare Group and general community about wetland health and assessment. It involved six wetland assessment tours and an activity day with the local schools.

Note also the Coff's Harbour Scheme. The four lagoons at Sapphire Beach, near Coff's Harbour, are central to the Crystal Waters Landcare Group. They were successful in receiving funding from the NSW State Wetland Action Committee for planning purposes, and contracted WCA to develop a management plan. The lagoons were impacted by urban pressures, weeds, and upper catchment sediment. Alan Cibilic completed the plan which provides direction for future actions. Again WCA was commissioned by DEC to undertake fish surveys which were completed by WCA.

The lesson is that the New Zealand wetlands movement must seek to point out at every opportunity outside specialist skills which can be applied in association with the main state effort.



Our Dogs

Bryn's story

G'day, I'm Bryn and that's me with Chip on my right who's one of my many youngsters. I'm getting a bit long in the tooth, so long in fact that before duck-shooting I could hardly walk and my owner took me to the vet who put me on shark-fin and mussel pills and they did wonders and I worked like a two year-old. The vet was so impressed he took some himself and reckoned if he burped it would clear a crowded room!

I've always felt I deserved some sort of honour for my services to the labrador bitches of NZ and also for my community service; I've retrieved hundreds of ducks which would have been wasted and I've cleaned up heaps of edible rubbish over the years.

One of the most rewarding things I've done is giving some of my blood to help save the life of young Jess (see last issue).

It's been a good life, I've been well looked after by my owners and when the time comes I reckon I should get a good spot in the big kennel in the sky.

Yours, Bryn.



Sam's Story

Hi, My name is Sam – I am a black labrador and I am at a time in life where it is rude to ask a lady how old she is. My dad, David Smith, is a keen hunter and takes me out as often as possible on hunting expeditions. With this year's gamebird season drawing to a close, we headed to Rotorua to stay with some friends for a day's pheasant hunting.

I like these friends; they have a big farm with lots of space but rather a lot of dogs. I met Cassie's mum (see Flight 124) and nephews, Bacci and Murphy, but tried to avoid the rest of the nine dogs as they were only working dogs, not well-bred hunting dogs like us.

While David was put to work docking lambs on the Saturday, I had a nice bask in the sun and quality time out. Sunday morning arrived clear and sunny and very warm for the end of August, and off we headed to the pheasant hunting grounds. We were following our Rotorua friends; their dogs travel on the back of the ute, tied on, but hanging excitedly over the side.

When we arrived at our destination we first set out through some pine trees that were twice as tall as David, and starting to be rather overgrown with gorse. I could get around far easier than him, though, and between us dogs we flushed up a couple of good cock birds but the hunters, blaming trees blocking their vision, failed to down them. At the end of the drive a couple of peacocks flew up and were brought down successfully, however these were a bit too heavy for us dogs to carry and we sent one of the humans over the fence and down the hill to retrieve them!

Most of the rest of the hunting was through sprayed-off gorse gullies. Almost all of the cock pheasants seemed to have decided their breeding territories and were pretty spread out. However, at one point we flushed about a dozen all from one spot, but they cunningly disappeared round behind us and on to the neighbour's. We did manage to bag three nice cock birds though, David shot one of these as it crossed the gully in front of him. However, I was most disappointed at the end of the walk up as I flushed a beautiful cock bird right between David and Rachael and although shots ricocheted down the gully, the bird flew on unscathed!

DOC warns of 1080 risk to dogs

Dogs should be kept out of the Tauherenikau and Waiohine valleys in the eastern Taranaki Forest Park for the next six months to avoid the risk of 1080 poisoning, according to a statement made recently by DOC.

The Department of Conservation carried out an aerial possum control operation over the 11,000 hectare area in August to protect native flora and fauna.

Wairarapa Area Manager Derrick Field said the presence of toxic baits and poisoned carcasses in the treated area could endanger the lives of dogs. While baits break down quickly after rain and become non-toxic, possum carcasses will take up to six months to decompose. Dog owners are warned to keep their dogs at home until the area is declared safe by the department.

"There is no risk to people visiting the treated area providing they do not eat or handle the bait," Mr Field said.

"But we want to make sure that hunters and trappers understand the risk of taking dogs into an area where 1080 has been laid. Dogs are extremely susceptible to 1080 poisoning, often by scavenging on poisoned carcasses."

People should also not allow children to wander unsupervised in the area. And they should not take animals from the area for eating.

Warning signs have been erected at entry points into the park and on tracks and in huts leading to the treated area.



I will have to tell you a little secret to finish with, though. As we were driving back across the paddock, a magpie flew up and landed just over the next brow. David leaped off, dropped two shells into his gun and crept, commando-style, over the brow, with me hot on his tail. We popped our heads over the ridge in unison, up came the gun and click. Misfire? No. Empty shells in the pocket, one of which had ended up in the bottom barrel. Bugger! Magpie lives to fight another day.

More Projects



Photos above and below show Neil Candy's wetland which is developing well with Ducks Unlimited's input.



Photos above and below show Graeme and Ann Berry's wetland development Mangaone near Raetihi.



James Hunter's wetlands, Rangitoto, Waipukurau, in panoramic view - see story Flight 124.



Ashhurst Estuary in the Manawatu, pictured in May 2005, is one of Ducks Unlimited's ongoing successes. Photo by William Abel.



Here is another view of Ken Barnes' wetland near Carterton; more on page 12.

DU received a generous donation from Christopher and Susanna Grace of Hunterville which was used to purchase a number of DVD versions of Chris Thomas's film "Waterfowl and Wetland - A New Zealand Odyssey". These are available to donate to schools which have an environment programme as part of their curriculum for educational purposes.

Directors' Board Meeting Report

by William Abel

The Ducks Unlimited Directors' Board Meeting was held this year at the Wairarapa Ski Club lodge at Ohakune. This break in the usual venue was in order that the group could visit Graeme Berry's 2000-acre farm Mangaone in nearby Raetihi. Graeme has recently bought this farm for the very extensive opportunities it presents to create wetlands all over the block. The farm has been leased to a neighbour, leaving Graeme free to do the wetlands development without the day-to-day work of running a farm.

Ducks Unlimited and Patron Jim Campbell have been advisers on the project and DU has funded the diesel requirements for this year's digging. Contemplating perhaps 10 years of digger work on this property, Graeme has done it properly and purchased his own Hitachi machine. With limited lessons and the instruction that he was not to completely bury the machine before calling for help, he ventured forth.

Graeme and his other operators have created a wonderful habitat in a long gully. Many ponds and extensive open water have created a very attractive series of wetland areas.

There is already a 20ha area of manuka swamp "with a QEII covenant on it," says Graeme. This is further down the valley from the new development and Graeme is fencing and retiring these potential wetland areas as fast as he can. Planting is about to happen on this area with a probable mixture of natives and trees capable of feeding the waterfowl at a later time.

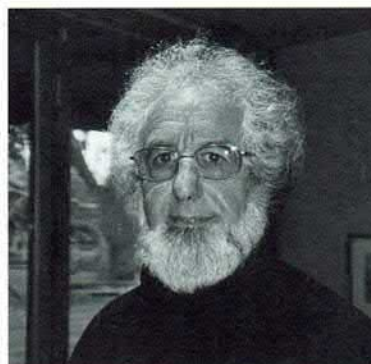
The directors say that Graeme is to be complimented for his foresight and enthusiasm in the development of this property.

Meeting report

The 2005 Ducks Unlimited board meeting went well on the Saturday. It was great to be joined by our patron Jim Campbell and Dave Johnston of Reporoa. We reassessed the strategic plan, noting success in some of the goal areas and a need to pick up the pace in other areas.

Some of the board had been shooting early on Saturday morning with Di Pritt and everyone went off for an evening shoot at Mitredale. Thanks to Di for the organisation and meal on Friday night.

On Sunday morning it was off to Mangaone. Graeme and Di had arranged a convoy of four-wheelers for us all, as we had to cover a lot of ground. We rode around the farm in weather that could be described politely as varying between raining heavily and a localised weather bomb. Great fun, though, and very encouraging to see members doing such great conservation work.



Max Edridge, architect, joined Ducks Unlimited in about 1999. Resident in the Wairarapa since 1989 and married to Dinah, he moved from Eastbourne to continue his architectural practice in Wellington and the Wairarapa. He has made quite a mark on the Wairarapa with his many projects involving the community and the preservation of the flavour of the oldest inland town in the country - Greytown.

He has a small developing wetland of his own and takes a deep interest in the environmental effect wetlands have on the community. His hobbies include photography, art and sculpture, music, reading, trees and landscape.

New members - Welcome!

Andrew Marriott, Silverstream
Grant Williamson, Feilding
James Graham, Carterton
Bruce Peck, Palmerston North
Dan Steele and Louise Tuin, Retaruke Stn, Owthango
David Severinsen, Palmerston North
Tim Aitken, Waipawa
Jim Macdonald, Outram, Otago
W E and G A Lundie, Greytown
Hayden Hazlitt, Palmerston North
Rose Strahan, Kiwitea, Feilding
Daniel Beetham, Waterview, Auckland

Two Irish hunters got a pilot to fly them to Canada to hunt moose. They bagged six. As they started loading the plane for the return trip, the pilot said the plane could take only four moose. The two lads objected strongly. "Last year we shot six, the pilot let us put dem all on board and to be sure he had the same plane as yours."

Reluctantly, the pilot gave in and all six were loaded. However, even with full power, the little plane couldn't handle the load and went down a few moments after take-off. Climbing out of the wreckage, Paddy asked Seamus, "Any idea where we are?"

"Bejasus, I tink we're pretty close to where we crashed last year."

(Thank you, John Dermer)

Birdlife

Second release for Campbell Island teal

The Department of Conservation's (DOC) restoration of Campbell Island continued in August when 55 Campbell Island teal were returned home, sooner than expected.

The transfer of 22 birds from Whenua Hou/Codfish Island and 33 from the captive-breeding facilities at Isaac Wildlife Trust's Peacock Springs in Christchurch and the department's National Wildlife Centre at Mt Bruce, Wairarapa, was the second of three planned releases.

"The department led the process but we couldn't have done it without the assistance of the Isaac Family's Peacock Springs in Christchurch, the Auckland Zoo, Massey University and all the other parties who helped out along the way," said DOC programme manager Pete McClelland. This release will see the population on Campbell Island reach about 130 with a worldwide population of less than 180. Fifty teal were released last year.

Pete McClelland said as this was the second transfer of the flightless brown duck it would undoubtedly be another momentous occasion for all parties involved. "When the recovery plan for the teal was written by the Department in 1993, with the ultimate aim of returning the species back to Campbell Island it was never thought it would be this soon," Mr McClelland said.

The team left for Campbell Island on 31 August from Bluff on board the MV Clan Macleod which had been specially fitted out to hold the teal. The journey took about 48 hours.

This release will boost the numbers on Campbell Island and help ensure that the population becomes established quickly at which time their threatened-species status can be downgraded from its current critically endangered.

Once the birds were established on Campbell no further management on them would be required, making it even more important to keep the island pest free, Mr McClelland said. "They've proved to be amazingly adaptable. But they were living the life of Riley at Mt Bruce and we actually had to slim them down before we brought them back to Campbell. Take a couch potato and run it in a marathon and it's not going to last too well", he said.



Mt Bruce captive-breeding ranger Raelene Berry with one of the Campbell Island teal, prior to its departure.

Mr McClelland said the 55 teal sourced from Codfish Island and captive-breeding institutions had recently been through a disease-screening process to minimise any risk to themselves or to other species on the island. The trip also provides an opportunity for department staff to monitor some of the other activity on the island, such as the spread of weeds introduced when the island was being farmed and the recovery of the vegetation and invertebrates and smaller seabirds following the removal of the rats. McClelland won't officially declare the island rat-free until 2006 just in case, but he was in a hurry to take his teal home.

Two major internationally significant conservation projects had occurred on Campbell Island over the last five years - the world's largest rat-eradication programme and returning the world's rarest duck to its rightful home after 200 years.

The success of the programme had been a team effort from a variety of interested parties. The Campbell Island teal recovery programme started back in 1984 when four of the flightless birds were brought back to New Zealand from Dent Island. The aim was to establish a captive population to safeguard the species in case anything happened to the population on Dent Island, Mr McClelland said.

For more information contact Pete McClelland at the Department of Conservation. Tel: 03 214 4589, mobile 027 696 3895



Extinct Swamp Bird Rediscovered in Arkansas

Sometimes, Goodbye isn't Forever

The ivory-billed woodpecker, the third largest woodpecker in the world, which was believed to be extinct, was been rediscovered recently in Arkansas. A bird which is the size of a magpie with the call of a hyena would be hard to miss, one would think.

But it is an example of a bird, believed to be extinct, being discovered to be alive and well, if rather rare; the discovery of the takahe in the South Island 1948 confirmed its existence 50 years after its supposed extinction.

Video footage and drawings and the testimony of at least eight people confirm their existence. The large red-crested *Campephilus principalis* nearly vanished in the 19th Century as the American countryside was cleared of its forests and swamps.

Otago Regional Council Assistance Available for Private Wetlands Development

As part of its biodiversity programme, the Otago Regional Council has available financial assistance for anyone wishing to protect wetland areas on their property.

Eighty significant wetlands are identified in the proposed water plan. Values considered as significant include scarcity, naturalness, ecological or physical character, indigenous habitat, or Kai Tahu values. Anyone with a wetland on privately-owned or local-authority land can apply, including wetlands not identified in the *Proposed Regional Plan: Water*.

Each application will be considered on its individual merits taking into account the wetland's habitat value, potential for long-term sustainability, level of public benefit resulting from the works and landowner commitment. Projects receiving money from this programme will be required to provide adequate security for any work paid for by public funds. This could take the form of a covenant on the land title or some other means. The rate of funding will be based on an assessment of the public versus any private benefit resulting from the project.

Depending on the level of public benefit resulting from any work, up to 100% of the cost will be met for the following: capital cost of



This photo of Otago Harbour wetlands was taken by a South Island reader.

establishment of fencing; any enhancement works required including alternative provision for stock water; improvements to public access and placing a covenant on the land title.

For more details about this programme please contact the Otago Regional Council by email, info@orc.govt.nz or phone 03 474-0827, freephone 0800 474 082 or fax 03 479-0015.

Elimination of Coastal Wetlands Identified as Underpinning Contributor to Devastating Aftermath of Katrina and Tsunami

United States legislators and environmentalists at state and federal level are now pointing to constant and accelerating erosion of wetlands as the underpinning cause of the Louisiana floods in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Wetlands function as natural sponges that trap and slowly release surface water, rain, snowmelt, groundwater and floodwaters. Trees' root mats and other wetland vegetation also slow the speed of floodwaters and distribute them more slowly over the floodplain. This combined water storage and braking action lowers flood heights and reduces erosion.

Wetlands within and downstream of urban areas are particularly valuable, counteracting the greatly increased rate and volume of surface-water runoff from pavement and buildings. The holding capacity of wetlands helps control floods and prevents waterlogging of crops.

Preserving and restoring wetlands, together with other water retention, can often provide the level of flood control otherwise provided by expensive dredge operations and levees. The bottomland hardwood-riparian wetlands along the Mississippi River once stored at least 60 days of floodwater.

Now they store only 12 days because most have been filled or drained. Similarly the disappearance of Asian coastal wetlands are being fingered as a main contributory cause to the aftermath of the tsunami at the beginning of this year.

This was underlined by the Wetlands International Asian Wetland Symposium held in February this year. The symposium identified as major contributing causes to the devastation in the aftermath of the tsunami being due to:

- loss and degradation of mangrove and seagrass beds
- silting and degrading of coral reefs
- sedimentation of turbidity of coastal waters leading to algal blooms
- major changes in intertidal flats and coastal lagoons.

The symposium also placed on record the observation to the effect that certain wetland types played a role in reducing the tsunami impact, especially in locations further from the epicentre,

including coral reefs and mangroves which broke the impact of the waves.

In doing so they absorbed much of the energy and thus protected inland areas. Similarly with the mangroves.

In the United States, in the aftermath of Katrina, legislators and environmentalists voiced their opposition to engineering works as a mere stopgap measure, and outlined plans for a major restoration of the coastal wetlands. Gigantic acreages of the wetlands infrastructure have been chewed up especially in recent years by leisure and tourist developments and also by major industrial schemes.

This was counter to a number of executive orders, starting with the one on 24 May 1977 by former President Carter, part of which stated:

"...in order to avoid to the extent possible the long and short term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and to avoid direct or indirect support of floodplain development wherever there is a practicable alternative..."

Meanwhile, in New Zealand, environmental groups, notably Ducks Unlimited, continue to lobby against similar coastal elimination of the wetland buffer which has also grown apace in recent years due to the accelerating demand for coastal residential properties, built regardless of the delicacy of the coastal area. This insistence on preservation of the coastal wetlands infrastructure is likely to grow with mounting evidence that commercial imperatives took precedence over civil defence ones in the lead up to Katrina. Louisiana was becoming increasingly prone in recent decades to flood damage as measured in insurance pay-outs. But environmental safety considerations took a back seat to the demand for coastal development.

In New Zealand top targets of the environmental movement in the aftermath of Katrina and the Asian tsunami will be residential and leisure construction in estuarine zones and also in sand dunes, a coastal buffer area under constant destruction by developers. *(Contributed by a reader)*



Dedication to Ducks a contribution by new member Louise Tuin

These days blue duck seem to feature largely in our lives because we live in an area where a population of blue duck can be found. This interest has developed into starting a conservation project in combination with building a tourist accommodation venture, Blue Duck Lodge. Blue Duck Lodge is situated on a clearing above the banks of the Retaruke River, a major tributary to the northern end of the Whanganui River. The lodge comfortably sleeps up to eight people. It offers a serene retreat idyllically located to explore the surrounding native bush, rivers and streams. The Retaruke River is home to a healthy population of the whio. Since recently starting this project, together with DOC we completed a survey in February 2005 counting 43 ducks in our area. In March 2005, four of these ducks were banded. One of the activities available while staying at the lodge is to kayak this beautiful stretch of river and survey the blue duck. The next step in our project is to start a trapping programme along the riverbanks.

Our friend and longtime Ducks Unlimited member Mark Grace from Hunterville decided that we could do our research on trapping at the 2005 AGM and therefore donated our membership immediately.

With a long way to travel to Manukau, we decided to meet at Basecamp in National Park on Friday evening to start the northbound journey. As we passed the first sign for Waitomo, the general consensus was that we were feeling alert enough to continue driving to Pukekohe, where we could stay with a friend. However, when we passed the next sign, a guilty feeling took over the boys, who felt compelled to visit another friend in Waitomo. We were more than likely to find Crusty at the Waitomo Tavern on a Friday night.

Sure enough, Crusty was there to meet us at the entrance. He was especially excited to tell us he was already enjoying the company of a tour bus full of young, entertaining American volunteers passing through Waitomo that night. As you can imagine, we had a lot of fun and it turned into a very late night, which put us behind schedule in the morning as we headed for Manukau. This was not a problem as we had planned to meet the rest of the Ducks Unlimited AGM party at 10.30am at the hotel, from whence they were due to leave for the Wetland Tour.

We found our way and with half an hour to spare we stopped for breakfast on the road. After parking the car and putting on our wetland gear, we entered the hotel at 10.20am. There, we learned that the bus had left already 20 minutes ago! We had misread our programme; the wetland tour started at 10.30am, but the bus left the Centra at 10!

Luckily, as we had our own transport, a Toyota Hilux, we decided to try to catch up with the bus. Finding out where the wetland tour was proved to be a lot more difficult than we first thought. The hotel staff didn't know where the group was, nor did they have mobile numbers of anyone leading the party. However, helpful staff became involved in trying to find out either of these two things for us. We phoned and left messages on all of the DU committee members' answer machines, using the latest Flight magazine for contact details. Meanwhile, the hotel staff were studying maps to find the easiest way to get to Waiatarua, and searching the Internet yellow pages for mobile phone numbers!

Eventually, we decided we would not make it to Waiatarua on time, but we would meet the party at Ayrilies garden. With excellent info from the Centra staff, and a borrowed Auckland A-Z from the manager, we set off to find Ayrilies. After a few more hurdles, namely, reaching a closed road that was not marked on the 2002 map, and a detour to the seaside, we arrived at Ayrilies early for lunch! We even had time to help Chris and Beverly set up for lunch!! Calls were streaming in from all of the supportive committee members who had been involved in getting us there.

The journey was worth it; the Ayrilies garden and wetland tour was very special, and the rest of the weekend a prime occasion to meet many interesting and enthusiastic people.

To find out more about our blue duck conservation programme check out www.blueducklodge.co.nz

Ayrilies, at Whitford, East Auckland

Owned by Bev McConnell, Ayrilies Garden is a garden of national significance recognised by the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture. It has featured in many magazines and on various television programmes over recent years. We described the garden in Flight 124.

Within this garden is the relatively new wetland, close to the sea. It is the home for a wide variety of waterfowl. Large, accessible and well planted with young trees, it has great potential. Chris Bindon has erected 17 grey teal nest boxes at this wetland which the Ducks Unlimited AGM field trip visited for lunch on Saturday 30 July.

A footnote is that 31-year old Mark Grace, son of Christopher and Susannah, and who once wore the distinction of being the youngest DU Life Member, arrived early at Ayrilies, bouncing along in a Toyota Hilux together with new members Dan Steele and fiancée Louise Tuin and got the barbecue started, so by the time the bus from the hotel carrying everyone else arrived, the food was already cooking, to everyone's delight.

The photo opposite shows the air of conviviality around the lunch tent

Waiatarua Park - Waters of Reflection

"Waiatarua, once a gem of pale blue water in a setting of green raupo and tall reeds, was until recently the mecca of botanists, but now, with drainage it is nothing but an unsightly waste of weed and blackberry." So said the book Botany of Auckland in 1936.

But now, thanks to the work of the Auckland City staff, this major area in St Johns has been restored to its former glory. The walk around Waiatarua is just over two kilometres, with good bridging and all-weather tracks suitable for wheelchair access. Local chapter member Chris Bindon hopes to put some grey teal nest boxes into this site in the near future.

The Ducks Unlimited AGM field trip inspected this wetland on Saturday 30 July and met with staff who explained the trials and tribulations involved in this major wetland project.

See photos on next page

Mark Grace and Dan Steele manning the BBQ!



Waiatarua Park - a group of Ducks Unlimited members tour Auckland's wetlands during the AGM in 2005.



A jolly barbecue lunch at Ayrilies, Bev McConnell's lovely garden and wetlands.



Rachel and Julie Candy at Waiatarua Park, during the AGM's wetland tour in Auckland.



President Ross Cottle at Waiatarua.

Louise Tuin, Mark Grace and Dan Steele puzzling over directions to the wetland tours.



Ducks Unlimited Director Jim Law received the Bill Barrett Trophy in acknowledgment of his work on the huge Wairio wetlands project in the South Wairarapa. This award, established in 1984 by Australian Life Member Bill Barrett, is awarded annually to the DU member who, in the opinion of the DU Board of Directors, has done most during the year to promote the aims and objectives of Ducks Unlimited.

Wetland Care Projects

Ken Barnes of Carterton is developing a wetland with the help of Ducks Unlimited and Wetland Care. He is very happy with his new wetland extension which was completed recently.

He writes: "...Watched a pair of swan and eight cygnets swim upstream... there are a heap of tui and woodpigeons and fantails in the kowhai trees beside the track, often some California quail tooting away in those lupin and scrubby flats... I want as big a predator-free zone as possible, kind of a cat/mustelid exclusion area". The photos give only a taste of the beauty of the wetland, but we thought Ken would also like you to see his bike. It's a Honda Africa and he describes it as a "trail bike on steroids". Another photo of the wetlands on page 6.



The visitors are multifarious and varied.



Ken and his Honda Africa



One view of the block at Ken Barnes' wetlands

Progress from the Candys' wetland project in the Manawatu

We received funding from Ducks Unlimited NZ and Game Bird Habitat Trust for the earthworks involved in building our wetland. Construction of our double ponds began in the hottest week of February, with Gary Thomson and Jim Campbell on their trusty machines.

Two dams about 2.5 metres high were constructed in a wide shallow valley, the top pond designed to overflow into the lower one which when full in turn overflows into the creek bed. The catchment area for the ponds is just under 50ha. The total wetland area should be around 2ha, including margins. A minor hiccup was not locating a 6in tile drain under the upper dam. Consequently the lower pond filled rather suddenly and unexpectedly when it rained. We are happy to report that Mr Thomson has rectified this problem (we hope).

Almost every day there seems to be something new happening on our pond. Most of the water arrived at the end of May and beginning of June, and since then various forms of wildlife have appeared, some only briefly, and others are still entertaining us. Mallard, grey teal and paradise duck were some of the first, and our dabchick was here on and off for a little while. We think we have a pair of dabchick, perhaps with a nest, but so far we have only seen one at a time. A swan lumbered in like a 747 for a stopover one winter morning, and we have had up to 12 pied stilt, but this has settled into three pairs, each very territorial. Just last week we heard our first frogs, with a pukeko following the next day. Did it hear them too? Today's event was the first clutch of ducklings, 10 baby mallard skirting the pond edges and darting about their mother.

Neil and Julie Candy

(see photos on page 6)

Wellington Conservation Board Changes

Members are appointed to the Wellington Conservation Board by the Minister of Conservation with appointments of any new members taking effect in September each year. Board members represent a wide variety of interests and reside in communities right across the board's district.

During this year, Andrew Cutler was appointed to the board for one year, and Ray Ahipene-Mercer, Helen Algar, Andrew Foster and Geoff Doring were each appointed for a term of three years. All started their terms in September 2004.

Members who retired from the board at the end of August 2004 were Elizabeth (Liz) Burge and Mike Crozier. The key places administered by the Department of Conservation in the board's district are:

- Lake Wairarapa Wetlands
- Government Buildings
- Carter Scenic Reserve
- Turnbull House
- Castlepoint Scenic Reserve
- Pukerua Bay Scientific Reserve
- National Wildlife Centre (Mount Bruce)
- Paraparaumu Scenic Reserve
- Putangarua Pinnacles
- Hemi Matenga Scenic Reserve
- Cape Palliser
- Waikanae Estuary
- Rewa Bush
- Papaitonga Scenic Reserve
- Rocky Hills Snail Reserves, Horowhenua
- Tora Scenic Reserve
- Tararua Forest Park
- Colonial Knob
- Aorangi (Haurangi) Forest Park
- Makara Coast
- Rimutaka Forest Park
- Pauatahanui Inlet, Porirua Harbour
- Kapiti Island Nature Reserve
- Pencarrow Head, Kohunga Lakes
- Mana Island
- Turakirae Head
- Matiu/Somes Island
- Wellington South Coast
- Kapiti Marine Reserve
- Dominion Observatory

The Board consists of: Bill Carter (Chair) of Paraparaumu, Bev Abbott (Deputy chair) of Wellington, Helen Algar of Wellington, Raymond (Ray) Ahipene-Mercer of Wellington, Diane Anderson of Eketahuna, Te Akapikirangi (Aka) Arthur of Porirua, Andrew Cutler of Wellington, Geoff Doring of Carterton, Andy Foster of Wellington, Robert Logan of Wellington, Haami Te Whaiti of Masterton, and Margaret Wassilieff of Wellington.

From the Wellington Conservation Board's Annual Report to the New Zealand Conservation Authority for the year 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005.

In case you weren't around then, here are the names of the original founding directors of Ducks Unlimited in New Zealand in 1974: Ian Pirani (Chair) Cheryl Pirani (Secretary) Jack Worth (Director) Paul Pirani (Director) Trevor Voss (Director) Neil Hayes (Director) Dudley Bell (Advisor) Henry Lickers (Advisor).

Wairarapa Restoration groups celebrate Conservation Week

Ducks Unlimited President Ross Cottle with directors Jim Campbell and Jim Law, who have signed a five-year management agreement with the Department of Conservation to restore the Wairio Block wetland on the eastern shores of Lake Wairarapa, attended an event held on Friday 12 August at the MIS Education Centre in Masterton, where more than 30 people came together to discuss how "everything is connected", the theme for this year's Conservation Week.

The event was jointly organised by the Department of Conservation and Greater Wellington Regional Council. Participants described their involvement in restoration projects in the Wairarapa region, which included wetland development, riparian planting, wildlife monitoring and the planting of native trees on District Council-managed land, to name a few.

Former Landcare Trust co-ordinator Andrew Stewart was the event facilitator and he asked participants to describe their goals for the future of their restoration project, and for the "greater" group as a whole. Volunteers were asked to form a steering group, in order to progress some of the ideas and suggestions of the restoration-group representatives.

For more information and images please contact Sally Thomas at DOC on (06)377 0700.



Garry Foster, Jim Law, Percy Braggins, Karen Williams, Eddie Bannister, Jim Campbell, Tenick Dennison, George Bain and Tom Cameron pictured in Masterton in August during Conservation Week events.

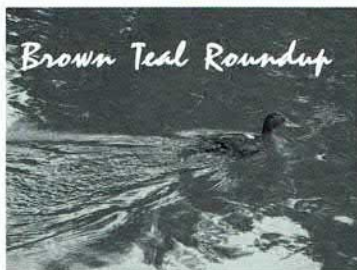
A little DU History

The Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust was established in 1991. It is the fundraising arm for Ducks Unlimited. Devised by the then Executive Director Dr Grant Dumbell it was funded by tax deductible donations which could only be invested with the income available to DU as required.

During the 90s DU was asset-rich by way of the Sinclair and Pearce wetlands but the cost of these and employing an executive director meant we were cash-poor. The board borrowed the trust capital at 10% which was then paid back to DU, which was highly unproductive.

By 1997 Grant's contract was terminated and we put the two wetlands on the market which sold by early 1998. Thus, DU was able to pay off the bank loan and return the trust capital of about \$77,000 and donate to the trust nearly \$200,000. A sum of \$273,000 was placed with Spicers in May 1998 and DU has drawn \$9,000 of income since then and the portfolio now stands at \$328,000. DU has contributed another \$50,000 which is on fixed interest.

There are five trustees with a maximum of two board members. They are currently board member David Smith Chairman, Glenys Hansen Secretary/Treasurer, Jim Campbell, Ken Cook and Alan Wilks.



Mimiwhangata/ Northland by Emma Neill

As at end of July, 15 adult females and 10 adult males are fitted with transmitters, although one female and one male are missing. Four nests have been recorded to date,

with one of those incurring abandonment and/or predation. Four deaths (two adult females and two females from the 2004 cohort) have occurred since the May round-up issue. Mustelids are confirmed for two deaths, suspected for one and the body was not recovered for the fourth. Predator control with 349 trap sites continues from Whananaki, north along a coastal margin to Teal Bay. May-July inclusive, 11 cats and 13 stoats were caught. There is enough rain periodically to keep the grass growing, but generally a cool, dry winter.

Okiwi, Great Barrier Island by Joanna Sim

I started as the new Pateke Ranger for Great Barrier in July and have been getting up to speed with the teal and their cryptic habits. As at 8 August 2005 there are 45 birds fitted with transmitters. Of these, 12 are missing which are a combination of suspected transmitter or battery failure and possible movement out of the basin. Seven pateke with transmitters have died since May, one of these most likely road kill and all of these birds have been sent off to Massey to help establish cause of death. In addition two more un-transmitted birds have been found run over on the same road. Nesting has started, seemingly a bit later than previous years. To date there are nine females sitting tight, another three who are under suspicion and an additional possible failure. Unfortunately monthly flock counts were not done in May or June due to inclement weather, but were begun again in July for Okiwi. Craig has been undertaking his dedicated predator-trapping regime and has caught 63 cats since the end of April via a combination of 99 conibears, three leg holds and 37 cage traps. Seventy five pukeko have been controlled and ra-tracking lines indicate 60% tracking rate for June. Night rabbit shoots have also just begun to keep them at the low densities achieved earlier in the year.

Captive-Breeding Programme by Kevin Evans

Since the release in May, Peacock Springs have flock-mated nine pairs of wild ducklings - Great Barrier eggs, Great Barrier orphan ducklings, Northland eggs, and progeny from the Little Barrier birds held at Peacock Springs during the rat eradication. These birds have now been distributed out to the breeders with old birds being replaced and new holders receiving pairs. We have had three new people join the captive programme which may be enough for the present. With a large number of eggs and ducklings already on the ground, the earliest breeding season we have had for a few years, this season is shaping up to be a beauty.

Our target of 80 birds should easily be reached this season, if the start is anything to go by. We are also set to reach our target of 100 parent-reared birds next year with the addition of this year's new flock-mated pairs. The potential to release at other sites is now nearing as additional production is available, which is fantastic.

Mayor Island is keen to reintroduce some brown teal in February 2006. An early release will help take the pressure off the holding facilities at both Peacock Springs and the breeders. I will keep you posted on the progress for this release and if anyone knows of any company which may wish to sponsor this release, please let me know. I would like to thank all of the major sponsors of the captive-breeding programme, each breeding facility spread across the country which each year generously produce birds for the releases on a good-will basis. Keeping and caring for brown teal is not a cheap exercise and your generosity and dedicated hard work is truly appreciated. Without you this project would not be possible.

Also special thanks must go out to Anne Richardson and her team at Peacock Springs (Isaac Wildlife Trust) for their stupendous work in flock mating, holding and pre-release conditioning 81 birds this year. Anyone who knows anything about keeping this species in captivity knows that brown teal are cantankerous creatures when kept in large numbers for any period of time. This has created almost a fulltime job looking after the teal alone, not to mention the normal daily activities of looking after the many other endangered species they are breeding.

Without everyone's commitment the release programme would not truly be the conservation success story it is today.

Peacock Springs by Anne Richardson

At Peacock Springs we have had a busy year with brown teal and there is still no sign of a respite. Starting in June 2004 we received the Little Barrier wild birds to look after during a poison drop on the island. Taking advantage of the gene pool, these birds were paired with Great Barrier birds resulting in one pair producing two clutches of four eggs before they were released back on to Little Barrier. On 7 October wild eggs were transferred to Peacock Springs from Northland and Great Barrier which were artificially incubated and raised successfully. These seven birds were flock-mated with the Little Barrier offspring during the autumn of this year. As a collection point for all the release birds by May 2005 we were holding a total of 81 birds here at Peacock Springs. Great job, breeders!

Thank you to those of you who sent healthy and beautiful birds as it made our job easier. A total of 62 birds had transmitters fitted here and were released on 19 May 2005 at Moehau. The remaining were the flock birds of which seven pairs have been sent out to other institutions so far. In May we received a pair from Willowbank for temporary holding which promptly settled in and laid a clutch of eight eggs which have all hatched and are swimming around happily with mum and dad. They will be going home as soon as the kids are old enough and before she gets anymore bright ideas about laying any more eggs. And talking about no rest for the wicked, one flock-mated pair earmarked for Hamilton Zoo was found today on a clutch of five eggs. Seems we just can't get these birds out quick enough as these two are only 10 months old. We still have one other pair here which is going to Tauranga as soon as possible before they also get into the spring mood. Here's looking to a great season. Good luck to all!

Port Charles Pateke Roundup as at 9 August 2005

by Jason Roxburgh, Lettecia Williams and Rebekah Caldwell

Predator Control: Since the last roundup, the trapping has caught via kill traps three cats, two possum, one hedgehog, three rats, one mouse. Via live traps, three myna, one hedgehog, two rabbits.

2005 Release: 19 May dawned cold and clear, and saw 62 Pateke released at Port Charles, followed by BBQ hosted by Banrock Station Wines, who are very generously sponsoring our entire quarantine and transfer costs for the release. Many thanks again to Ossie Latham and Ducks Unlimited/Wetland Care NZ for this. The support of this event by the local community was excellent, with over 100 people present (impressive given that that is almost 50% of Port Charles residents). See coverage in *Flight No 124*

Monitoring: Since the 19 May release there have been seven deaths of monitored birds (six 2005 released birds, and one 2003 released bird), three road kills, three cat predation, one possible harrier predation, although it was ill and may have died from that and been scavenged. This means there are now 34 (85%) of the monitored 2005 release birds still alive. We've had no transmitter or harness failures, so know the whereabouts of all the monitored birds. Sadly we've had three wild birds handed in after being hit by vehicles, so this is becoming a major issue. A positive aspect, however, is that the community are keen to hand in dead birds. Rebekah and Lettecia continue to advocate strongly with residents and visitors about pateke, especially asking people to slow down while driving in the area. As mentioned above, we've had a number of vehicle related deaths of pateke recently, so we are going to put more effort into reducing this.

Breeding Season: Many of the released birds have paired, but few of the 2005 birds show signs of nesting. However, many of the 2003 and 2004 birds we still have transmitters on are showing signs of breeding. A number of very early broods of ducklings have been seen in the area.

TiriTiri Matangi - Update by Ian

As Ray and Barbara are on leave, I will prepare an update on the total number I am aware of on the island. Seen regularly: 14. Irregularly: three. We occasionally get reports from overnights out looking for kiwi who have seen teal but as band combinations have not been collected we are unable to verify if they are ducks known to us. The dams at NE Bay have been completed and are full with a pair having established a territory on the lower dam. We hope we may see them produce ducklings over the coming months. I believe the pair at wharf dam may be nesting.

Karori Wildlife Sanctuary by Neil Anderson

The beginning of June saw a flurry of new hatching with 14 ducklings appearing but only three of these have survived the winter. The Taylor Wetland pair which had twice before been successful lost all of a good-sized clutch of six and the pair at the north end of the top dam lost all of their four, their second failure. A series of sharp, nasty storms early in the month may have contributed to this but it did not seem to deter our most experienced and prolific pair on the top dam that still has three of their original four. The year until the end of May had seen seven breeding pairs produce 40 ducklings from 11 clutches with a success rate through to banding age (around 10 weeks) of just over 65%. However, it has emerged that all locally bred birds recruited into the breeding population since breeding began in late 2002 share the same original release parents, so hopefully the next year will see rather more diversity in the population. During the year to the end of May there had been plenty of changing of territories and that continues into the new breeding year. The pair from the creeks above the top dam moved their brood of four down on to the dam itself (the elusive male of this pair has now been identified) and they initially patrolled the whole dam endeavouring to wrest control of all three feeders from the incumbents.

Video footage of the feeder in this family's previous territory showed nocturnal visits by a new pair of birds and a young pair previously formed near the hides have subsequently disappeared from view. The female of this pair has these creeks as her natal territory but on the other hand so do her five siblings, none of which has been seen for many months.



The unsuccessful pair at the north end of the top dam continues to hold that territory with frequent forays to the south-end feeder. The previous residents, our most experienced pair, are keeping a low profile at present but are still seen occasionally with their juveniles which are soon to be banded. On the Taylor Wetland the resident pair continues to hold sway but there is rather less competition here than on the top dam. The lower lake pair successfully fledged two juveniles at the south end with the whole family having been known to visit the north end to harass the locals there. The remaining single birds are showing a curious separation of the sexes. The highly visible trio at the north end of the lower lake are all males and a lone bird occasionally seen on the lake is an original release male. On the top dam there are no single males in evidence with four females hanging around together, the most recent arrival having made the journey up from the Taylor Wetland.

Brown Teal Conservation Trust by Neil Hayes

All very quiet on the home front, but hopefully the mild Wairarapa winter will result in some early hatchings. One of the last pieces to be fitted in to the brown teal jigsaw is determining precisely what brown teal actually eat in the wild. In association with Dr Murray Williams the BTCT has drafted a brown teal food research study proposal and has commenced fundraising - aimed at assisting an entomology student, with a wetlands bias, to carry out such research. There is already some evidence that suggests that invertebrates are the main diet of both duckling and adult brown teal.

A review of both the Brown Teal Conservation Trust (BTCT) Management Manual, published in 2002 - Natural History Captive Management and Survival of the New Zealand Brown Teal and the recovery programme AUDIT, published in 2000, reveal an essential need for research to determine the diet of wild brown teal. Such knowledge is believed vital to saving this endangered species. The BTCT believes that flock sites are critical to the survival of brown teal and that the brown teal food supply at such sites, and sites adjacent to flock sites, is a vital component to their longterm survival. In addition, it is envisaged that the study would also determine the likelihood of suitable food at proposed release sites for captive-reared brown teal. By early August the BTCT had raised \$2500 towards such research.

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