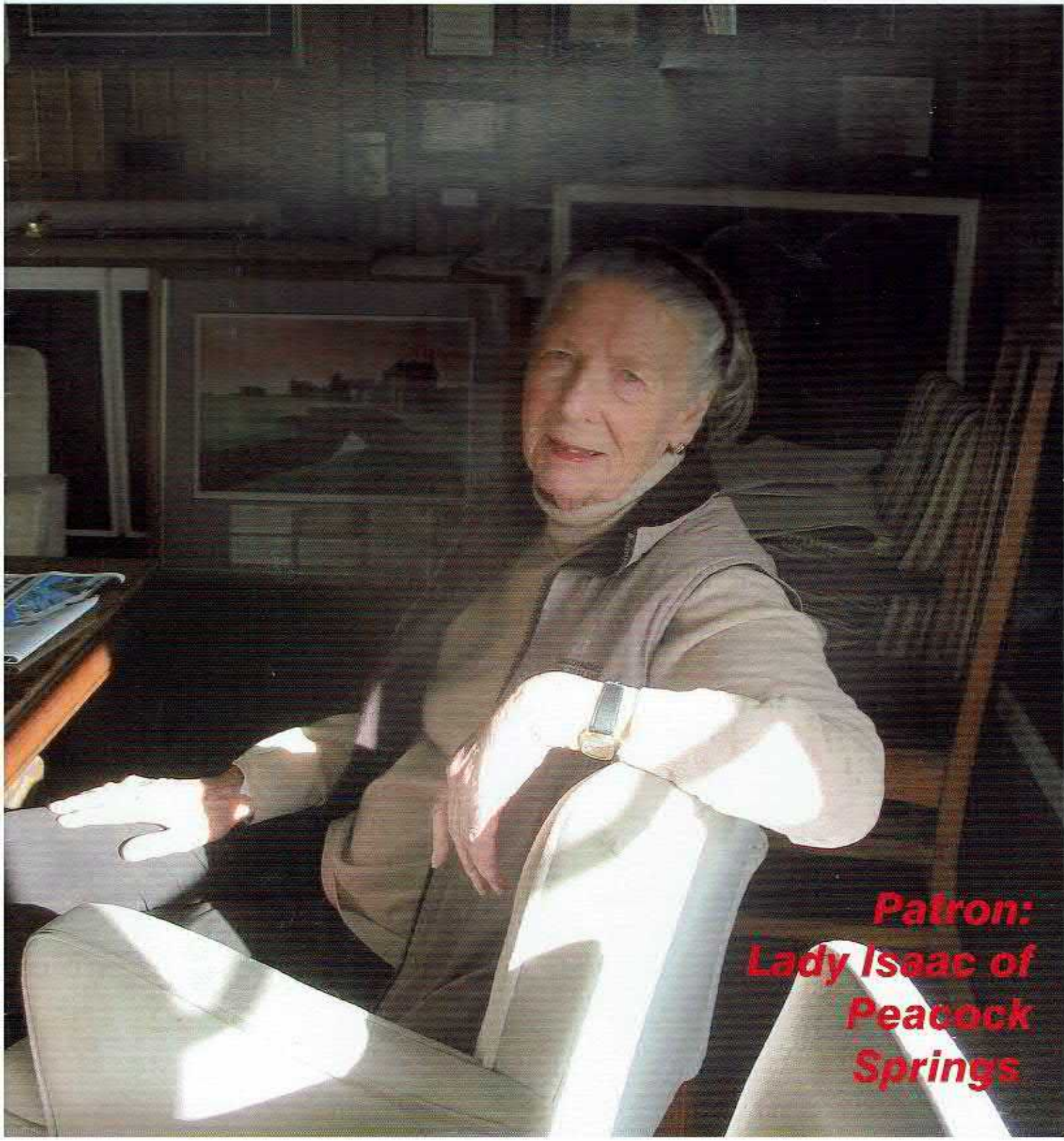


Flight



ISSUE 130 - JANUARY 2007



**Patron:
Lady Isaac of
Peacock
Springs**



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wetland care
NEW ZEALAND

Our business is to harness community, business and government resources to restore and develop lost wetland areas within New Zealand.

Wetland Care members recognise that wetlands are vital to the wellbeing of the environment, acting as huge ecological sponges by soaking up pollutants and filtering water before it reaches streams, rivers, lakes, aquifers and the sea.

Our initiatives focus on matters as far-reaching as groundwater replenishment, flood control, nutrient and contaminant management and climate change – all critical factors for the conservation of freshwater and saltwater wetlands and marshes.

We want to preserve and conserve the flora and fauna of our most endangered ecosystem so that vibrant wetlands are our legacy to future generations.

Funding for projects comes from the Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust which was established by Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc in 1991, as well as membership, donations and corporate memberships such as that from Banrock Station Wines.

Central to Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is forming partnerships with people and organisations with similar aims. An example is Banrock Station Wines who place the Wetland Care New Zealand logo on their wine bottles distributed in New Zealand. In return, Banrock contribute a fee, which is based on each bottle sold, to Wetland Care New Zealand.

Money from this partnership has been given to wetland conservation projects done by:

Ducks Unlimited Operation Pateke
Port Charles release 2005 at Coromandel
Henley Trust, Masterton
Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, Wellington
Kitchener Park, Feilding
Manawatu Estuary Trust, Foxton
Mangaone Wetland, Rautahi
Masterton Intermediate School, Masterton
Steyning Trust, Hawkes Bay
Travis Wetland Trust, Christchurch
Wairio Wetland, South Wairarapa
Wetland Trust New Zealand, Rangiriri
Waitakere Branch of Forest and Bird, West Auckland
Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, Dunedin

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



Our Website is : www.ducks.org.nz



The next AGM
for
Ducks Unlimited NZ (Inc)
will take place
in
Taupo
on
27, 28, 29 July
2007!

Generous Donation to Wetland Care NZ

William Abel Director of Wetland Care NZ, has sent Flight a letter dated 18 November 2006, which he was delighted to receive from the Whangarei Native Forest and Bird Protection Society (Inc). The Society's Secretary/Treasurer, P.F. Collier, writes:

Dear Sir

Our Society wishes to make a donation of \$2,000 to your Trust in order for you to continue with your good work in preserving wetlands for NZ native birds.

P.F. Collier
Secretary/Treasurer

William reports that this letter was received following a visit to Murray and Lois Tapps' wetlands in Whangarei. He says that he is very grateful and wishes our members to know of this act of generosity.

Insight

by Ross Cottle, President

By the time you read this, Christmas and New Year will have come and gone and we will be looking forward to 2007.

DU has been involved in interesting projects, namely:

Wairio: Excavations down to level of Lake Wairarapa for area of permanent water.

Fencing of dam wall and new excavation.

Extensive planting of area enclosed by fence.

Even though nature tried its best to wash it all away a couple of weeks later the survival rate has been estimated at 80% so we approach this year's work with confidence.

Henley Lake: More excavation work down at the southern end has created more shallow dabbling area for a whole range of bird life.

Wairakei Pastoral: Jim Campbell has helped oversee the development of stage two on that project.

Graeme and Ann Berry's Wetland: Another substantial addition to their wetland area fully fenced, planted and looking great.

All things considered a most satisfactory year and we look forward with confidence.

Ross Cottle

President

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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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Front cover photo:
Lady Isaac, Patron of Ducks Unlimited.



Schoolchildren adopting kiwi

In October, two new Adopt-a-Kiwi schools and one kindergarten took on the challenge of supporting their own adopted kiwi in the wild, reports Pukaha Mount Bruce. A female North Island brown kiwi called Willamina was flown from Christchurch to Palmerston North on the morning of 6 September and released into the forest the same afternoon. She was the fourteenth North Island brown kiwi to be released into the forest as part of the ongoing restoration project.

Willamina was named and adopted by the Wairarapa Montessori School in Masterton who attended the release and watched as she left captivity to begin a new life in the forest. DoC staff have since tracked her down in the forest to check she has adapted to forest life. Suffice to say she is doing well.

On 20 September, Greytown Kindergarten children witnessed their adopted kiwi being released into the wild after having raised \$61.45 towards sponsoring a hectare at Pukaha Mount Bruce. Greytown Kindergarten children were identified by Pukaha Mount Bruce Education Officer Chris Day as an Adopt-a-Kiwi Kindergarten after hearing about their Crazy Kiwi Day that took place earlier in September. Mr Day read about their fundraising day, which involved face painting, a continuous morning tea, painting, singing, dancing and much more - all done to raise money for the restoration of the forest.

The children from Greytown Kindergarten were very lucky in that their kiwi was none other than Rangi, the female kiwi previously seen by tens of thousands of visitors in the nocturnal house.

The children were thrilled to see Rangi, an established breeding bird, released into the wild and for most, it was the first time they had ever seen a live kiwi. The children formally presented their cheque for \$61.45 on 20 October and all received certificates in recognition of their efforts.

Wa Ora Montessori School from Lower Hutt have also adopted a kiwi in the past month, with the release having taken place on Monday 16 October, bringing the total number of wild kiwi to sixteen birds altogether. They very fittingly chose to name their kiwi Tane. The nine-month-old male now joins his parents, Rangi and Tua, who were the previous breeding pair from the nocturnal house and released the week before.

All schools will be presented with DVD films which feature close up footage of their kiwi and of the actual release into the forest as a special memento of the occasion. The film also enables those students, teachers and parents who were not fortunate enough to witness the event to have the opportunity to experience the release for themselves.

Pukaha Mount Bruce website www.mtbruce.org.nz

Guided walks over summer

As we get closer to summer months and the activity in the forest continues to build, visitors are encouraged to take advantage of the guided walks on offer. Guided walks bring the experience to life for visitors as experienced rangers offer a wealth of information about captive species, recovery and breeding programmes as well as interesting tips on flora and fauna. For visitors interested in hearing about some of the history of Pukaha Mount Bruce and conservation in New Zealand, a guided walk is a must.

Guided walks are available every Saturday, Sunday and during public holidays at the following times:

10:30am-12 noon (includes takahe talk)

2pm- 3.30pm (includes kaka feeding and talk)

Guided walks are only \$15pp including entrance fees, or \$45 family.

Exclusive Twilight Tours

In the still warmth of the early evening, the birds of Pukaha Mount Bruce come out to play. From 1 November 2006 to 30 April 2007, when the crowds have gone home at the end of the day, groups of 20 or more people will once again have exclusive access to the forest, and the undivided attention of our knowledgeable guides.

As part of a twilight tour/dinner package, guests will be able to enjoy inside and outside dining, delicious food and espresso coffee. The deck of Café Takahe offers expansive views of the forest, and guests will experience the ambience of a forest as it comes to life in the evening.

This year dinner packages and twilight tour prices range from \$20 to \$60 per person.

For bookings contact (06) 375 8004 or email info@mtbruce.org.nz.

Can't see the birds for the trees?

In response to recent visitor feedback, the Pukaha Mount Bruce visitor services team is trialling an identification sheet to encourage visitors to look for birds in the wild, as well as those in captivity. As bird populations increase, so too do the opportunities to see wild birds such as rilleman, grey warbler, tomtit, tui and of course the re-introduced kaka. Visitor feedback and ideas will then be incorporated in the design of an identification tool that will be available to all visitors in the future.

Wairarapa Chapter's Annual Clay Target Shoot.

This year, the Wairarapa chapter held its annual Clay Target Shoot at James and Di Martin's place 'Wiatawa' just north of Martinborough. James and Di are pictured at right during the Conference in July.



James and Di Martin

60 shooters attended. The Top Gun was Gary Dickens, Top Lady was Hayley Bright and Top Junior, Damian O'Leary.

Peter Harvey Memorial Trophy for most improved shooter was awarded to Damian O'Leary.

Winner of the Shotgun was Philip Wyeth.

The Manawatu won the Chapter Challenge over the Wairarapa by a reasonable margin, reports President Ross Cottle. "Our thanks go to our major sponsor Wairarapa Hunting & Fishing", he added.

A most enjoyable day!



Our Patron

Quarrying into conservation DU Patron Emphasises focus on “what is already there”

Peacock Springs and the famous Isaac Salmon Farm are part of an immense swathe of conservation outside Christchurch and adjacent to the airport.

Lady Isaac, patron of Ducks Unlimited, was at work there at her organisation's offices when Flight called late last year.

The office is on part of the 3,000 acres that Lady Isaac describes as a 'conservation park'. She does not hold with the conventional view of land possession, believing instead that the so-called owner merely controls it, perhaps for their lifetime.

“Nobody actually owns it,” points out Lady Isaac.

As patron, she is happy now with the progress of Ducks Unlimited, believing it to be on the correct course in “allocating money that can be usefully used through other peoples’ work.”

Lady Isaac is pleased that Ducks Unlimited no longer follows a policy of acquiring land in order to turn it into a wetland. Instead, she believes that the organization must continue on its present path of focusing on “enhancing what is already there.”

Lady Isaac, who was brought up in the United Kingdom, is one of the very few people anywhere in the environmental movement who has followed such a large tract of land through so many transformations: from its original state, through an industrial application, and then through to its present manifestation as a conservation park.

The land was originally acquired for quarrying the stone required by



Lady Isaac's salmon farm general manager Michael Field-Dodgson is an authority on geosmin, a peculiarity of cultivated salmon.



Lady Isaac pictured in her boardroom

her husband the late Sir Neil Isaac's gigantic road and infrastructure construction business.

Whilst excavating for roading material they intercepted part of the network of aquifers that exist under the greater Canterbury Plains. They saw the opportunity to rehabilitate the quarry by creating an extensive wildlife area that includes in miniature the braided rivers for which Canterbury is famous.

As the excavations progressed so did the extent of the concept as it became apparent that a large subterranean water resource was present with strata producing a large flow of very pure water. It was this that led to Peacock Springs, where excavated ground would be transformed by creating lakes and ponds in association with re-grassing and tree planting. It would also lead in 1984 to the establishing of the Isaac Salmon Farm widely known for its research and development in the whole sphere of fish cultivation.



Freshwater science holds key to water quality improvement

International and national freshwater experts were in Rotorua in November, discussing new technology, research and issues in freshwaters.

The New Zealand Conference of Freshwater Sciences convener, Professor David Hamilton of Waikato University said, "Major themes in conference sessions have targeted many of the critical issues confronting freshwater resources in New Zealand, including didymo invasions, lake water quality and availability of water in dry regions of the country. An open community forum focused on lake water quality will cater for strong community interest in water quality of Lakes Rotorua and Taupo, and offers an opportunity for lively debate on how to manage competing the pressures and interests that influence lake water quality."

Present also was Professor Alan Hildrew from the University of London, an internationally renowned expert in stream ecology.

Freshwater Sciences Society President Neil Deans said, "Rotorua is a region which both depends on high quality freshwater resources and is grappling with major issues in freshwater management, particularly of its lakes. Researchers predicted some of the current issues decades ago, but their message was not addressed by most authorities at that time. Now the costs of clean up are in the tens of millions of dollars. Similar issues exist throughout the country, either of water quality or quantity, or biosecurity, such as with didymo. If New Zealand wishes to remain clean and green, methods of maintaining the quality of our freshwaters in the face of intensification of land use will need to be employed, or we will need to set and hold to the limits of resource use. This requires ongoing investment in research and environmental monitoring to prevent and address pollution or we will have to accept environmental degradation. There are some exciting technological or engineering developments which can assist in remediation, but, as always, prevention is better than cure."

For further information please contact Professor David Hamilton on 0211357288 from 27 November 2006 or Society President Neil Deans on 0274394381 anytime

Royal swan release at Henley Lake

A pair of surplus male royal swans were released at Henley Lake near Masterton this summer.

"Amazingly enough", reports Ross Cottle, "a couple of weeks later another pair of swans flew in from somewhere and have decided to call Henley Lake home as well. Let's hope they stay".



Ross Cottle and Tenick Dennison releasing the two swans.

Turn your garden into a native bird restaurant with Forest & Bird

No, we don't mean you eat the birds! Forest & Bird's display at Ellerslie International Flower Show in November showed visitors how they can attract native wildlife into their own garden.

Every home gardener can increase native biodiversity in their community by creating a wildlife haven in their own backyard, no matter how small or urban – and the friendly and knowledgeable team at Forest & Bird's exhibit gave good examples.

Birds and animals rely on the miniature garden habitats we create for shelter, nesting and food. Although the limited size of gardens prevents them from being complete habitats, it is surprising how many species can live in a small space if the right conditions are created.

Native birds, such as tui, bellbird, silvereye and even kereru, native butterflies, native skink and gecko, as well as beneficial insects can all be attracted to your garden by offering suitable habitat for them to live in and find food.

Providing a garden haven for these species helps create healthy biodiversity, and brings the enjoyment of their presence – and beautiful birdsong – to homes and communities.

Visitors to Forest & Bird's site at Ellerslie were shown how to:

- Plant native trees, shrubs, ground covers and grasses that attract native wildlife with their flowers, fruit and nectar.
- Plant lists show how to plant for year-round food sources for native birds.
- Supplement the natural nectar sources (such as flax and kowhai flowers) of nectar-feeding birds with an attractive sugar water feeder, and bird 'muffins'.
- Build lizard and invertebrate 'hotels' from rocks, logs and driftwood.
- Incorporate threatened plant species into garden designs.
- 20% of our native plants are threatened with extinction, but many, such as kakabeak, thrive as garden plants.
- Eco-source plants to grow plants sourced from local wild origins. By planting these forms gardeners can keep local diversity alive.
- Avoid planting species that can turn out to be invasive pests. Find out which environmentally friendly alternatives gardeners can plant to replace these bio-nasties.
- Eliminate animal pests such as rats and possums, and make sure pets don't prey on native wildlife.
- Use eco-friendly alternatives to poisonous chemicals.
- Plant native hedges, or a native lawn – it will require less mowing and watering and produce interesting texture and flowers.
- Plant native deciduous trees to provide garden shade in summer and let in light in winter.

Contact: Forest & Bird Communications Officer - Marketing and Promotions, Laura Richards 021 988 315

Hunting in Uruguay Report by Neil Candy

Twelve months of planning, flights confirmed, bags packed, Uruguay here we come. Graham Gurr, Dave Johnston, Richard Dobbinson, Ross Hood and Neil Candy.

All set to leave, but no one told Aerolíneas Argentina this was the plan. We finally departed Auckland eight hours late inside a very crowded aeroplane and arrived Buenos Aires at approximately 9.30pm local time. Having missed our connecting flight and hotel bookings the airline eventually arranged accommodation in BA. We piled into two taxis and embarked on a hair-raising tour of BA by night. I am fully convinced that the traffic police don't exist in Argentina, because we travelled at speeds of up to 130kph down the motorway and not much less through the side streets, our drivers talking to each other on cell phones the whole time. When we finally reached our hotel we were parched and famished. It is amazing how good pizza and beer can be at 02.00am.

Next day we were met at Montevideo airport (Uruguay) and after filling in hunting permits we were driven to Mercedes, about three-and-a-half hours away. The countryside was flat to gently rolling, with much of it undeveloped to our eyes. Dave J's eyes were lighting up with prospects of developing dairy farms and speaking Spanish.

At the estancia we hired our shotguns (mainly Berretta 20-gauge under-and-overs) and embarked on our first evening hunting doves. We surrounded their roost and shot at wave after wave of birds for two hours. The shooting was fast and furious (if not very accurate) and the guns were red-hot. Man it was fun! There were five very happy Kiwis.

Day two saw us upland game hunting for perdiz. This bird is larger than a quail but smaller than a hen pheasant but just as quick as both of them. Hunting over a Brittany spaniel these little guys would explode out of their hiding places and go in all directions, even straight back over the dog and shooters about three metres off the ground. We were hunting about 10 minutes drive from the estancia, some of us hunting on rough scrub country and others on grassy farmland. Over a two-hour period the three groups bagged between 20 and 30 of these spectacular birds each (Not telling how many shells were fired, but ask Graham sometime?) The evening shoot was pass-shooting for doves, pigeon, parakeets and anything else brave enough to fly past.

Day three and we were up in the dark for a big three-course breakfast then off duck-hunting. No mallards to shoot, but rosy bills, Brazilian teal, silver teal, white-faced tree duck, corn duck and brown pintail. It is a little disconcerting because none of them quack so we didn't hear them coming (the best excuse I can think of). The lake covered about 60ac but was only knee-deep right across, which tells you how flat the countryside is. The bird boys (guides) were

disappointed in the number of ducks, as it was late in the season, and recent heavy rain had dispersed them, but we still thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. The afternoon decision – dove shooting or perdiz hunting? The exciting perdiz won hands down.

Up at 04.30am for breakfast and then a 1 1/2 hour trip north towards Paysandu to go duck-hunting. Very foggy all day. Reminded me of Reporoa and the Waikato. Spent all morning duck-hunting on a large shallow lake. Our maimai consisted of a branch or two pushed into the water in front of us and a scrubby tree behind. (Ours was one of the good maimais). For lunch we all adjourned to a nearby town and startled the locals. Many gringos in camouflage clothing invading the only restaurant in town. Chicken steaks, wine, good company, this is how duck-hunting should be. We spent the afternoon back at the lake scaring a few more ducks and pigeons.

Still foggy next morning and we were off to a local dairy farm to hunt perdiz again. Love hunting these little fellows. The farm was very well managed (the owner had trained at Lincoln University) so we had a good talk about the different aspects of farming there verses here. Two hours hunting and nearly 50 perdiz later we left for the lodge and a traditional Uruguayan BBQ lunch, meat, meat and more meat.

Our last morning was spent duck hunting on a little marshy creek bed, about 4 metres wide. The ducks were coming in very low, not even a metre off the ground, and from all angles. This was disconcerting, but very exciting. We were twisting and turning - I nearly wore my neck out.

Back to the lodge to pack, say our farewells and head for Montevideo. This was a hunting trip we all thoroughly enjoyed, and will remember for a long, long time. I would highly recommend it to any keen hunter. Great value for money and a tremendous time.

Graham Gurr is organising another trip for 2007, for more information contact him on gurr@haleyonpublishing.co.nz with Uruguay in the subject line.

SEE PHOTOS ON PAGE 9



Richard Dobbinson holds a perdiz

New Members:

Colin Stewart, Masterton
Adam Wyeth, Masterton
Henning Howmand, Auckland
Martin Askes, Tauranga
Jamie Munn, Palmerston North
Lyn Watson, Palmerston North
Yuri Fyfe, Waikanac
Simon Lusk, Havelock North
Jane Donald, Featherston

Wanted
one pair of Mandarin Ducks,
phone Sharon on
09 833 6363 evenings,
or cellphone 025 989 597



CANADIAN ADVENTURE



First day's bag of Canada Geese in Alberta recently - see the live ones wandering around the side! See story page 11



*Photo from a friend of Graham Gurr's in South Dakota, near Watertown, USA.
This is what your farm pond looks like when 10,000 snow geese drop by on their migration!*

While trying to catch a swan on Jim Campbell's place near Masterton, Jim got stuck in the mud in the pond and was slowly sinking. He had to be pulled out and the photo shows Ross Cottle fishing him out.



The swan is still laughing.... Swan 1. Jim nil.

URUGUAYAN ADVENTURE



Five men go a-hunting... Ross Hood, Graham Gurr, Neil Candy, Richard Dobbinson and Dave Johnston outside the Estancia near Mercedes in Uruguay. See story page 7.

This iz a perdiz in the hands of Richard Dobbinson in Uruguay.



**Joyce Brooks
Ducks Unlimited's
Champion Raffle Seller**



Joyce Brooks

Joyce Brooks of Greytown, married for the past 56 years to long-time DU member and Greytown identity Roger Brooks, has been quietly and efficiently selling Ducks Unlimited raffle books over the years - this year an astonishing 73 books. As mentioned on the back page of this issue in the article carrying the results, Joyce sold the winning ticket for the 23-inch Real Flat TV, and on top of all this, she sold three of the 10 prize-winning tickets. When asked by Flight how she did it, sunny-natured Joyce just smiled enigmatically and said, "I have my clients." She says that "the people around here are so good - I just come up to them and every year they buy them from me." Well, Joyce obviously has a huge amount of friends and family, with her family having inhabited Greytown for many generations. Joyce's contribution of her time, effort, patience and good relationships in the community has greatly benefited the Ducks Unlimited NZ coffers, and she is to be warmly congratulated.

Whio News

Riparian plantings provide blue duck roost habitat

A study of blue duck (whio) roosting habits has shed new light on the ability of mixed land use to provide habitat for the endangered bird. This study, which highlights the importance of maintaining riparian habitat, showed that the blue duck is much more adaptable in using various types of vegetation for roosting than was previously thought.

Blue ducks are usually found in native forest streams and are an indicator of high quality river



Blue ducks - photo by Brenda Baillie

provided additional roost habitat. The surveys showed that the blue ducks were opportunistic and would roost in a wide variety of places, but no matter what they used, all the roosts had two features in common. The roost sites were located at, or very close to, the water's edge and they all provided overhead and lateral cover. This cover is important for security from aerial predators, hiding young, shelter, rest and sleep.

Riparian vegetation provides a dual role in supplying roost habitat for blue ducks. The root systems of live trees along the bank edge provide stable undercut bank for shelter. Dense, overhanging vegetation provides similar cover. The riparian forest also delivers large structural pieces of wood to the river system, the logs and log jams and large root plates providing roost habitat for blue ducks. In areas that have been surveyed for a number of years, some roost sites were favoured by blue ducks and used repeatedly from year to year whereas others would only be used once.

Roost habitat is only one of the essential habitat requirements for blue ducks. The results of this survey show that it should be included in evaluating habitat requirements for the protection, management and enhancement of blue duck populations. This example illustrates how habitat of remnant native species can potentially be extended onto private property through creating ecological 'corridors' that support greater biodiversity.

systems. However, the study revealed that in river systems where blue duck populations already exist, they can be found in areas of adjoining mixed land use as long as there is suitable, high quality, habitat. This means that exotic riparian plantings may provide good quality roosting sites, not just native vegetation.

An example of this is the Takaputahi River in the Eastern North Island. In areas where native riparian vegetation was scarce, overhead cover provided by willows growing along the stream edge were the key roost sites. Other exotic species such as large radiata pine root mats and hawthorn



Observing the blue ducks - photo by Brenda Baillie

Brenda Baillie works for Ensis and Andrew Glaser is with DoC. We thank Treegrower magazine for this story.



Spoonbill ducks above, photo kindly contributed and taken by Gail Simons, at her Stoney Oaks Wildlife Park



These lovely photos are of a shy DU member's work on his wetlands. And his name is Jack. Place: begins with Wai...



Ducks Unlimited Canada - a true success story

by Ron Petrie

The Leader-Post Wire Services, Mortlach

People, it is said, are Saskatchewan's greatest export, and that's true, metaphorically. Economically, a stronger case could be made for wheat, potash, canola, or oil.

But literally?

Let's try ducks. Just for today. In the sloughs and potholes of the Prairies, particularly of Saskatchewan, millions of the birds hatch and grow every summer, replenishing the needs of sports and tourism all the way down the gut of North America, from the Dakotas to the Louisiana bayous. What's great — greatest? — about waterfowl as an international export is: No shipping costs.

Ducks are a self-propelled commodity. A late-fall chance for one last look at the mallards as they gather in pre-flight preparation for migration is what has drawn Michael Champion of Ducks Unlimited and me out here to the northern edge of the Missouri Coteau in the R.M. of Wheatlands.

Hunters we're not. Unless cameras and binoculars count, both of us are unarmed. We're in jeans and windbreakers, not camouflage nor hipwaders, and we're stomping, not skulking, across our first stop, a duck pasture. Technically, it's a cow pasture, and a fine one, but actually the land belongs to the ducks. Not that we're likely to spot any ducks. Or cows, this time of the year.

I'm confused. Again.

Once more Champion explains. One of about 2,300 Ducks Unlimited Canada projects in Saskatchewan, this one, the Breton property, was purchased and seeded for spring grazing by the cattle normally kept at the adjacent 31,000-acre Val Jean Community Pasture. In return, the community pasture reserves a portion of its land for ducks, keeping livestock off until the hatch is complete in early

July. Mallards gain new habitat, the cattle see fresh grazing range, and meanwhile a bit of pressure is taken off the old community pasture grasses.

Ducks helping cows helping ducks.

In his seventh year with Ducks Unlimited brokering deals for habitat preservation, Champion is particularly fond of the Breton pasture, not only for its creativity, but also for its complexity and scope.

"Working with the community pastures has strengthened our partnership with the provincial government," he says. "But even more important is the fact that we're dealing with so many producers from the community pasture."

Winning the support and confidence of ranchers and farmers is key. Since its first marsh preservation near Kinistino in 1938, Ducks Unlimited has had a typical marriage — ups and downs, times for better and times for worse — with this part of the world's single-most influential friend and foe of waterfowl, the private landowner.

As one of 70 provincial employees of Ducks Unlimited, the Moose Jaw born-and-raised Champion hits the road out of the Regina office as a go-between, putting to work not only his two passions, agriculture and nature, but also his education in agriculture from the University of Saskatchewan, specialized in grasses and ecology.

"I have the greatest job in the world," he says of the career opportunity, a perfect fit, that came his way after a brief stint with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Champion has worked on programs that pay farmers to convert grainland to forage; that help cover a farmer's income shortfall, if any, between a crop of spring wheat and the more duck-friendly winter wheat.

From the Waikato

Jack Worth has sent this item from the Hamilton Fish and Game Association which reports that:

"Lake Cameron, situated behind the Gostiona Restaurant at Rukuhia...is making excellent progress. In recent times, safety rails have been installed on the bridges, the reserve surrounding the lake has been fenced, largely but not entirely on the boundary and most grey-willow in and around the margin of the lake has been felled. The reserve area around this lake is relatively large - and whilst a small area has already been planted there is a huge job left to be finished. We have just received a Honda Grant through Environment Waikato (EW) that will allow a further 3000 trees to be planted. Some help is forthcoming from locals, but a great deal has so far been done by this Club (Hamilton Fish and Game) the Department of Conservation and Environment Waikato. There is a need still to install several major silt traps and of course in order to control water levels in the lake, the obligatory weir".

In this same newsletter the editorial started as follows:

"My dad always used the old adage 'all things in moderation'. During my hunting life, the cry from the masses has been: the hunting season starts at the wrong time. Famous hunter and administrator Tom O'Connor always railed about the season

starting too late - his view being that 'dirty weather came (regularly) at the end of April'. "That's when the season should start", he always said. Many others observe that a later start would inevitably increase the chances of extra hydration (rain).

Personal observation over a long period has led me to note a very predictable pattern in the Waikato weather. Our 'spring' ends between Christmas and 10 January. This is followed by summer drought, which can end in March but regularly continues well into May. The big wet comes (nearly) every year between 6 and 10 June - exactly at the time the Pacific Oscillation moves away from our shores. Then the ducks that we chased away early in May arrive back in droves. Occasionally, there is an exception and we saw it this year - a very large amount of very early autumn rain. These dream conditions that would deliver (a sky darkened by the shadows of) great mobs of waterfowl cueing up to land in our ponds, rivers, lakes."

Thanks, Jack. - Ed.

Alberta Canada, a hunting trip to remember

Report by Graham Gurr

"Hi, can you tell me where to get the shuttle for the NISKU inn," I asked the attendant. "Nisku," he said repeating my pronunciation. I had said Nisku as in Manaku. "Oh, you mean the Nisku." Only he said nisooow.

Welcome to Canada, another country with which we share a common language, if only we could understand what we were saying to each other.

In September 2005 Craig Worth and I had travelled to Edmonton to hunt with Blaine Burns of Tofield, Alberta, for ducks and geese. Finding our hotel at 0100 a.m. was the first of many interesting events ahead of us over the next few days.

Blaine had arranged for us to be picked up the next day and transported to Tofield, by one of his guides. It was a Sunday and change-over day for clients, so we settled into the lodge and met the other clients as they arrived over the course of the afternoon.

Blaine came highly recommended by our friends at Ducks Unlimited, he was for many years a waterfowl biologist for them in Alberta. He arranged for us to go scouting with a couple of his guides for the early evening. We covered a lot of territory looking for birds and the fields they were using. Once found, a personal call to the farmer nearly always resulted in an invitation to come and shoot as many as you are allowed. (I've rephrased that slightly for those of you not used to the ravages of several thousand ducks descending on a half harvested field of peas.)

Next morning before any reasonable person would be awake, we drove out into the dark on our first hunt. Blaine was to be our guide, but before we could get to where we were going we had to meet up with one of his scouts who had found a harvested pea field being used by some ducks about an hour away from the lodge. Getting to the correct field required quite a lot of cross-country driving, which in the dark was quite an adventure. Eventually we arrived and set out the decoys. Two dozen full-body goose decoys and several dozen mallard shells. Blaine set up the blinds; we had individual lay-out blinds, which we had to cover with vegetation before being shown the correct way to get in and out. They had very comfortable seats that allowed you to lay back and flaps, which covered you. To shoot all you had to do was sit up. The flaps were sprung so they snapped back as soon as they were opened about a third of the way. You could see what was happening through the covers, which had gauze panels in the flaps, the sides cut the wind and the bottom kept you dry, so they were warm and cozy. Craig and I were so impressed with them we carried one each back to New Zealand at the end of our trip.

The ducks started before it was light, but legal shooting time. The first ones had set their wings and were in the decoys before anyone was ready. The next lot was coming in as the first landed, Blaine called the shot. "Take 'em!" we sat up in unison and five semi autos with three shots each let rip. Ducks were falling everywhere. Mallard and pintail. Blaine's black lab made swift work of recovering the slain. We settled back in the blinds, but not for long - the honk-honk of Canada geese came clearly. Blaine got them settled and coming in our direction with a few calls. As a skein of Canada geese loomed into view over the decoys the call "Take 'em!" sounded and the rapid fire of the autos did the rest. Craig on my right had a double, I had one and as the geese swung over the left end of the row of blinds our companions, three good ol' boys from Tennessee, showed us how it was done. It rained geese. Once again Blaine's dog did the hard work and retrieved. Ducks and geese turned up at regular intervals for the next hour. Blaine counted and recounted the ducks and geese. We were allowed eight ducks and eight geese each. When the duck count reached 39, Blaine said that the next ducks were all mine but to only shoot one. Two swung through the decoys and I tracked one with the gun, as I shot the other overtook it, but only

one fell, much to my relief. We had 40 ducks and 20 geese for the morning.

Back to the lodge for breakfast. A real treat, as were all the meals. Fran was in charge of the cooking and she was brilliant. She used to own the local restaurant and had retired to work as a cook on the oil developments in Alberta. She made the best meals I've ever had in a duck camp. Her biscuits (scones) were easily the best I've ever eaten. They were so good I had her show me how she makes them. The secret was buttermilk.

We had been so successful for the morning our evening hunt was cancelled, as we only needed a few more geese each to limit out for the day.

Next morning we got up and did it all again. This time it was a field the geese were using, the lay-out blinds proving to be deadly as they were so low to the ground and once covered in vegetation so almost impossible to see. With good decoy placement the geese land at your feet. Once again flight after flight came into the decoys. These really were stupid geese. I've hunted them further south in Washington and South Dakota and by the time they arrived there they have wised up to hunters. With the birds in Alberta we were probably the first hunters they had seen. At one stage Craig had three dead in the air with three shots. I had a double out of the same mob and the good ol' boys took their share. We stopped a few short of the limit.

We went out for an evening hunt, well it would have been an evening hunt but the ducks started to arrive before we had the decoys set up. They just kept coming and we were dropping them as quickly as they arrived. I tried to take photographs of the action but my point and shoot camera was not up to the task. All too soon it was over, and still daylight.

Craig and I had in total five days. Most days we would limit out on either ducks or geese. The best days were when we got to hunt both, morning and evening. A nap after brunch set you up for an evening hunt.

I met up with Blaine in Uruguay this year when a group of DU members went to hunt ducks, dove and penzif. (See story this issue). After a little persuasion, (it was five against one), Blaine has donated a three-day hunt for two people for our 2007 AGM auction, to be taken September/October 2007 or 2008. The value of this hunt is US\$1950 per person. For that you will get two full days and one half day hunting. It includes meals, accommodation and guiding. Not included are tips, shells, bird cleaning, airfares and hotels before or after the hunt.

For more information contact Graham Gurr (09) 4895337, gurr@halcyonpublishing.co.nz. He is also organising another trip to Uruguay for July 2007.



Guide Murray, Craig Worth and Graham Gurr



Manawatu Chapter's Big Day Out - reported by Tony and Betty Simpson

A full bus, a fun driver, Neil and Julie Candy as trip leaders - sounds like a recipe for a good day out.

The Manawatu chapter visited three wetlands south and west of Palmerston North in late November observing a variety of habitat and wildfowl with each wetland having its own character.

First port of call was the fascinating sand country 'bolt-hole' of Dave and Anne West. (See photo below). Complete with camouflage bach and good shooting possies, as well as excellent breeding places, we were treated to nine different variety of wildfowl - teal, shoveler, paradise sheldrake, mallard, grey, coot, swan, Canada geese with little 'uns in tow, and dabchick. Dave is not sure of this, but feels the dabchick could be like the beaver family and come up under a bank to nest - very secretively.

On to Te Hākari south of Levin - an old stamping ground of Neil's. Oh! the tales we were told, among the more praisable being the story of - fortunately - an unsuccessful attempt to burn down the farm hay shed. Te Hākari is 34 acres of 'buffer zone' country between upland and coast. The local iwi, with the help of outside funding, are trying to restore the wetland.

The return of bittern and visits from Royal spoonbill have been an encouragement.

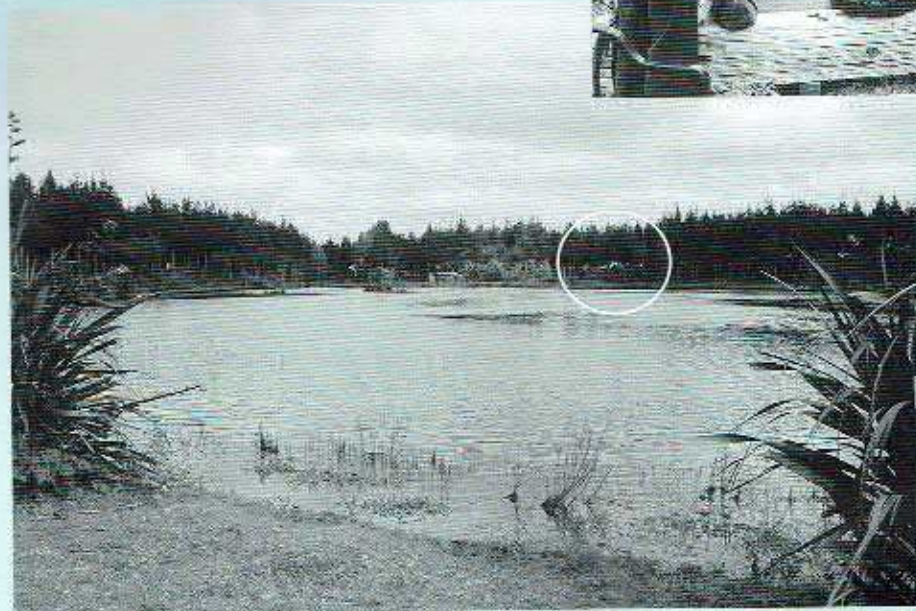
Also part of the buffer zone is the coastal lake system that runs from Waikanae to north of Wangamui. Lake Harman is one of these lakes. It is 'Paradise Found' for our very own William and Jan Abel.

But first it was time to replenish energy and restore equilibrium with lunch on their deck, overlooking their wetland and out to the lake.

Their story is one of patience and hard work, with the results now very evident. To tell the full story is a tale in itself - suffice to say the visit to them was a great way to round out the day. We left laughing at the story of the shooters whose mui-mui caught fire - funny for those watching - not so funny for those caught in the conflagration (that story appeared in the last issue - Ed).



Above - Those who know will spot John Dermer searching for something, host William Abel in the peaked cap and Phil Soler on right - with apologies to those un-named DU Manawatu members.



Left - Dave and Anne West's bach is seen on the far shore.

New Zealand working with other countries to protect endangered albatross and petrel

Members of an international treaty to protect southern hemisphere albatrosses and petrels launched a three-year work plan to secure the seabirds' future, at a meeting in Christchurch in November, reports DoC.

"Of the 28 species of albatross and petrel that are covered by the treaty, 18 are native to New Zealand but they spend much of their lives beyond our jurisdiction," meeting chair Bill Mansfield of New Zealand said.

"That's why it is not enough for New Zealand to take conservation measures on its own - New Zealand needs the help of all other

countries in southern temperate latitudes. The same is true for these other countries. As just one example, the Chatham albatross breeds here and is considered a native species in New Zealand. However it spends much of its life feeding in the Humboldt Current and is familiar to mariners off Ecuador, Peru and Chile".

Argentina, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, Brazil, France, the United States and the United Kingdom attended the second meeting of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels.

Signatories to the agreement have agreed to tackle key threats to albatross and petrel, namely, animal pests at breeding sites, pollution including from eating plastic rubbish, and accidental capture in fishing operations.

Wairio Plant Survival Counts

An assessment of plant survival rates in the Wairio wetland restoration project was sent to the Wairio Wetland Restoration Committee recently by Don Bell, pictured on right. He writes:

Howard [Egan]'s comments from his inspection of the area in late September, I undertook a detailed assessment of survival/mortality over the accessible areas on 16 October.

Overall things look pretty good. We knew some plants were washed off the islands and others buried by debris at the high-water marks following the July floods. At that time we also noted the poor survival of kowhai. Since then, however, the majority of plant species has come through well.

The few species that performed relatively poorly appeared to have more exacting site requirements. Most often they failed where water would have ponded for long periods, yet survived where drainage was better. Plants with higher than average mortality were:

- *Sophora microphylla* (kowhai) – 56%
- *Pittosporum tenuifolium* (kohuhu) 54%
- *Caprosma robusta* (karamu) 27%.

• *Lophomyrtus obcordata* (Rohutu) – to all appearances mostly dead, but on close inspection they have shed all leaves and are now trying to grow new shoots. Hopefully they will come through OK.

If we look at the survival of plants in particular sites (hopefully you will visualise the areas from my descriptions) the results are:

Just north of the gate: 82% survival. Parts of this area were not sprayed so many plants were hard to see. It also contained a high proportion of the rohu.

Extending onto the stopbank: 66% survival. Low-lying parts of this area would have been under water for a considerable period; even some flax couldn't handle the conditions. Also debris wash was a problem at the high-water mark.

Over by the remnant kahikatea, totara, kowhai: 73% survival. Again plants in the lower spots fared worst and there was a lot of debris dropped in a couple of higher spots.

The islands (could only access the three nearest the track): 93% of those not washed away survived. Some plants look a bit sick, due to sand build-up; whilst others had part of their roots exposed where sand had washed away.

Weeds

Other than by the gate, the sprayed spots were still quite visible in the drier sites, but increasingly invaded by clover, rhizomatous grasses, dock and dandelion in wetter areas. One or two localised areas of blackberry were showing signs of rejuvenation as well.

On Wednesday 18 October I took advantage of the rare windless day to release spray around all mainland plants, using a mix of Roundup 'Transorb' (0.8%) and Gardoprim (1.6 ml/L). This should take them through the spring-summer growth period free of weed competition.

Blackberry patches and the odd wild briar were treated with Grazon (6 ml/L) plus pulse.

Given that we have a few *Phormium tenax* fans left over at Akura, I also sprayed for blanking in anticipation of a heavily reduced price. Approximately 140 plants will fill all the gaps as well as one or two extra spots. If I can negotiate a good outcome with Peter Cameron I will plant these in a couple of weeks.

On the islands Howard's grass is starting to show up, particularly on the leeward batters and in the water runnels. There are signs of what I think is natural vegetation germinating on the moist sand above the high-tide mark. If nature is kind, I think these areas will look pretty good in a year or two.



Don Bell

Don Bell

Forest & Bird Conservation meetings

Forest & Bird has been busy promoting better conservation of New Zealand's precious freshwater habitats and wetlands in recent weeks. At a meeting held in September, General Manager Mike Britton, who represents Forest & Bird on the Government's Sustainable Water Programme of Action consultative group, advocated for policies and actions that lead to greater protection for native species and restore the natural character of degraded freshwater ecosystems.

Top of the South Field Officer Debs Martin presented Forest & Bird's submission at consent hearings for TrustPower's application to build a hydro-electric power scheme on the Wairau River in September in Nelson. She told the hearing that the scheme would have significant adverse effects on the spectacular braided river system, adjoining wetlands, and native wildlife and plant species that live there, including the endangered black-fronted tern.

And more than 100 people turned out for the official celebration on 14 October to mark the Manawatu Estuary becoming a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. Speakers included Banrock Station Manager Tony Sharley, Forest & Bird

National President Dr Peter Maddison, Darren Hughes MP, Foxton and Mayor Brendan Duffy.

Dr Peter Maddison thanked Joan Leckie for her dedicated efforts to achieve the listing and persuaded her to join him at the microphone to receive a vote of thanks. Joan has played a principal role in efforts to achieve Ramsar status and is the chairwoman of both the Manawatu Estuary Trust and the Forest & Bird Horowhenua Branch. Local MP Darren Hughes presented Joan with an official certificate from the Ramsar Secretariat and later a stone sculpture was unveiled on the esplanade overlooking the estuary to mark the occasion.

For more information go to www.forestandbird.org.nz/mediarelease/2006/0814_wairaupreciousresource.asp.



The Canada goose conundrum -

Letter to the editor

11 October 2006

Dear Editor,

Your issue 129 includes two well-considered letters on Canada Geese from Howard Egan and Mike Hucks, both of whom are credible commentators on this issue whose opinions I take seriously. I agree with most of what they both have to say, but each raises an issue on which further comment from Fish & Game New Zealand is appropriate.

Howard considers geese becoming out of control in the Wairarapa over the past two or three years to be largely because of lack of action by Wellington Fish & Game Council.

I dispute that geese became out of control in the Wairarapa, or anywhere else. We have certainly had sustained public complaint about geese from the farming community, but we have always responded constructively to any specific complaint about a goose problem. None of the couple of dozen farmers who have advised us of a goose problem has been denied assistance to deal with it. Hunters now enjoy an open season on geese in the Wairarapa that is nearly eleven months long, so they are not being denied either.

I agree entirely that a moult cull of geese is undesirable, wasting as it does both the hunting resource and the money. However, not having a cull when the bird numbers are too high is equally unacceptable to the farmers. The only sustainable answer lies in hunters harvesting enough geese to keep the population within limits agreed with the farmers, without the need for additional culls. I would happily receive your readers' views on how this might best be achieved.

Mike considers that Fish & Game spends at least 85% of its limited income on administration, and that waterfowl enhancement

funding is negligible. Our accounting system, like that of most enterprises, does not allocate costs to administration, but rather to the work that produces the results that we are here to deliver. Administration becomes part of the overhead cost apportioned to the work we do. This results in our work being charged at about 2.6 times the wages cost of the staff time involved. I suggest that this compares very favourably with the overhead costs charged by any doctor, dentist, lawyer, consultant or any other public or commercial body. Mike would be correct to observe that 85% of Fish & Game's money is spent on fixed costs, leaving only 15% of it available to spend on projects. But the organization that functions on the 85% spends most of its time delivering genuine Fish & Game results, rather than on administration.

With regard to habitat enhancement, surely the true measure of what is achieved is the amount of habitat enhanced, rather than the amount of money thrown at it. Twelve years ago my Council used to allocate \$15,000 a year to habitat grants, and I am proud to admit that we now allocate none. What we do instead is use our staff capabilities to help people with good habitat projects to get access to other sources of funds, resulting in far more wetland enhancement these days than we used to be able to achieve, and without our licenceholders having to meet all the costs. So yes, habitat grant funding is negligible, but if we are getting more bangs for fewer bucks surely that is a good thing?

I appreciate Howard's and Mike's contributions on these subjects, and I welcome their healthy criticism of our efforts.

Peter Hill
Manager
Wellington Region,
Fish & Game New Zealand

Bill Clinton-Baker remembered

Peter and Marilyn Forward of West Vancouver, British Columbia, sent this gracious letter to Ducks Unlimited in August and Sandra Pipes has forwarded it for publication in Flight.

"Please accept this small donation in loving memory of William Clinton-Baker who passed away recently in Masterton, New Zealand. We enjoyed Bill's warm hospitality while we were visiting New Zealand in the mid-eighties and that was how we learned of his keen interest in your organisation. At that time, 'Bill' was saving an endangered species of ducklings by keeping them in a pen with one of his chicken hens. We then had the opportunity to see the little ones transferred with great care to another home - and I believe that was that of Jim Campbell. Hopefully, that project ended with babies growing to maturity and that the species lived on. We also had a very interesting visit to Mount Bruce, which he also supported.

More recently, Bill and Jan came to Canada and while they were here they went to a friend's home near Williams Lake, BC. Together, they shared their support of Ducks Unlimited and there is still a strong effort to save the wetlands in that area.

Our thanks to Sandra Pipes for helping me find a way to send this to you. Best wishes to Ducks Unlimited for future success.

Sincerely, Peter and Marilyn Forward"

Annual Ducks Unlimited Raffle Results

Howard Egan of Carterton, who organised this very successful raffle, announced that the raffle was duly drawn on 27 October at Masterton Police station. A noteworthy thing is that Mrs Joyce Brooks of Greytown (see photo page 8), already a stalwart in the raffle-ticket-selling arena, not only sold a record 73 books of tickets this year, but also sold the winning ticket for the 23 inch Real Flat TV, and on top of all this, Joyce sold three of the 10 prizewinning tickets.

DUCKS UNLIMITED (NZ)

Annual Fundraising Lottery

5th Barry Petherbridge, Te Puke Ticket number 2845	6th H&C Prince, Upper Hutt Ticket number 2920
7th James Nilsson, Albany Ticket number 2746	8th Jeff Griffith, Masterton Ticket number 1963
9th Evan Brooks, Carterton Ticket number 1305	10th Ann Pearson, Cambridge Ticket number 3635

1st prize Bill Green, Masterton Ticket number 3332
2nd Ann Pearson, Cambridge Ticket number 2830
3rd Mark Dirksen, Devonport Ticket number 1692
4th I. Hicks, Carterton Ticket number 3320

The Patience of Alan Wilks

It has just been realised that this is the 40th issue of Flight that Alan Wilks has mailed out. This means that over the last ten years since April 1997 he has stuck nearly 24,000 address labels on envelopes and until recently every one had to be permit-stamped and then contain your copy of Flight and sometimes a pamphlet. A sterling effort all for free, please keep up the good work Alan! Ed

Was it a rifleman?

Your editor, Gail and her husband Peter were recently bemused then confused when a high-pitched squeaking noise invaded their Greytown garden, even to the extent that they turned off the Concert Programme playing at the time, thinking there had been a scratch in the CD. Then they inspected the environs in case someone was pushing a squeaky wheelbarrow. This went on for two days. Finally a small wren-like bird was seen flitting about in their nearby fig tree. Squeaking. A Lot.

Coincidentally an article in the February 2006 Dawn Chorus magazine from Tiritiri Matangi described the bird which had been plaguing them... It was surely a male rifleman bird, and as Mark Hauber of the University of Auckland reports in Dawn Chorus: "If you see, but do not hear a rifleman up close, chances are you spent too much time at rock concerts in your youth and have lost the ability to hear high frequency calls". Any letters or comments would be welcome.

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For membership and general inquiries, Ducks Unlimited, PO Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland
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