

Flight



ISSUE 131 - APRIL 2007





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, Raetihi
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

Wetland Care Report

A busy period so far this year.

We have done a project in Woodville for David Challies on his farm and helped Graeme Berry in Ohakune with another large wetland.

Three more projects are in the pipeline for Ross and Alice Hood, Horowhenua, Wyeth brothers in Masterton and the Stewarts in Masterton as well.

Geoff Reid has also requested assistance with his Mikimiki wetland.



Make sure you register
NOW for this
exhilarating weekend

Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc
2007 Annual General Meeting
27-29 July 2007

Venue and Accommodation

Sun Court Hotel, North Croft Street, Taupo

Programme

Friday 27 July

7pm Registration and pre-dinner drinks followed by dinner

Saturday 28 July

9am AGM

10.30am After morning tea visit to Wairakei Pastoral Developments. Drinks and lunch to follow.

6.30pm Drinks Swift Conference room and silent auction

7.30pm Award presentations

8.00pm Dinner and main auction

Sunday 29 July

9.30am Social gathering, speaker and morning tea

Insight

Recently, Sharon and I hosted an employee of Ducks Unlimited Canada, Barbara Hanbridge. She is from the prairie province of Saskatchewan and worked out of the DU headquarters in Saskatoon. With a degree in biology, Barbara had started work as a field operative in Saskatchewan. She was then asked to transfer to the educational side of DU Canada through their Greenwing or youth programme, the focus of which is to get young people to think about conservation at an early age and hopefully take those attitudes into adulthood.

She showed us the literature that was aimed at the young, programmes set up for the classroom and practical field trips designed to inspire young minds.

She left me in no doubt that we need to start working on tomorrow's conservationists today. As a small beginning we still have some of Chris Thomas' DVDs available to any school which wishes to use them.

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:

Black swan female on the attack.
Photo: Bruce Lambert.



Pukaha Mt Bruce kokako news update

The first kokako nest fledged in early January with two chicks leaving the nest. The whole family has been seen moving through the parents' territory and while they are together the parents are not likely to attempt another nest.

Two other kokako nests have hatched and are under close observation. One has two chicks and the other at least one (we haven't yet been able to get a clear view of this one). We have banded two chicks from the first nest and will attempt to band the chick(s) from the others later. There are three kokako pairs whose nests have so far eluded us, but we keep on looking.

(From Pukaha Mt Bruce newsletter)

Rare black kite seen in Wairarapa

The black kite, an Australian bird of prey, which is fully protected, is a rare find in New Zealand and was seen in early February, close to DU's Wairio Block, by Colin Miskelly and Kate McAlpine, of Birding-NZ@yahoo.com, a members-only bird spotting site. Apparently anyone can belong to this group through the internet.

They reported:

"An auspicious start to the day with an actual Wairarapa black kite flying low over the car while on the Lake Ferry road (near Pahautea turn-off). It stayed obligingly near the road for the next five minutes as we executed a couple of u-turns.

We walked out to the lake through the Wairio block, about 3km to the south of the Oporua spillway. There were very few waders south of the spillway: one bar-tailed godwit, one Pacific golden plover, four variable oystercatchers, two NZ pied oystercatchers, 100 pied stilts, 11 Caspian terns and 27 royal spoonbills in a tight flock at the spillway.

Most of the waders were in the JK Donald block, north of the spillway, especially at the head of a long inlet: nine Pacific golden plovers, about 400 banded dotterel, 150 pied stilts, one hybrid stilt, three red-necked stilts and two pectoral sandpipers.

A bittern flushed twice from the JK Donald block eventually flew south to the Wairio block.

Colin Miskelly & Kate McAlpine"

(BIRDING-NZ is moderated by Brent Stephenson)



Jim Campbell with Duncan Sinclair ex-President DU Canada, of the Bahamas Trust and Hazard Campbell, USDU President.

Diana, Lady Isaac with Jim Campbell on the left and Norman Marsh at the official opening of Waimara Lodge in 1990



Jim, his 'puddlejumper' and his dog



The view from the top

Our Patron - Jim Campbell

A Global View of Wetlands

Jim remembers fondly the kingpins of Ducks Unlimited in North America who gave him so unstintingly of their encouragement and hospitality when he began hitting his conservationist straps. One of the centrepieces of the campaign was in 1987 when he attended DU USA's 50th convention in Vancouver. It was there that he met such luminaries as Hazard Campbell, (USDU president), Arthur Irving, (Canada's DU president), Duncan Sinclair, Stew Morrison, (executive director of DU Canada), and an enthusiastic group of DU Canada Contributor Services reps. The DUNZ co-patron goes back to 1976 when he signed up with the recently-formed DUNZ, after being prompted to do so by local enthusiast, the late Ron Denny. It was not long before he attended a board meeting, and soon after joined the board himself under the Pirani regime. Swift movement within the organisation followed as Jim's long association with the conservation movement, notably through the old acclimatisation society, proved to be valuable experience.

Soon he was elected as President of DUNZ. Today, what remains in his mind most about the US and Canadian DU is the sheer scale of their operations. He recalls vividly a visit to Herb Moulding's home, touring DU projects for three days, inspecting every type of control structure used for wetland enhancement and visiting a large warehouse in Winnipeg used exclusively to store DU auction items.

From this visit a system was set up for DUNZ to obtain auction items. This visit also impressed Jim in the extent of paid staff. He made a point of keeping in touch with Canada's CEO Stew Morrison, and Stew and his wife Pat became special friends. Their son Chris spent his 'gap' year with Jim and Raana on their farm at 'Rameslie', working when there was work to be done, and seeing much of New Zealand through many DU projects.

The information witnessed in DU's massive projects has led Jim to implement some of these schemes himself. Especially noted were the lagoon configurations such as Henley Wetland Complex, which were completed with the assistance of the late John Falloon and the late Ted Hansen. Such schemes also allowed Jim to give full reign to



The man and the land

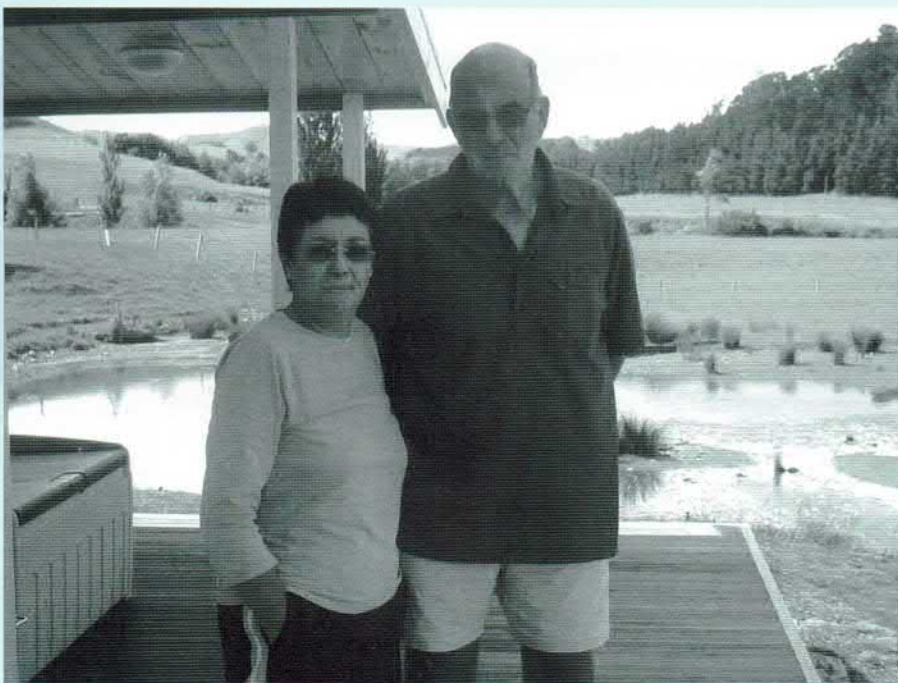
his great hobby, wetland construction.

He put himself and his Allis Chalmers HD5 bulldozer, along with Eketahuna contractor Gary Thomson, at the disposal of the movement. One of the highlights of their wetland grooming skills was working on the hard-to-reach place of Mana Island with Jason Christensen and Robin Gay.

The contribution from co-patron Diana, Lady Isaac in the form of mute swan cygnet donations was a significant addition to the funding process at this time, along with numerous donations from the late Norman Marsh's and Dave Johnston's Broadlands Wildfowl Trust. The late Horrie Sinclair's generous gift of 800 acres to DU anticipated a huge conservation management commitment and thus was put in place an alliance between DUNZ and the QEII National Trust.

As government policies and people changed so did the state's commitment to the project. DUNZ was left with an increasingly costly commitment that it was compelled to bear single-handedly.

Eventually this whole project evolved into the formation of the New Zealand Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust from the sale of the Sinclair Wetland. The experience was a salutary one and signalled a change of emphasis for DUNZ away from complex administration to the philosophy of today, which sees the movement dedicated to securing, enhancing and creating new wetlands. The waterfowl and wetland film produced by Chris Thomas helps to promote the cause of DU sponsorships such as Banrock Wines' significant contribution have also helped to lift the public profile. Jim acknowledges that the strength of DU is a direct result of the dedication of the many committed volunteers, from board level to grass roots.



Jim and Raana Campbell at home

Trouts, ducks and a stoat

by Bruce Lambert

It all started in the first week in December 2006 with the usual trip to Taupo. Always a good time to fish the lake as there are always a lot of smelt about. We fish with fly rods, three colours of lead line, six metres of nylon trace and a yellow parson's glory fly - works a treat. Boated 52 trout over three days, let most go, just brought a few home to cook on the smoker.

One morning as we were coming into the boat ramp, we noticed a small duck with a bad attitude. The duck was attacking swans and other ducks around a small yacht that was moored at the jetty. We decided to go and find out what his problem was and found that his lady friend had made a nest in an old tyre that was used to stop the boats hitting the pier.

She had three eggs in her nest and between beating up the neighbours, the drake was helping her build up the nest by passing her scraps and branches. Nobody at the jetty knew what kind of duck this was so, when I got back to Greytown, I asked Alan Wilks of Ducks Unlimited if he could tell from the photo that I had taken. Australasian coot, came the answer, and he said, "Coots breed once a year, their eggs, five to seven per clutch, are creamy-white, uniformly dark-spotted, and oval with distinctly contrasting blunt and pointed ends".

The coot was first seen in New Zealand in 1958 at Lake Hayes in Central Otago. Since then their range has expanded widely; the population is probably more than 1000. It is clear that the coot is a very mobile bird. Extensive movements are triggered by drought or floods in Australia.

The way the bird was acting, he would make a great fullback for the Australia rugby team, would need to change his colours though because he was All Black in colour.

Left the lake until next year and back to work for three weeks until the Christmas holidays. Down south where all good trampers go, the country is so much bigger than the north island, bigger hills, bigger valleys, more snow (it snowed on Arthur's Pass on 31 December). Mary and I tramped in the Bealy ranges in snow up to our knees in some of the most beautiful country you will see in New Zealand.

Then on 5 January it was off to Mt Aspiring National Park for four days of tramping with a group of 40 from all around New Zealand, Australia, Taiwan and even Auckland. More great country, walked up to the Rob Roy glacier where the keas steal anything not tied down and you can here the crack and rumble of the avalanches before you see the snow falling off the mountains. On the second day we climbed up to Mt Aspiring and on the side of the track found a stoat in a box trap. DOC had done a great job on him. One of their traps had stopped one of the biggest killers of our native birds and ducks in New Zealand. Great job DOC.

Air NZ lost Jimmy Chang's luggage on his way from Auckland to Queenstown, so he arrived with just what he was standing up in. Everyone rallied around so that he would have enough gear to tramp every day and on the last day his pack arrived. The first thing he went for was his camera to record some of the beauty of that part of our country. I sent him a CD of the photos that we had taken over the past four days so that he would have a record of his trip.

After all of that, it's back to work - fishing on weekends or tramping, depending on the weather.

Sounds a well-balance lifestyle, Bruce! - Ed.



Taupo rainbow trout



Australasian coot in Taupo



Stoat in DOC trap

Containing Your Dog

by Alan Wilks



Alan and Jess with the In-Ground Radio Fence package

My section is nearly three-quarters of an acre and not dog-proof, mainly because of the cattlestop, and I was reluctant to put a gate there.

My yellow lab Jess is now four, and the two-and-a-half years I've had her she would jump the cattlestop if anyone walked past. This was a constant worry, but the worst aspect was that she could get into the neighbour's property. They're weekenders and don't like the rabbits, which I feel are part of our environment, so they spread the anti-coagulant rabbit bait Pindone which Jess -

being a labrador - would scoff up. It has cost me hundreds of dollars in vet fees. Before I had her she was tied up most of the time and I wanted her to be able to run free but even though I watched her like a hawk she'd get away sometimes.

Jess is my life now I'm a widower, and my son David and daughter-in-law were concerned I'd lose her so for Christmas they gave me a Petsafe In-Ground Radio Fence which David installed over Waitangi weekend.

Easy to install, the system consists of a single wire which can be attached to a fence and tucked into a spade cut across gateways or lawn. A continuous loop is formed around the area and where the loop joins, the wires are twisted together and don't emit a signal and these are run to the power source and control box.

When wearing the collar the dog gets a warning beep a little over a metre from the wire and any closer gets a belt. Flags are provided to put at the warning distance for training, which is supposed to be quite extensive but I found Jess learned very quickly. For two days you have the dog on a lead without the collar and correct it when it gets to the flags. On the third day you take your dog wearing the collar to the flags and let it hear the beep and then get a belt. The next day I couldn't get Jess anywhere near the flags so



This is the plug-in site

I let her run free, wearing the collar, and she stayed in the section. The fourth day the milkman arrived and tooted and Jess took off and obviously jumped the cattlestop at speed and got a belt and no way would she come back into the section again while wearing the collar! While I was encouraging her back and holding the collar, I got a belt myself!

It's now six weeks since she's been off the section without me and interestingly she seems to know when she's wearing the collar.



No way is Jess going past those white flags either side of the cattlestop!!

Available from pet shops, it's expensive at \$500. It comes with 500 ft of wire with another coil if needed at a cost of \$190. My son ran out about two-thirds round the section and got 100m from Dick Smith Electronics for \$15!

For peace of mind I can thoroughly recommend the system.

Plumed Whistling Ducks visit the Candys from drought-stricken Australia

An amazing event happened on Valentine's Day at Neil and Julie Candy's Manawatu wetland, close to Woodville. A flock of plumed whistling ducks (*Dendrocygna eytoni*) from Australia had landed. At first it was thought they were strange mallard crosses. At the time they were standing on the jetty about 30m from Neil and Julie, probably with jet lag. They were face-on and thus their magnificent plumage was not immediately visible. The group disappeared for a week then reappeared, flying off a paddock when their distinct flying style and whistling attracted Neil's attention. The Australian overstayers have been with them ever since, apart from four days, which of course was when the local press went to see them! The Candys understand there have been five previous sightings in New Zealand as a result of severe drought conditions in Australia. This is chronicled as Thames 1871, a flock of 14 in Kaitangata in 1871, Ashburton 1894-96, Little Wanganui, north-west Nelson in 1975, a flock of 12 and at Elbow Landing, Lower Waikato River, a flock of nine to twelve 1982. Apparently these birds are not strong swimmers, shun deep water and feed on grass. Neil and Julie have had many bird watchers visiting armed with cameras and telescopes and hope the birds will stay and breed.

(See page 13 for more on this subject.)



Hihi returns to the Auckland mainland

One of New Zealand's rarest birds, the hihi (stitchbird) will return to the Auckland mainland this week for the first time in 125 years.

About 30 of the rare birds were transferred from Tiritiri Matangi Island to Cascade Kauri Park in the Waitakere Ranges in February - the first time hihi have been on the Auckland mainland since they became locally extinct in the 1880s.

The transfer is being undertaken as part of the Ark in the Park project, a partnership between the Waitakere Branch of Forest & Bird and Auckland Regional Council, supported by the Department of Conservation, Auckland Zoo Conservation Fund, Waitakere City Council, ASB Community Trust and Waitakere and Portage Licensing Trusts.

In 2005 hihi were returned to the New Zealand mainland for the first time, when 60 birds were transferred from Tiritiri Matangi to Karori Wildlife Sanctuary in Wellington. The success of that transfer has led to the latest transfer to Ark in the Park. February's transfer will be followed by a second transfer of another 30 birds in April.

In the Auckland area hihi are found only on two DOC-managed islands - Hauturu/Little Barrier and Tiritiri Matangi, and the Hauturu/Little Barrier population is the only self-sustaining population in New Zealand.

Translocation team leader Sandra Jack of Forest & Bird says the transfer was an exciting development, both for the prospects of the species' survival, and Ark in the Park's vision of restoring biodiversity to the Waitakere Ranges. "Hihi are currently still vulnerable to extinction and establishing additional populations is a core focus for hihi recovery. We hope that a self-sustaining population will become established in the forest in the Waitakere Ranges, improving the species' chances of long-term survival", she reports.

Although supplementary food and nest boxes will be provided initially, it is expected that the hihi will eventually be able to rely on natural food sources and nesting sites in the 1000ha of mature forest at the Ark in the Park site.

Intensive use of traps and poison bait stations, maintained largely through the efforts of a large team of community volunteers, will protect the birds from predation by pests such as possums, rats and stoats. The birds will be fitted with transmitters so they can be effectively monitored for up to six weeks after release.

Auckland Regional Council's Parks and Heritage Committee chair, Councillor Sandra Coney says it is wonderful to see hihi being released as part of the Ark in the Park programme.

"This partnership has brought rare and treasured species back to the Waitakere Ranges and allowed them to flourish. That visitors might take a walk and encounter a robin or a whitehead, and now a hihi, adds something very special to a visit to Cascade Kauri."

DOC Hihi Recovery Group Leader Richard Griffiths says the transfer is a key one for the recovery team.

"If successful and the birds survive in the presence of low numbers of introduced predators, it will kindle the possibility of one day seeing and hearing hihi in our backyards in Auckland."

Hihi facts

Hihi/stitchbird (*Notiomystis cincta*) is today one of New Zealand's rarest birds but was once found throughout the North Island. The impact of introduced predators, habitat destruction and possibly disease reduced the distribution of hihi to Hauturu/Little Barrier Island in the Hauraki Gulf.

Until recently hihi were believed to belong to the honeyeater family along with the tui and bellbird, but recent genetic studies indicate they may be more closely related to the family of birds that includes the saddleback and extinct huia.

Hihi have distinctive large, bright eyes, an upright tail and long cat-like 'whiskers' around the base of the neck. Male hihi are more colourful, with a jet-black head and white 'ear' tufts, bright yellow shoulders and breast band, a white wing bar and mottled tan to grey-brown body. Females are smaller and are a more sombre olive to grey-brown colour.

Hihi are readily detected in dense forest by their strident call, which has been likened to the word "stitch" or two stones being repeatedly struck together. They also have a low warbling song that can last several minutes.

The birds feed predominantly on nectar, but also eat insects, particularly in the breeding season. Feeding stations will be built in the park near walking tracks so visitors can encounter hihi more readily.

Hihi nest in tree cavities (which may make them more vulnerable to predators) and have an unusual mating system in which females may breed with a single male or several. They are also the only bird known to sometimes mate face to face!



The stitchbird, or hihi

Pukaha Mt Bruce reports that eight juvenile hihi were released at Karori Wildlife Reserve in January 2007. Zoe (a three-year-old female) has fledged one chick. Izzie (a four-year-old female) is rearing one chick. Mahira (a one-year-old female) was incubating three fertile eggs which were expected to hatch in early March.

Wairio has a planting day

700 plants were planted on Wednesday 21 March. Planting consisted of the windrows in stage 1 as delineated in Howard's Minutes of 6 December 2006, i.e. carex, sedge, flax, ti. On the high ground south of the bund: eight species of mixed shrubs and trees. 500 were planted in the morning, 200 in the afternoon.

Howard reports that the experience in his opinion has highlighted two problem areas which need to be addressed: planting labour and release-spraying.

The 13 Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre volunteers, organised by DU member Nicola Morris, Chief Executive Officer of that fine institution, worked well and were cheerful company. It was a long, hard day but planting conditions were good, warm weather with moist soil. As Howard chuckled, "Regional Council staff were forced to work like labourers rather than just provide expertise!" DU committee members present were Don Bell, Jim Law and Howard Egan along with member Colin Stewart and there were three Regional Council senior staff.

Provided the fencing at Site B is completed, planting of the islands and windrows there is expected to take place in July. This could take place on both a weekend when more people are available, and during the week.

The 2006 planting has been release-sprayed three times, of necessity, by Don Bell and Howard Egan. The next release-spray must be done in mid-May, and by a ticketed poisons person. As Don Bell's responsibilities will have changed by this time, someone else must be found with the requisite qualifications.

**Ed Beetham
of the
Wairarapa
Urgently requires
a
Male Cape Barren
Goose**

**Please Phone
06 372 2868**



The Wairarapa chapter annual lunch and ducky derby

(See photos following pages)

At the Wairarapa chapter annual lunch and Ducky Derby at Gladstone Vineyard on 24 March 2007, there was a good attendance with 54 diners and a couple who came later for the auction. A big thank you to Joyce Brooks for handling the registration and finances! Thank you also to all the members who contributed auction items.

We asked some members to bring along items they manufactured and saw a number of people admiring Brian Maunsell's weather cock; it is a magnificent specimen made painstakingly and beautifully out of copper and brass.

Ducks Unlimited president Ross Cottle spoke and emphasised how the organisation was gaining profile through its activities. He cited the Wairio wetland as a prime example of how DUNZ, by being seen to accomplish projects, was gaining the profile of the type that attracted financial support from organisations such as Banrock Wines and the Phazyn Trust, and more recently still from DU in the Bahamas. "Where people see action, they will support it," he said. "We are gaining profile. People understand our objectives, and they know what we are doing to meet those objectives." He then reviewed the organisation's role over the past year.

Then Steve and Mary Blakemore of Homebush Masteron were introduced. Mary is the artist in residence at their Pokohiwi Road homestay. Steve is a previous member and is the builder of their shepherd's hut/caravan/studios and a specialist in consultancy on resource consent matters. They demonstrated their very interesting shepherd's hut product to us - it was there on wheels for us to admire.

Chris Thomas, our resident filmmaker, raconteur and ancient mariner gave a slide presentation and talk on his and my recent trip through Southern Chile and landing on Cape Horn. Of particular significance to Chris was the monument to all the sailors who have lost their lives in those latitudes, a rather poignant sculpture of an

albatross carrying the souls of those departed on an eternal journey through time. He pointed out that Chile was a nation with notable parallels to New Zealand in migratory birdlife. He brought to his address the flavour of the wide-eyed tourist along with the clinical eye of the master mariner. Chris has been a seaman all of his life, initially in the Royal Navy and latterly in various roles as part of research teams visiting Antarctic waters for the Australian and New Zealand governments as well as taking the role of navigator on a number of trans-Pacific yachting ventures.

A big thank you to Ed Beetham for his auctioneering. We received a number of items from DU Canada which we always appreciate. They have been unrelenting in their generosity to our fundraising efforts.

We had been inundated with goods to auction from generous local suppliers. These are usually small owner-operated businesses, not the big corporates with head offices elsewhere. We are very grateful for their constant support.

As for the annual Ducky Derby: 1st prize Gordon Campbell (who gallantly passed his 1st prize of a Masterton-Martinborough chopper ride with Ken Barnes on to his wife; 2nd Brian Maunsell, and 3rd our own editor, Gail Isaac, who is about to be the proprietress of a small fluffy squeaking duck made in China. (*Oh joy. - Ed.*)

Thanks to Jim the finishing judge, Sharon the commentator and Ross the starter. We made \$160.00 from the Ducky Derby alone. Ross's lost sunglasses.....Priceless!

It was a neat cruisy sort of venue at Gladstone Vineyard, the weather was great - 27 degrees - the company fine, meal absolutely excellent and the local Gladstone Vineyard wine sublime. Good to wander off at the end of the day with a prize or two and a bit of sunburn.

Report by Ken Barnes



Wairarapa Chapter Annual Lunch at Gladstone in March



Jo Wagg is flanked by Brian and Pam Maunsell



Ken Barnes Wairarapa chapter co-president



Andrew Morris of Masterton with Howard Egan of Canada Flats, Carterton



Alec Scott and Robin Borthwick listen to Chris Thomas' talk on the visit to Chile



Gail Reid



Karen and Clive Allen who are "testing the waters"



Sold! Auctioneer Ed Beetham with Wairarapa chapter co-president Matthew Wyeth



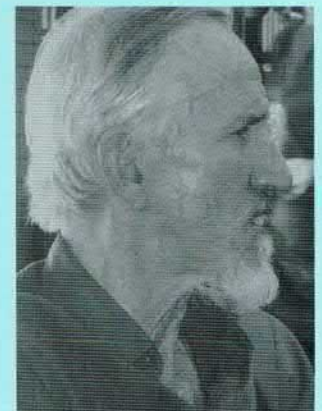
DU national president Ross Cottle with Wairarapa co-president Ken Barnes



Janet Denny with Janet and Gordon Campbell - Jim's brother



Jill Herrick and Trevor Thompson



Chris Thomas who gave the interesting talk on his trip to Chile with Ken Barnes

Wairarapa Chapter Annual Lunch (cont'd)



Robyn Borthwick



Ken and Jacqui Barnes



Aidan and Ross Cottle



A flavour of the day in the sun at Gladstone



Gill and Bill Lundie



Sharon Stevens-Cottle busy fund-raising



Keepers of the Gate for the day and raffle-selling supremos: Roger and Joyce Brooks with Joe Bannister, his daughter Natalie and son William



Matthew Wyeth with Marilyn and Ed Campbell of Mt Bruce



Jim and Jo Wagg with Jan Clinton-Baker



Jim and Marilyn Law

Brown Teal Roundup

Last Tuhua pateke update was dated December 2006.

Summary: from John Heaphy

I flycamped in the crater 21-23 February 2007, one year and one week post-release of 28 captive-raised pateke. A minimum total of 27 pateke were located on the lakes last week. Good month to do an annual monitoring count for Tuhua.

I suggest a successful initial establishment of pateke to date on Tuhua from the one release, with more birds present after one year than those people who had been quizzed suggested would be deemed a success. It's possible they will establish a self-sustaining population from the one release.

Any supplementary transfer postponed to February 2008.

Milestones:

At least 12 of the 28 originally-released pateke have survived the first year.

Successful breeding in August with brood of four ducklings observed.

Juveniles recorded in February flock count. Only one definite mortality recorded on Tuhua.

Two birds known to have dispersed to mainland, 28km and 52km flights. Both dead.

Disappearance of some 10 tx signals (and birds?). Problems with two tx not working from day one.

Regular monitoring achieved throughout the first year, including daily for the first month after which all 28 still present and accounted for.

Supplementary maize feeding continued through winter on a monthly basis with last fill on 18 October, but last few fills were predominantly feeding grey ducks as most tx'ed pateke well dispersed away from feeder sites and camping beside them which suggested only one or two pair visiting.

Monitoring:

Eight tx still operational:

Black Lake - 43, 51, 53, 64, 90

Green Lake - 70, 75, 94

No. 90 was caught in mortality mode and reset in October - her tx turns on at about 15:00 hrs daylight saving time. Established pair 70 and 94 in south end of Green Lake and have been there for a number of months together. They are the only obvious pair bond at the moment and have stayed in their territory.

Flock Count:

Black Lake - Minimum 21 birds consisting of five operational tx, two colour-banded only males and at least six unbanded (bred on Tuhua). There were a number of other similar plumage birds to the juveniles but

couldn't see both their legs to confirm unbanded.

Green Lake - Minimum of six birds consisting of three operational tx, two non-operational tx and one unidentified loner in NW corner.

Tx removal:

James Fraser is now booked to go over to Tuhua 21-25 May 2007 and see if he and Percy can catch pateke and remove tx's. If so, it would be good to get each bird individually colour-banded at same time as colour bands were not available when tx were originally attached. Postponed his March trip.

I have three tx here from the three known dead birds.

Supplementary Transfer:

In discussion with Captive Co-ordinator Kevin Evans on 26 February 2007, there are now no pateke available for a proposed May 2007 Tuhua supplementary release due to several recent disasters in captive stocks and nest desertions, etc. He is now unable to supply birds until February 2008 but would guarantee their availability then. This is obviously subject to RG approval, and securing a source of funding (\$5000) next financial year. Suggested number would be in blocks of four - either 28 or 32 birds.

Thanks to BoP Conservator Henry Weston who had just last week found and offered \$5000 funding for this current financial year. Back to the drawing board to try and source funding somewhere for next February..... Bother.

Even if there is a reasonable breeding season for the Tuhua pateke this coming winter, it would still be good management practice to have a further block of genetically-diverse birds released. These birds would contribute to a quicker establishment of the species on Tuhua.

Timeframe would be mid to late February 2008. Birds would be individually colour-banded only, no tx, and no extra monitoring. Supplementary feeding would be by negotiation with the RG, but only maize for one or two months if at all? Release would all be done and dusted in a day. As the powhiri has already been done for the first release, a second one is not likely from the Tuhua Trust Board.

Funding required for health checks, Air NZ freight to Rotorua, and helicopter Tauranga - Rotorua - Tuhua - Tauranga.

Wasps:

Equally as bad, but probably even worse than this time last year with recent dry weather. Localised densities in places - some areas had four to five wasps per square metre which needed to be traversed through, which makes life interesting! A number of areas were not able to be accessed and tx signals and potential roost sites not followed up. Not sure what impact wasps would have on pateke between peak period of January - April.

Lake water levels:

Very dry at the moment. Green Lake water level only slightly down (10cm) but looks like someone has pulled the plug on the Black Lake with level down about 30 cm. Mudflats and ponded water now right out to raupo edge at pateke release site whereas this time last year water level was up to feeders. Tuhua caretaker Luke said on Friday their piped spring water supply to SE Bay had dried up.

Hawks:

Still present but for first time not beating up the lakes continuously. Only one was seen briefly at dusk the second night. They appear to be hunting in the forest at the moment as I found a recently predated juvenile kaka last week in the crater with a hawk feather beside it. This very young kaka would have only recently left the nest and either would not have yet been flying or else only just. A number of kaka and petrel predation events have recently been reported by the public from Tuhua on Tractor Track and southern flanks with no proven cause.

Transfer and Monitoring Report:

Intention is still to complete by end March so that the RG can make a decision on a supplementary transfer. This report will be based on the email updates sent to date so there will be nothing in the report that the RG doesn't know about or be able to surmise.

Only two suggested improvements to transfer/establishment phase:

Captive pateke could be exposed/familiar with maize prior to release.

Some sort of mesh cage with pateke-sized entrance hole could be placed under each feeder to exclude grey ducks.

Discussion:

Objective was obviously to do the regular monitoring and check the tx'ed birds but also to see whether they would flock up in February sufficiently to allow a reasonable count/estimate of numbers. The 27 obtained is a minimum, and there are possibly more hidden away around the lakes or within the expansive wetlands. The undisturbed birds on Black Lake were originally spread over a distance of 200m in small groups and the Green Lake birds in three separate small groups. Viewing from across the Black Lake only produced a best count of six birds well-spread due to roosting in dark areas, around large boulders, and fallen trees.

After some trial and error the best way found was to walk quietly but in sight along East side of lake to gently push birds out into a raft and let them drift back under cover. Some ducks were not too keen to move but later an alarm call from a grey duck had them all flying across instantly. All birds could fly so not in a major moult phase.

Brown Teal Roundup (cont'd)

All eight operational tx were out on both lakes for the first time - until now there have always been some secreted away up in tight wetland vegetation.

Very difficult to accurately observe around both lakes due to terrain, thick lake-edge vege, raupo/carex, wasps and distance to view. Impossible in wetland vegetation. Easiest way would be to get a lightweight stable kayak or canoe which could be carried between the lakes and not prone to puncturing on sharp sticks, if such a vessel exists.

Little pateke action at either dawn or dusk with only a handful of birds moving. Camped next to feeder/release site and no activity around there either as no feeding been done for a number of months, plus low lake level had the feeders high and dry.

Grey duck numbers back down to usual 50-60 birds, interacting and roosting with pateke.

Conclusion:

Early to mid-February is a good time to do an annual monitoring of pateke on Tuhua. Need at least two days but probably no need to camp on site due to lack of dawn/dusk activity.

John Heaphy

Conservation Officer (Protected Species and Islands)

Department of Conservation

Tauranga Area Office

Ph: Office - (07)5787677, DDI - (07)5712722 VPN - 6544

Welcome to our New Members

Barnita Trust, Levin

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Trevor Thompson, Masterton

Jane Donald, Featherston

Simon Lusk, Havelock North



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Information about the Plumed Whistling Ducks

with thanks to Juliet Oliver for discovering this: (Text by Dan Cowell)

Plumed Whistling Ducks are formerly known as Eyton's or Plumed Tree Duck. They live in Northern and Eastern Australia (where it is known as the Grass Whistling Duck) and Tasmania, occasionally reported in New Zealand. They prefer tropical grasslands along rivers and swamps.

Sexes alike. This species is named for its long, buff flank feathers. The head and breast are light olive-brown; the sides are chestnut, barred with black. The bill is red and spotted with black; legs and feet dark pink. They are the only whistling ducks with orange-yellow eyes.

Eyton's whistling ducks only feed at night and in small groups and mainly feed on grass, rice, reed, etc. which they find on the marsh fringes and on grassy plains. In the daytime the ducks rest in the lagoons, marshes and watersheds in larger groups.

In the wild, the breeding season is from September to December; in captivity from April to June. They breed from the second year, sometimes first year. Drakes can become a bit aggressive towards other (whistling) ducks during the mating season. They continually threaten them and sometimes even fight. As with all whistling ducks, they prefer to breed in nestboxes. Plumed Whistling ducks lay 10 to 12 eggs which hatch after 27-28 days. The ringsize is 12mm. You may ring the ducklings when they are 16 days old.

This species has a large range, with an estimated global Extent of Occurrence of 100,000-1,000,000 km². It has a large global population estimated to be 100,000-1,000,000 individuals (Wetlands International 2002). Global population trends have not been quantified, but the species is not believed to approach the thresholds for the population decline criterion of the IUCN Red List (i.e. declining more than 30% in ten years or three generations). For these reasons, the species is evaluated as Least Concern.

See <http://www.harteman.nl/omnibus/anseriformes/ducks/plumed-whistling.html>.



Obituary

Jack Worth

30 June 1930 - 24 January 2007

by Ian Pirani

New Zealand, his family and friends have lost a truly amazing man. His talents cover a huge range of activities. As a youngster Jack was a yachtsman, a champion rower, a Waikato rugby league representative, a very good claybird shooter, an avid gamebird shooter, a gamebird breeder, a parrot breeder and a major passion for him was wetlands many, many, years before it was recognised how important wetlands are to our way of life and the life of the inhabitants of the wetlands.

He founded the Waikato Rowing Club, Club Waikato Rowing Supporters, The Forest Lake Rugby League Club, the Thunderbird Gun Club, and was a founding member of Ducks Unlimited New Zealand.

He was a man who always wanted to keep a low profile. He sought no credit and Jack would not have liked me to write about him in the way I am. He sought no recognition for his amazing contribution to everything he was involved in.

Jack developed leukemia fourteen years ago and the experts gave him only a few months to live, so he and Clare sold their pheasant, duck and parrot-rearing property in Ruakura and moved into Hamilton. He sold his guns, but he was still alive when the next duck-hunting season came around. He wanted to hunt so Craig, his son, bought him a new gun. Eventually he wore that gun out!

He had to have regular blood transfusions to keep him functioning and before each season he would talk the hospital into giving him double his blood to get him through the season...



Jack's work career covered a plumbing business, National Airways Corporation and later the engineering department of Waikato Hospital.

He and Clare married in 1957 and had son Craig and daughter Kay. They have one grandson.

Jack was a powerful man and always achieved his goals. Without him I doubt the whio (blue duck), pateke (brown teal), grey teal and many other birds would exist in the numbers they do today.

He was involved in founding DUNZ in 1974. Our first meeting was in Hamilton. DU was modelled on DU North America which Jack recognised as being on the right lines for long-term results.

His contribution to DU and everything he was involved in will live on. We should be very grateful to an outstanding man.

Coromandel's Moehau Kiwi Sanctuary volunteers needed

Volunteers are normally required all year, but must be prepared to stay for three to four months.

Where: Waikawau Bay, north-eastern tip of the Coromandel Peninsula. Activities to be undertaken will be kiwi-monitoring, radio tracking, rat tracking, trap checking.

Fitness/Skills/Experience: High level of fitness, forest navigation skills, wildlife handling experience, wet weather experience. Participants must have isolation and basic amenities skills and a positive attitude and team working skills. Full kiwi-monitoring training offered.

Accommodation: Free lodging at the volunteer house next to Waikawau Beach. Free food provided.

What to Bring: Day pack and gear bag, sleeping bag and pillow slip, plate/mug/knife/fork/spoon, drink bottle, work boots, light footwear (sandshoes), socks and gaiters, shorts and t-shirts, long trousers, wool or polar-fleece shirt, wool or polar-fleece jersey/jacket, raincoat/overtrousers, sun hat, sunscreen and insect repellent, swimsuit, underwear, gloves to prevent blisters, personal medication/first aid kit.

Other Notes: Extra gear will be needed due to the area's conditions and will be discussed on contact with Pim de Monchy.

Contact: Pim de Monchy, Programme Manager

Moehau Kiwi Sanctuary

R.D.4

COROMANDEL



Waikato Wetlands

Wetlands were once a widespread feature of the landscape within the lower Waikato Basin and Hauraki Plains but today, less than 20 percent of the original freshwater wetlands remain. On the Hauraki Plains, wetlands are restricted to areas associated with the Piako and Waihou Rivers and the peat domes at Torehape and Kopuatai; in the Lower Waikato Basin there is a mosaic of shallow lakes and mineralised swamps all connected to the Waikato River, while the Hamilton Basin has a unique assemblage of peat lakes and remnant peat domes.

Three of the six wetlands recognised as being internationally important in New Zealand are found in the Waikato region. Two of these – Whangamarino and Kopuatai Peat Dome – are freshwater wetlands and the Firth of Thames is tidal. They are listed under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an international treaty administered by the Ramsar Secretariat hosted by the World Conservation Union.

The Department of Conservation organises public plantings around a number of lakes in the Waikato area each year. If you would like to participate in any planting activities, contact the Department of Conservation on 07 838 3363 or email jdethierry@doc.govt.nz.

Canadian visitors



Alan Wilks of Greytown is pictured this summer with his son David Wilks holding Alan's grand-daughter Alaina. Beside him is wife Laurie. The other one of the two grandchildren - Fletcher, 2, and Jess, Alan's dog, had better things to do at that moment than pose for photos - and beside Alan are Laurie's Canadian parents, Dan and Marilyn Wright from British Columbia. It was at this time that David installed the dog-proofed electronic fence system described on page 7.

Godwits on long-haul flight

One of the Firth of Thames' satellite-tagged godwits touched down at Yalu Jiang in the northern Yellow Sea on China's coast in late March 2007. The distance between Miranda and Yalu Jiang (9575km) is impressive enough, but the track that this bird took covered at least 11,026km of non-stop flight. This is potentially the longest tracked non-stop flight of any bird in the world, beating even the 10,800km flight recorded on a southward migrating godwit last year.

It's fair to say that we are all pretty blown away by the performance of these birds!

*Phil Battley
Ecology Group
Massey University
Private Bag 11-222
Palmerston North*

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