

# Flight



ISSUE 153 - October 2012

Inside:  
Broadlands reward  
Mallards under threat?  
Humurana experience  
Pateke new start  
Blue duck heroes



## From the President

It has been a very busy and interesting three months since the last Flight was published.

The Board had its August meeting in Cambridge, the purpose of which was to pursue further a relationship with the Wetland Trust.

An onsite meeting was held with Tony Boxborough and Karen Denyer from the Wetland Trust at Lake Ngaroto, which is situated about 20 minutes south of Cambridge. The Waipa District is looking at purchasing land on the edge of the Lake in the next two years which we could have a hand in developing {watch this space}.

The other exciting event is the Wairio Wetland in the Wairarapa.

The Greater Wellington Regional Council(GWRC) has been allocated a large sum of money to improve the water quality of Lake Wairarapa.

Wairio being adjacent to Lake Wairarapa is a perfect wetland to filter water through.

DU has spent \$18,000 dollars this current financial year and GWRC have agreed give another \$18,000 on a dollar for dollar basis.

As well as that, we are led to believe this could carry on for another two years.

As if that wasn't enough the Game Bird Habitat Trust has voted us \$9000 for the Wairio project.

With the funding set in place we can look forward to rapid progress on this, our Flagship Project. (see page 12 for more on Wairio).



Ross Cottle

## New members

### A warm welcome to DUNZ Inc

Mark Perren of Papamoa

Hans van Dam of Palmerston North

Peter Muller of Te Aroha

MLP LLP of Northland.

Bernard Lilburn of Palmerston North

Jonathan Preston of Raetihi

Jeremy Howden of Masterton

### Members passed away

With sadness we note the following deaths.

Our sincere condolences go to their families.

Richard B Threthewey of BC Canada

David McNeil of Matamata

Henning Hovmand of Bulls.

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All to be camera ready. Discounts for long-term adverts.

Waterfowl adverts free to members.

Contact the Editor to book space or check discounts.

Contributions to Flight from members or other readers are welcome.

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Editing and Production:

Liz Brook, Brightnook Farm, RD9, Feilding 4779.

Email: liz.brook@farmside.co.nz

Tel: 06 328 9836.

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106A Main Street,  
Greytown.

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## Board of Directors

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Jim law      Wairarapa      06 3077855

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Dan Steele      Whakahoro      07 8956276

**Cover photo:** Lake Ellesmere - a vast canvas for any birdwatcher. See story page 6.

Photo: Peter Langlands.

## 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.

Central to Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is forming partnerships with people and organisations with similar aims. Money from our partnership with Banrock Station Wines has been given to wetland conservation projects done by, among others:

**Tutukaka Landcare Coalition**  
**Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc.**  
**Ducks Unlimited Operation Pateke**  
**Port Charles release 2005 at Coromandel**  
**Henley Trust, Masterton**  
**Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, Wellington**  
**Kitchener Park, Feilding**  
**Manawatu Estuary Trust, Foxton**  
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**Wairio Wetland, South Wairarapa**  
**Wetland Trust New Zealand, Rangiriri**  
**Waitakere Branch of Forest and Bird, West Auckland**  
**Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, Dunedin**  
**Cape Kidnappers pateke release, 2008 and 2009**  
**Fiordland pateke release, 2009**

For further information, please contact:  
**William Abel** - Director, Wetland Care  
New Zealand, phone 06-362 6675  
PO Box 281 Levin.

## Hard work pays off for co-owners

The Home of the Duck is a 10ha wetlands in Broadlands, in the Reporoa Valley, halfway between Rotorua and Taupo. The ponds have been developed from an oxbow of the local stream.

Our group of 10 has owned and improved the habitat over the last 25 years, largely working to a master plan by Grant Dumbell, a well known environmental consultant who used to work with DUNZ.

The whole process has given us immense enjoyment and we are, we think, justifiably proud of the results. From modest beginnings, the pond reconstructions and intensive planting are now picture-book pretty, and home to many bird varieties.

In the July 2012 issue of Flight, President Ross Cottle laments the apparent drop in mallard numbers in the North Island. This is certainly a trend we have noticed at Broadlands. Although we shoot enough to keep our team happy, numbers are not what they were 10 years ago. We have looked hard at our own wetlands management and, apart from some minor issues, we feel that the ponds provide better habitat than ever before, so the mallard decline at a local level is confusing.

In the often vigorous discussion that goes with 10 guys owning a wetland, the feeling seems to be that although we have pretty good mallard breeding on the ponds, the adults do not hold as resident birds. On top of what appears to be a viable natural food chain, we provide additional feed for the birds.



**Stunning:** Years of effort reflected at Broadlands.  
Photo: Wendell Phillips

We have had considerable (read huge!) conversion from forestry to pasture in the area, and we have noticed a lot of birds seem to sit and possibly live out in these grassed areas. This may be one answer for our dilemma. The other reason would seem to be in the lower number of shooters, and the resulting availability of rest areas for the duck. As a converted non-shooter myself, I see this as a bonus for the duck, but my fellow shooting owners do give me a bit of grief over this view. We just do not see the mobs being flushed and flying throughout the day like they used to.

So, although we do indeed suspect there is a general drop in overall mallard numbers, maybe there are the same numbers but they

are redistributed and not seen so often?

Whatever, we just love our Home of the Duck and if ever a group of young bucks had the ability to band together and develop a wetlands we would all say- "just do it".

**Mark Newcomb.**  
**Warkworth.**



**Mallard home.** Photo: Mark Newcomb

## Director profile

### Neil Candy

Born and raised at Ohau to dairy farmer parents, I had a large coastal farm as my playground. Sand dunes, coastal lakes, the Ohau River, the beach and sea were just out the back door. It was a fabulous place to grow up.

A love of hunting and the outdoors was established early on, duck hunting on my own at 12 years old (to Mum's horror), rabbits by the hundreds, pheasants, quail, if it moved...

If only I had put as much time and effort into school work!

At the tender age of 17 my parents offered me and my brother Michael the chance to go share milking. We had two years on the farm at Ohau before it was sold and then five years in the Whangaehu Valley near Whanganui where a brother in law joined us. This farm milked 400 cows and also ran 2000 sheep, which was a steep learning curve for us all.

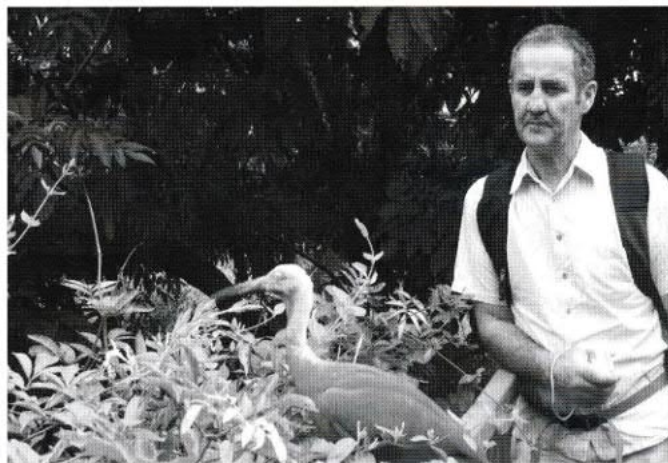
One paddock was about 250 acres (101 ha), half in bush and the rest in gorse but was home to a number of Samba deer.

In 1981 I purchased a small dairy farm at Tokomaru (90 acres (36 ha) and 110 cows), met Julie, my wife to be at the local badminton club and was married a year later in 1982. Three years later we purchased another 70 acres (28 ha) on the back boundary, where we had our first attempt at establishing a wetland area.

We have three daughters who all have their gun licences and are keen duck hunters and clay target shooters

My membership with Ducks Unlimited began over 20 years ago when I went to a Manawatu chapter meeting and came home to tell Julie she was now treasurer and I was secretary. In those days our dairy farm backed on to a Lands and Survey flax block, the Makerua swamp, and Ducks Unlimited was about to do some work putting ponds in.

I figured that "if you can't beat them you had better join them so you can control them".



Neil Candy: Checking out birds (feathered kind) in France.

And we have been committed to DUNZ ever since.

We have met a lot of wonderful DU people, visited some spectacular places most people never get to see, and had a lot of fun along the way.

I have been a Director of DUNZ for a few years now and have really enjoyed the time spent on the "Board", but with all organisations new people and ideas must be forthcoming or the brand will eventually cease to exist.

Now we have a large lifestyle block of 180ha near Woodville, where we graze dairy heifers and farm sheep. In 2005 (with the help of Jim Campbell and Gary Thomson) we constructed two large ponds beside the house. The tree planting programme goes on, with another 400 trees and flaxes going in this year, near the pond and elsewhere on the farm.

I have at last found my ideal job, teaching clay target shooting to corporate clients and to guests at Ruffit Lodge the farm's other (small) income stream.

***Ducks, or at least their eggs or hatchlings, are easy prey for predators. Even in the face of reasonably good trapping, ducks seem to be losing out. Ian Jensen looks at possible reasons, and wonders what the future holds.***

### The perils of being a duck

Looking at our rough margins, or small pockets in many farming areas, of pine or poplar, pampas or toitoi, really the makeup is of little consequence, along paddock edges many have a drain running there as well, particularly in dairy areas. Gone are much of the vast tracts of cover.

In this environment, where ducks and other waterfowl breed, predators also live. This is borne out where active trapping and bait station operations are maintained with good kill numbers allowing a far greater chance for at least the eggs to hatch, as well as the adult birds making it through the moulting process is maintained.

On Queens birthday weekend while in the Wairarapa after a night shoot on the Lake's eastern shore in a dairy area between the stop bank and the "Camp", around 800m, my dogs either retrieved, or marked five hedgehogs and two more near the camp later in the evening.

Some of them were in open ground under the cover of dark, but mainly they were near the margins of cover. This when they are supposedly hibernating, I find the same where I live on the Kapiti Coast, even over winter they are often about.

Mallards as we know will nest almost anywhere there is cover, I have seen them here only 25m from the beach in Marram grass, in the dunes in ferns and other cover, alongside driveways where dumped branches provided cover, right in the same environment where the hedgehogs and no doubt ferrets, rats, stoats and weasels also live.

From that I would estimate a high proportion of the nests are most likely predated or if the eggs hatch, provide breakfast, lunch and dinner for the marauders.

I note that at QEII Park at Mackays Crossing, in the latest "Friends" newsletter with around 108 DOC 200 traps from July 2011 to June 2012, 6 Stoats, 46 Weasels, 112 Rats, 103 Mice, 75 Hedgehogs and

2 Possums were caught. The park is a mixture of rough cover and some dry stock grazing, I am not sure of trap locations, most likely not where the grazing is carried out, as the traps are maintained by the friends group and the ranger.

In the last three years here, in five DOC 200 traps, 9 hedgehogs, 36 stoats/weasels, 1 Ferret, 25 Rats, in addition I run 5 Bait stations for rats/stoats/weasels.

In addition, since February 2008, 226 hedgehogs, 37 possums, 3 stoats/weasels and 1 ferret, nearly all found by my dogs apart from the odd one I step on.

I believe we are overrun by pests, for here even though I am around all the time I would see less than 20 percent of the stoats/weasels that I catch. Surprisingly from May 2009 to May 2011, there were 18 stoats/weasels trapped and from June 2011 to August 2012 there were 18 stoats/weasels trapped, so in about half of the time I have the same number, I would have thought that by now the numbers would be in decline.

We've had a good number of ducks in the last 2-3 years; good water over summer is very important, food and cover from hawks. Plus predator reduction in what I trap/dispatch would have a considerable bearing as well. Now there is another 25 traps in the locality, though I envisage not all of them are serviced well, so therefore the total effectiveness will be compromised. Also I have noticed blackbirds cracking snails on top of the trap boxes does tend to trigger them. So when you look at the vastness of areas such as the Wairarapa, where you would expect to have ducks breeding and raising their young, my call would be that the majority well before they hatch, become "Hawk" or "Puke" tucker. That of course is another hurdle. There would not be many places where concentrated predator control is carried out on an ongoing basis, not many hunters would have the time or resources to carry out control on a year round basis, I can only do it because I live on site and walk where my traps are every couple of days or so.

**Ian Jensen.**

# Can't say no to an egg

Some cheeky pukeko strut across our TV screens now and then advertising a certain power company that is helping to fund protection for the whio.

Those pukeko have become the public face of an extraordinary woman who for more than 20 years has been doing her bit to save, and to raise birds. Judy Fentress and her husband Dave, originally from Colorado, came to New Zealand 21 years ago after 20 years in Switzerland.

Known to many as The Bird Lady of Paterangi, Judy started down the bird path when a neighbour gave her a mallard egg to hatch. A pair of mallards she raised 19 years ago come back every year to hatch their eggs in a safe place. There are currently up to 35 birds at her place.

When she received an incubator, her bird rearing really took off.

"I was invited to a DU function by a friend (member) to sit around and talk about birds," she said.

"One thing led to another and a few days later a Dominion incubator was brought to my house by Hamilton DU members. A few members had given it a try and couldn't get it to work properly.

"Well... I actually got the incubator to work at an incredible reliable state. I told them, you can pick it up as it now works properly. They said, you fixed it, it's yours.

"I was blown away. I am still using this incubator years later. It's perfect for duck,

swan and goose eggs. It automatically turns the eggs and the temperature and humidity is spot on.

"In this incubator I have successfully hatched Carolina ducks, Mandarin ducks, black and white swans, Campbell Island teal, Cape Barren geese, Canada geese, Grey duck, Brown teal, Paradise ducks and other, larger eggs."

There are now four incubators at Judy's bird nursery and they can accommodate any size egg.

Judy said she would like more chances to incubate and raise wild or native birds for distribution throughout New Zealand. She already incubates for a number of DU members and bird breeders.

"Losses of chicks in the wild can be controlled somewhat with incubation. It's not always successful but it does offer another possibility of getting chicks where nature may have failed.

"For example, the red legged partridge were pretty non-existent in the North Island several years ago. A breeder couriered eggs to me from the South Island. I incubated them and got a lot of chicks, which we distributed over the North Island."

Judy also cares for injured birds. Currently there are two wild rosellas, both with damaged wings and three silvereyes. Then there are the bantams, the pheasants, a Canada goose, and a male Reeve's pheasant,



**Mothering:** Judy Fentress with some of this seasons ducklings.

Photo: Dave Fentress

with a very long and colourful tail in Judy's back yard.

"When possible, rescue birds are returned to the wild or good homes are found for them. It is sometimes hard to say goodbye," she said.

Native birds have also been a big part of Judy's life. For 15 years she was treasurer of the Otorohanga Kiwi House and Native Bird Park and helped manage their breeding programme.

One of the pukeko used in the Genesis TV advert is a special pet and has the run of the backyard – along with a swimming pool. "It's like having a pet dog in the yard," Judy said.

## Arbor Day at Pharazyn Reserve 2012

With the weather gods promising rain, the prospects looked bleak.

As it transpired, the day progressed with only a light shower or two, which in no way dampened the enthusiasm of the pupils from Kapanui and Waikanae Schools. Some classes were transported to site by bus, while others arrived in a fleet of cars belonging to teachers and family members.

To start, the biodiversity advisor for Kapiti Coast District Council provided an insight to the plants to be planted, along with some planting techniques. Possibly some of the latter fell on a few deaf ears in the eagerness to get plants in the ground – however, follow up from the environmental groups assisting, including the Reserve Focus group, Forrest & Bird and the Waimeha Restoration group, soon sorted any that needed a little more attention.

Around 1300 plants went in the southwest corner of the southern pond,



**Keen team:** From left, Janek Figur-Ambler, James Gray and Daniel Brown from Kapanui school, helping at Arbor Day, at Waikanae's Pharazyn Reserve.  
Photo: Jocelyn Prvanov.

which closed the western side to the southern side planted a few years ago.

As in other years, there is a great sense of achievement from the school pupils when they point out to others where they have planted in previous years.

A group from the last class were taken around one of the areas planted four years ago. Carex Secta are really thriving, with a number quite tall now. While there, the pupils were treated to a flight of shoveler ducks that pitched in, around 80 in total. They were a great sight and, typically of shoveler, after a short time, they lifted, swirled around and pitched in again.

The southern pond is now almost complete on three sides, so there is a sense of some achievement. With the reserve open, and featuring the newly finished car park and picnic tables, the public now visit and enjoy this area.

**Ian Jensen**

# They grow big in the Wairarapa

This stoat was eliminated in an MK6 FENN trap in July at the rear of Neil Hayes's aviaries. His mate met the same fate two weeks earlier.

"He is by far the largest stoat we've ever seen," said Neil.

"To give some idea of size, the diameter of the post was 100mm (4") and the width of the MK6 FENN trap 120mm (5"), which makes the overall length of the monster, from nose to tail, to be close to 500mm (20")," said Neil.

He has shown the picture to a couple of professional trappers who both said they had never seen any stoat even close to this size. Neil thinks it looks like being a 'record trophy stoat'.

The body went into the freezer at the Greater Wellington Regional Council at Masterton to eventually be mounted for educational purposes - along with the female that was also caught.



**Dead:** The best kind of stoat.  
Photo: Neil Hayes.

## Black swan - 25 years old

Recently, at Lake Ellesmere, I found a dead black swan with a metal band on its leg. Immediately I was excited as I remembered finding lots of dead swans at the lake in the 1980s and sending the banding reports to the then Wildlife Service. I had known of little or any banding at the lake in recent years. When the banding report came back my suspicions were confirmed; the bird had been banded in 1988, making it 25-years-old. The swan was freshly dead.

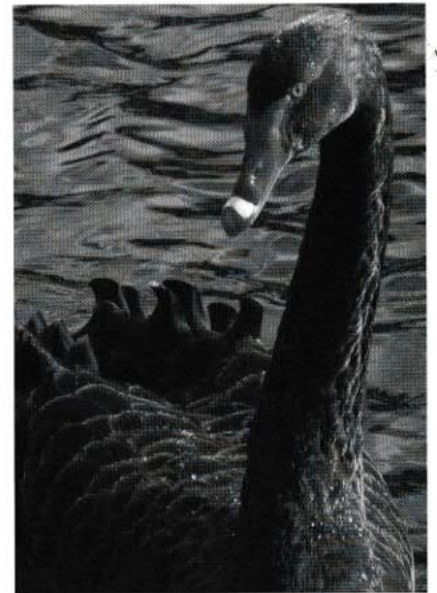
Banding birds gives a real insight into their movements, longevity, and for breeding - productivity studies allows individual birds to be followed. Many birds in New Zealand are long-lived, in comparison to the Northern Hemisphere counterparts, and as time goes by the longevity records increase. Already some albatross marked in New Zealand are over 50-years-old. Banding a bird makes that individual recognisable. My

interest in birds and ornithology goes back to 1980 when I first started bird watching at Lake Ellesmere.

The lake is a fantastic bird watching location, and possibly has the highest numbers of bird species recorded from it in New Zealand. Ellesmere is particularly notable for its vast waterfowl populations. Waterfowl from all around New Zealand will annually pass through the lake. Lake Ellismere is a national stronghold for black swans, mute swans, Canada geese, grey teal and at time shovelers.

Having the lake on my doorstep, as a virtual wilderness, is an asset. A place to relax, especially since the earthquakes, and with each visit to the lake I leave it with an interesting discovery. A black swan at a quarter of a century old certainly rates up there.

**Peter Langlands**



**All in black:** A stately black swan, (not the one in the story).  
Photo: William Abel

## Big wet means bumper breeding for birds

In Australia, Victoria's feathered residents enjoyed a rain-induced renaissance this year, with the drought-breaking wet delivering prime conditions for water birds. Golo Maurer from BirdLife Australia said species such as the nankeen night heron had been noted in increased numbers in the state, while the buff-banded rail had been sighted in some Melbourne parks.

## \$99,000 funding injection for Bulahdelah Wetland

Great Lakes Council will receive more than \$99,000 to conserve and restore a 366 hectare wetland at Bulahdelah as part of a bid to improve and protect water quality in the Myall River floodplain. The funding comes from the NSW government's environmental trust and will be used on land acquired in 2011. The Great Lakes Council and the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority acquired the privately-held wetland and the project will see "critical works" to conserve, protect and restore it.

# Hamurana Springs - a quality experience



**Diving duck:** A scaup, black teal at the Springs. Photos: Kerry Oates.

The Hamurana Springs Incorporated Society (HSIS) was formed in 2003, with the express aim of restoring the Hamurana Springs Recreation Reserve, near Rotorua, to its former glory, the international attraction it once was. The society has around 50 members who undertake work days monthly at the Springs. Tasks include track maintenance, weeding, stream clearing, tree planting, general enhancement of the grounds and a new predator control programme.

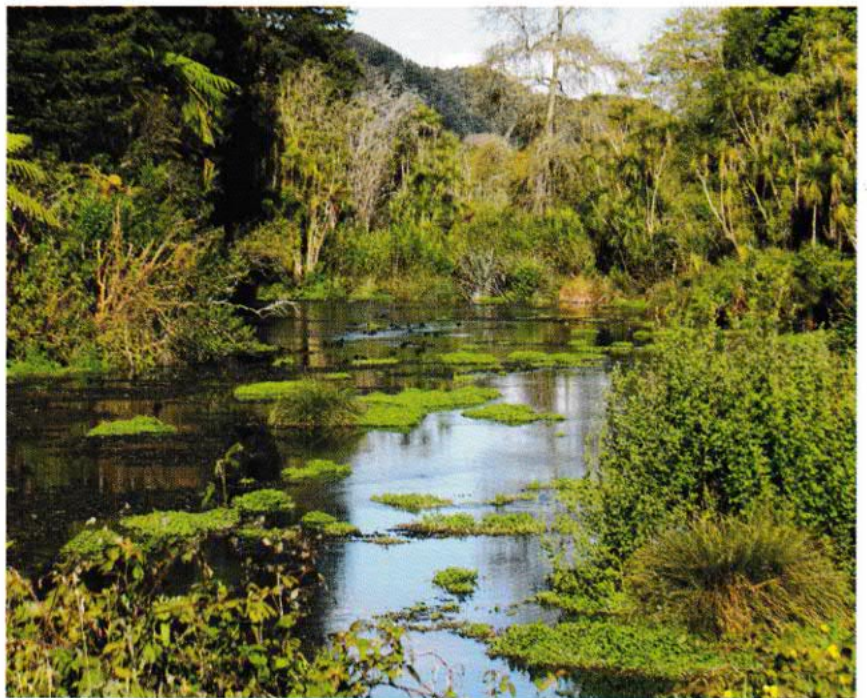
There are development plans too, and the society works alongside local iwi Ngati Rangiwewehi and DOC with memorandums signed between all parties.

The main aim is to maintain and upgrade the facilities associated with the reserve to provide a quality experience for visitors. Objectives include: establishing an on-going funding base; upgrading public facilities and gardens; and ensuring the facilities will be available to New Zealanders and overseas visitors.

The Hamurana Springs are on the northern shores of Lake Rotorua at the eastern end of the Hamurana village. The main spring is around 15m deep and exudes 4,500,000 litres/hour (1,000,000 gallons) which is enough to fill two Olympic size swimming pools every hour. The crystal clear waters are a constant 10°C all year round and are a favoured spawning ground of rainbow trout coming up the stream from the lake.



**Many hands:** Members at the April work day.



**Attractive:** Looking down the Hamurana Stream.

The native galaxiid koaro also breed in one of the tributary streams, and there is a restoration project targeting koaro under way in conjunction with Ngati Rangiwewehi.

The Springs are also home to thousands of waterfowl, including scaup, black swan, pukeko, mallard, geese, paradise ducks, black shags, little shags and little black shags, and an assortment of hybrids. It is a great place for photography, walking, jogging, golfing, biking or picnicking and is well used by locals and visitors alike.

DU member Kerry Oates established a pest control project in September 2011. Nearly 12 months on, the trapping team have caught 90 rats and a small number of stoats and weasels. Most recently,

DOC has come on board and supplied new Double Set DOC200 and DOC250 traps aimed at enhancing the mustelid catch around the reserve.

You can see more about the society and its work at [www.hamurana-springs.co.nz](http://www.hamurana-springs.co.nz)

## Kerry Oates



**Little native:** Koaro breeding at the Springs.

*Saving pateke (brown teal) takes stamina and dedication. Fortunately, these birds have some staunch friends.*

## Pateke releases on the Tutukaka Coast

Originally, pateke were widely distributed in lowland swamps and swamp forest from Northland to Stewart Island. Over the years their numbers have declined dramatically through loss of habitat and predation by mustlids, cats and dogs. Their remaining strongholds are the Northland east coast from Tutukaka to the Bay of Islands, Great Barrier Island, Coromandel Peninsula, Little Barrier Island, Tiritiri Matangi and Kapiti Island.

Their future looked pretty grim, until it was discovered they did respond to breeding in captivity. Now individual breeders all over New Zealand co-ordinated by Ducks Unlimited, manage the captive breeding programme and provide the birds for release at sites where trapping is at a level to ensure a reasonable chance of survival.

And what is a reasonable level of trapping? In our case at Tutukaka, we had been managing an area of about 2500ha prior to the first release in 2007 for five years, using a professional part-time trapper in addition to volunteer work that had been in place since 1999. The area trapped today is about 3500ha, and importantly the volunteer component adds another 25 to 30 percent to that area. Always significant when applying for funding.

Our initial concern was for the protection of the residual population of kiwi in our area, but pateke had always been a longer term objective. So, when approached by the Pateke Recovery Group to consider adding them to the mix, we jumped at the chance. Compared with kiwi, pateke are far more demanding because of their vulnerability to stoats and cats at all stages of their lives. (An adult kiwi will "see off" a stoat or cat attack most of the time). This meant we needed to extend and intensify our trapping programme - more funding for more traps. Help arrived from World Wildlife Fund, the NZ Government Biodiversity Fund, and Banrock Wines.

So far there have been four releases: 23 in 2007; 39 in 2008; 64 in 2011; and 60 birds on May 24 this year. Each release has

presented its challenges.

This year, prior to their release, the birds were gathered at Peacock Springs' near Christchurch Airport, for a final briefing about life in the real world, issued a passport, name tag, fitted with a transmitter (in the case of 20 of them) and checked for any unwanted diseases. On the appointed day they were loaded into specially prepared boxes ready for their flight to Whangarei where we expected to collect them at 3pm for

the last part of the journey to the release site at Tutukaka, an hour's drive from Whangarei Airport.

About 11.30am Kevin Evans who co-ordinates all this effort on behalf of DU, received a call from Air NZ to say that because of factors beyond their control the birds were stranded at Auckland Airport. I got the call just after midday and headed to Auckland Airport by car to make the pick-up. It was a smooth run and I was on my way north again with the complete consignment by 4pm. Nothing like 60 ducks for company in a station wagon. I might not look like a duck, but I sure as hell smelled like one!

The return trip was easy, and the birds were freed from their boxes in the dark by 8pm. Boy, were they happy. So was I. The release site is the intertidal zone in the creek that feeds the estuary at Matapouri Bay, once a traditional flocking zone. These birds were greeted by another 12 or so birds that had found their way to this point from the 2011 release. It's so rewarding to see these birds hanging in there, and hopefully showing the new kids how to survive in the wild.

Of the 60 released 20 are fitted with transmitters to follow their dispersal pattern.



**Release team:** In darkness pateke arrive at their new home.

However, additional funding from DU will enable us to complete three "flyovers" using a plane fitted with special aerials on the wing struts to enable the use of receivers. We've had one flight to date and located a bird from the May 24 release that flew 10km north up the coast to Whananaki unfortunately, its signal indicated it had met a sad fate. A moral in that - stay close to home.

**Mike Camm**



**Freedom:** After a harrowing journey released at last.



**Happiness:** On the water again.



**Picture perfect:** Pateke in a lovely spot.  
Photos: Bryan Divers.



## PICTURE GALLERY



**Stepping along:** Raetihi pukeko, "Hurry up" mum could be saying. Photo: William Abel.



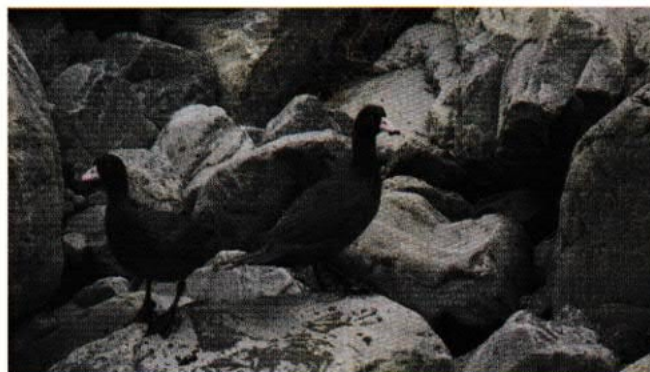
**Dabbling by:** A dabchick at Pohangina wetlands, a delightful area near Ashhurst. Photo: Gordon Pilone.



**Ducks delight:** Ducks, hundreds of them, take off from feeding on the remains of an oats crop at the Dermer's farm, Cheltenham. Photo: Liz Brook.



**Swimming school:** Whio chicks central North Island, no wonder we want to save them. Photo: Kerry Oates.



**Just passing:** Blue ducks in the wild, taken at Arthurs Pass by Nigel Boniface, a Masterton Tramping Club member. Some he saw were banded and some were not.



**Blending in:** Muscovy ducks happily at home with the hens, in Sandy Wilson's garden. Photo: Liz Brook.



**Shoveler ducks:** The male is the colourful one of course, the attractive one is female. Photos: William Abel.



**Craig Allerby**, from Feilding and a member of the Palmerston North Tramping Club with dead rat.



**Trap checks:** Janet Wilson volunteer co-ordinator with an albino stoat – dead of course.

## Volunteers help Oroua blue ducks

The Oroua Blue Duck Protection Project was started with enthusiasm in 2007 as a community project by members of the Manawatu Deerstalkers Association in partnership with the Department of Conservation. They had noticed, and had become concerned about, the declining number of whoie seen in the river.

The project received plenty of publicity in the early years as it expanded and hopefully many of you, especially Manawatu locals, are aware of it. It began with 107 DOC 200 traps placed on 10km of walking track that goes from the Oroua car park on Table Flat Rd, past the Alice Nash Memorial Heritage Lodge (NZDA) to the Iron Gate Hut. It expanded up river to Triangle Hut and traps were also placed along the river to Iron Gate Hut, up Tunupo and Iron Gates Creek, and towards the tops on the Tunupo Track - covering around 30km.

The project relies on volunteers from the community to clear and rebait traps each month. Given the size of the project and the area covered it is a big ask and while enthusiasm was high for a few years, it waned in 2011 and DOC advertised for a new volunteer co-ordinator to help bring life back to the project.

When I took over the role late last year I was aware that while traps in easily accessible positions had received regular attention, those in difficult streams had seldom been checked. To make the project work well this needed to be addressed. It was decided to relocate these traps to the ridge tracks and this was achieved in December with wonderful support from the Royal New Zealand Air Force's No 3 Squadron members, who, along with volunteers, lifted bundles of traps to their new locations. Difficult weather meant three attempts were needed and the job was finally completed just before Christmas. All the projects traps received routine maintenance and oiling with fish oil.

In May this year, 10 new A24 self-setting traps were put into Tunupo Stream to replace the DOC 200s we removed to the ridge track. When conditions allow, we will check on these. As an addition to this project, 30 of these traps have recently been placed alongside the Pohangina River to help protect the whoie living there.

Since November 2011 until the end of July 2012 we cleared 51 stoats and 383 rats. The project has been going really well, with enthusiastic volunteers checking all traps on

tracks every month and those in the rivers when conditions permit.

There has been a good response from old and new volunteers following publicity in the papers, from flyers in huts, from the DOC website, from the deerstalkers, local cavers, Massey University students and staff and from friends and acquaintances. Members of the Palmerston North Tramping and Mountaineering Club deserve special mention for being very supportive volunteers.

This spring there will be a count of the ducks by a team with a dog. I look forward to repeating this in a few years and discovering a good increase in the population.

**I am always keen to find new volunteers: you need to be reasonably fit, have some tramping experience and gear. Experience with the traps is not necessary. If you are able to organise a group to do the check one month that is even better I can be contacted at [jwilson@inspire.net.nz](mailto:jwilson@inspire.net.nz)**

**Janet Wilson**

### Mice in the mangroves

Water mice are the focus of attention of one of WetlandCare Australia's projects. Their Coastal 20 Wetlands Program supported by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program has 20 coastal sites covering 65ha of mangrove, casuarina and marine grassland on the Maroochy River, Queensland – a prime site for water mouse (*Xeromys myoides*) nests.

The water mouse is typically found in coastal saltmarsh and mangrove areas. In late 2011, a worker from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service discovered several water mouse nests at the site.

A key sign is their nesting mounds, which range from free-standing mounds in saltwater couch grasslands to sheltered

mounds in opportunistic sites such as the base of old grey mangrove trees located within the intertidal zone. The water mouse forages in the mangroves at night, feasting on invertebrates such as crabs, shellfish and snails. Loss, fragmentation and degradation of their mangrove and saltmarsh habitats are threats to their survival.

## Obituary

### Farewell to founding member

David McNeil, QSM, died in June this year. David was a founding member of Ducks Unlimited and became a director of DU in 1980.

As a farmer at Te Poi, Matamata, he maintained substantial ponds with a large collection of waterfowl. His great interests, waterfowl and trees, meant David made an outstanding contribution to waterfowl, wetlands, farming and forestry.

He successfully bred many species of waterfowl including mute swans. David was a prominent member of the McLaren Falls Park forestry group and was a friend of Jack Worth and Julian Nelson-Parkers.

His contribution to the foundation board of DU was very helpful. Thanks to Dawn and Ian Pirani and Neil Hayes.

## GM China in the protection game

A large number of birds die every year during migration because of wetland degradation, dwindling food sources, wind farm development and hunting, according to a statement from GM China.

In March General Motors (China) launched a wetland protection project in Shanghai in a bid to preserve endangered habitats for seasonal birds with a focus on three reserves.

The three-year GM Restoring Nature's Habitat Project will be carried out in national-level nature reserves in the provinces of Liaoning, Shandong and Shanghai. These are on major routes for migratory birds travelling from north Asia to southern Australia.

The Dongtan wetland reserve on Shanghai's Chongming Island has the challenge to preserve the vanishing wetlands.

Dongtan wetland is a major hub for migratory birds in East China. Nearly 150 kinds of them choose to stay in the 1.8 square kilometre reserve throughout the year. A 350,000 square meter lake as well as a similar-sized reed field provided the birds with abundant food and places to nest. Established in May 2003, the reserve on the third-largest Chinese island is not only a haven for birds, but also for amphibious species.

GM China will invest 3.3 million yuan (\$524,000) to help the three reserves to improve the environment for migratory birds and other local species.

The first phase of the project will protect breeding sites, ensure clean water supplies and prevent the invasion of alien species.

China Daily 23.4.12

## The Cape Sanctuary news

(Formerly Ocean Beach and Cape Kidnappers Preserve)

A total of 120 cats were killed during 2011, and 35 have been caught since January 2012. Stoat numbers were also high during summer with 11 caught and several sighted around the Farm Lodge and DOC hut. It appears there are a few resident families within the sanctuary.

As extra defence, we have increased the number of traps where stoats have been sighted and have also had a visit from predator-dog expert Scott Theobald and his stoat detecting dog.

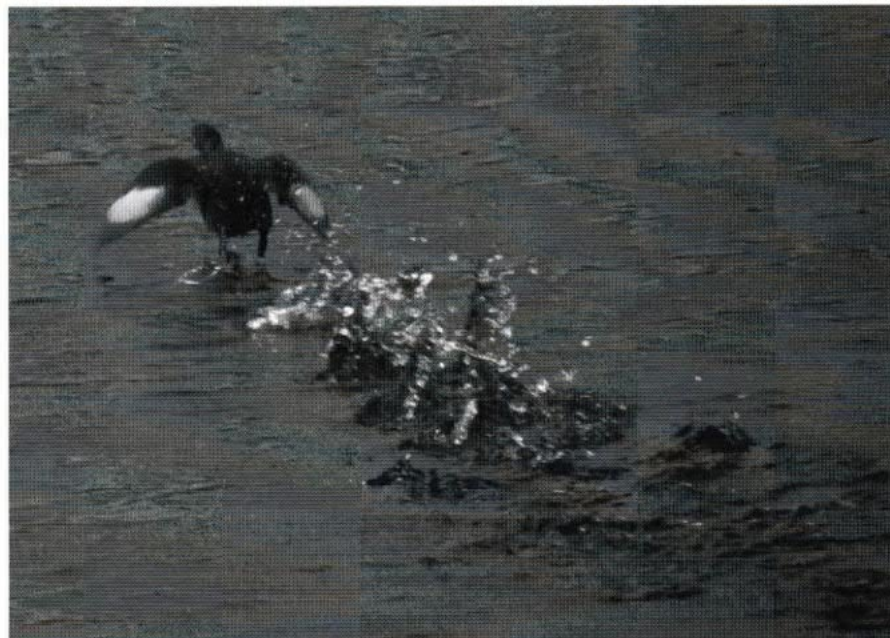
Stoats are seen most often in summer/autumn when juveniles are dispersing. It is hoped the extensive trap network will limit their dispersal and further reduce numbers over the next few months.

We are currently working on closing a major "gap" in our predator-proof fence by installing an automated gate at the main entry point into the sanctuary on the Cape Kidnappers side – there is currently only a cattle stop.

This gap is a weak point in the fence that creates a funnel effect, channelling predators into the sanctuary. Cats, stoats and rabbits have been photographed disappearing into the sanctuary at this point. Construction of this gate will make a huge difference to the predator invasion rates and will ensure a safer environment for wildlife.

Travis Cullen

## Dabchick takes off



**Flight path:** A dabchick demonstrates its take off ability at the Pohangina Wetland. The Wetland was started in 2001 by Anne and Gordon Pilone who have continued to increase the area of wetland. It is open to visitors, check out more at [www.pohangina.org](http://www.pohangina.org).

Photo: Gordon Pilone

## World Wetlands Day 2013

### Wondering what to do on February 2, 2013?

World Wetlands Day (WWD), the Ramsar Convention's annual campaign day. The slogan for next year is Wetlands take care of water. Visit the Ramsar website to see resource materials. You can receive their WWD pack by mail by writing to [wwd@ramsar.org](mailto:wwd@ramsar.org) – you can even ask for their design files to create your own adaptations – view examples. Time to celebrate our wetlands!

In New Zealand there are six Ramsar sites. They are: Firth of Thames Waikato, Manawatu Estuary Foxton, Farwell Spit Nelson, Kopuatai Peat Dome Waikato, Waitua Lagoon Southland, Whanagamarino Waikato.

# Funding boost for Wairio

The largest grant this year from the New Zealand Walking Access commission (\$20,750) has gone to the Wairarapa Moana Wetland Project. Fifty organisations applied for a portion of the \$230,000 available in this funding round.

The walkway will run along the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa next to Wairio Wetlands and finish up coming through the southern end of the Wetland. It is expected to open up the area to walkers, bird watchers, botanists and wetland enthusiasts.

The \$20,759 is partial funding for the project and was the amount identified in the application for the construction of the bridge to get out on to the lakeshore edge.

The South Wairarapa District Council has made provision in its Annual Plan for the construction of the car park so a significant chunk of the funding to develop this walkway has been taken care of.

DU recently received notice of dollar-for-dollar funding from Greater Wellington's Fresh Start for Fresh Water Project for the work DU is doing at the Wairio Wetland. Since DU spent \$18,000 this year, this is another \$18,000 to enable us to accelerate the restoration programme. DU also



Wairio wetland.

received \$9000 from the NZ Game Bird Habitat Trust to construct a low bund wall and flap gates to retain water in the wetland following flood events in nearby Lake Wairarapa or related flood spillways.

"We are in for some busy times at Wairio which will really advance the restoration project," said DU president Ross Cottle.

## The Commission

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission is the Crown entity that works to enhance free, certain, enduring and practical walking access to the outdoors for

New Zealanders and overseas visitors. The Commission has a small team in Wellington and a network of regional field advisors.

Twenty-two projects designed to improve access to the outdoors will receive funding through the New Zealand Walking Access Commission's Enhanced Access Fund this year.

Commission Chief Executive Mark Neeson said the 2012 grant recipients were from all over New Zealand, from the Brynderwyn Ranges in Northland to Matura in Southland.

## Wairio wetland thesis available



Back when: Bridget Johnson at Wairio in 2011.

Bridget Johnson's Wairio Wetlands MSc thesis, based on work conducted at Wairio while she was at Victoria University, has been accepted and is publically available as a pdf from <http://researcharchive.vuw.ac.nz/handle/10063/2336>

Stephen Hartley, Deputy Director of The Centre of Biodiversity and Restoration Ecology at Victoria University, has some comments about the work.

"I think Bridget has made an excellent contribution to organising and documenting the first stage of the experiment. Unfortunately, it was a bit too soon for her to make a meaningful assessment of the tree-planting trial just six months after planting, but another student, Aprille Gillon, has almost finished re-measuring the trees after one year in the ground and I think we are going to see much clearer results with respect to the water gradient - essentially most of the species don't flourish under prolonged water-logging apart from kahikatea and to a lesser extent manuka (no surprises there).

"Once all the data are in we can examine them to see what effect the different pre- and

post-planting treatments made. Bridget observed that scraping in the drier sites may have exposed the planted trees to increased herbivory and ultimately led to re-growth of weeds (tall fescue, etc) in the disturbed ground, whereas in the wetter sites the pooling of water in scraped sites favoured lower stature plants such as water plantain (also an introduced species) and the native sedge, *Isolepis prolifera*."

"Finally, areas most likely to support rare indigenous "turf species" are those that do not become exposed until late January or February. Her final chapter includes some more general comments on long-term management."

Stephen thanked the Wairio Wetland Restoration team for their support in enabling Bridget\* to achieve her goal and said he was looking forward to seeing the results of the experiment unfold over the next few years.

\*Bridget is now a PhD student at the University of Western Australia.

*Women in Farming (WIF), set up as a discussion and information group for women farmers, provides a useful forum for women around New Zealand. Recently, a WIF meeting was held at Flight editor Liz Brook's farm in the Manawatu, with a practical session on the care of drench guns. Straight Furrow reporter Laura Richards attended and also interviewed Liz. At the suggestion of some DU members, here is an edited version of the story, courtesy of Straight Furrow.*

## Rural women visit editor's farm

Journalist, editor, photographer and sheep farmer are all words that can be used to describe Beaconsfield, Manawatu, resident Liz Brook.

She is a member of Rangitikei-Manawatu Women in Farming. In late May, Liz hosted the group along with Kelvin O'Neill, of Drench Gun Services based in Palmerston North.

Members took a variety of drench guns to the meeting to ask questions about their particular models. Kelvin provided plenty of information on upkeep, cleaning, using and discussing the variety of guns available.



Liz Brook with her heading dog Bex.

Liz also talked to the group about her home and farm – Brightnook.

The farm is 68ha, with the Kiwitea Stream running through it. There are plateaus and cliffs, with the ground stony in some areas and Kiwitea loam in others.

Liz confessed that as she got older she was working to make the farm more easy care. Part of that has been reducing the number of animals.

"Two winters ago I had a problem at calving time. Three died, and I was working in town for a rural newspaper. I had to get up early to attend to the stock before I went to work."

Several things led to the decision to sell the cattle, leaving the sheep (about 300) and a few meat goats.

Some paddocks are now leased to a neighbour; most paddocks are fenced off from the river.

Liz's home is a two-story, Canadian-style log house built of Douglas fir and located on a plateau above the Kiwitea Stream. The house is off the grid and powered by 12 solar panels and a wind turbine.

"This was a dream of mine, not a financial decision but a lifestyle one."

In the beginning, she bought solar panels along with second-hand batteries, plus an inverter and a small generator. Last year she made improvements to the system by installing 12 new batteries and buying a new, bigger inverter.



Rustic mail: Letter box at the gate. Photos: Laura Richards.

She eventually resigned from the newspaper to concentrate on the farm and then to edit Flight, the Ducks Unlimited magazine.

Although the house is off grid, the woolshed, located near the road, is on mains power.

A farm being on two sides of the Kiwitea Stream, and a house positioned across the water from the road, can have its downfalls. During the February 2004 floods the swing bridge connecting the two sides of the farm was swept away leaving her stranded. There is now a new concrete bridge that has already withstood a few heavy floods.

## It's back ... Lake George filled again

From the road it looks little more than a distant shimmer of silver on a vast empty plain. But from the air Lake George, north of Canberra, reveals its secret.

Shrouded in folklore, the lake made famous by its elusive disappearing and re-appearing water, is for the first time in decades approaching its full former glory with the normally barren surface all but covered like a huge inland sea. Water birds not been spotted in years are beginning to return, and locals are again starting to talk about using the lake for windsurfing and other water sports.

It's the most water the joint owner of the nearby Lerida Estate vineyard, Jim Lumbers, has seen in at least a decade. "We're getting some glorious views in the morning with mist on top of the water," Mr Lumbers said.

"The birds will come back in huge numbers." He expected freckled and mountain ducks as well as pelicans.

Hang-glider pilot Andrew Luton, a regular visitor afforded one of the most unique views of Lake George, said the water had crept up quickly, from virtually empty in January to almost reaching the Federal Highway on the western shore by May. "It's quite deceiving, from the ground you can't really see just how much water there is," he said.

The lake is a large internally draining basin formed when an escarpment rose five million years ago, according to the NSW Office of Water.

Below the waterline is a rare plant, the round leaf *Wilsonia*, found in small pockets of Australia and threatened by off-road four wheel drives, grazing and weeds. Experts believe the crush of water will not kill off the plant. It is expected to survive by embedding seeds in the earth which will sprout when the lake bed is dry again. [canberratimes.com.au](http://canberratimes.com.au)

## Great place for bird watching

Lake Waiwiri (also known as Papaitonga) is a dune lake in a scenic reserve on the Horowhenua coastal plain just south of Levin.

The lake has surrounding wetland and lush coastal forest over 135 hectares that provide a refuge for forest and water birds which depend on wetlands or lowland forests. The pukatea and swamp maire forest also has

stands of mature kahikatea and tawa; while lower wetter areas contain flax, raupō and sedges. There is even a chance of seeing giant Powelliphanta snails in undergrowth.

The reserve contains rare plants and wildlife, and fragile habitats. Visitors should stay on formed tracks and defined lookout areas at all times.

The lake had two islands, Motukiwi (Papaitonga) and Motungarara (Papawhaerangi) that was formed by the Muaupoko people in 1820 to extend their village. Access to the islands is not permitted.

The area was settled by the Muaupoko during the early part of the 19th century, but they were driven from the area in 1822 by Ngati Toa people led by Te Rauparaha. Te Rauparaha narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Muaupoko previously, in an incident that claimed the lives of his son and daughter.

In 1897, Sir Walter Buller bought an area including Papaitonga with the intention of protecting the land around the lake. In 1901, 27.5 ha of bush were formally established as a reserve, and the lake was added to the reserve in 1991.

This year the reserve was enhanced through the purchase of the 17ha of Preston's wetland by the Department of Conservation. This wetland was once part of a natural water system that flowed into Lake Papaitonga.

Drainage channels in Preston's wetland will be plugged to redirect the water back into the lake.

For more information visit DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



**Birds galore:** Black swans, Canada geese and a mired of other water fowl at home on Lake Papaitonga.  
Photo: Ellen Brook.

## Taupo Swamp – an amazing haven for flax, native fish and water fowl

Traffic to and from Wellington on State Highway 1, heading north from Paramata or South from Pukerua Bay, zooms past this wetland treasure and most travellers don't even know it is there.

Taupo Swamp is a lowland fresh water area, classified as a topogeneous mire. Its 30 hectares of harakeke, (native flax) are protected by a QEII covenant. Harakeke, once used extensively for fibre, used to be widespread now few wetlands remain in the region.

A lookout point beside the highway is rarely used. Taupo Swamp is bordered by a walkway and cycleway connecting the seaside settlements of Plimmerton and Pukerua Bay. Parking is available.

Taupo Swamp is home to largely indigenous vegetation including sedges, flax, ferns, shrubs, herbaceous plants and grasses, native fish and water fowl. The swamp can also be seen from the North Island Main Trunk Railway.

Workers in the 1930s who were building the Centennial Highway that runs alongside Taupo Swamp faced two major challenges. Firstly, digging down to 6.6 metres to find

solid ground next to the swamp; then, the building of the coastal seawall and back filling it to create a platform for the road. It took three years to complete.



**Going past:** Stop for a look. Photo: Billie Win



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## **Important**

# **Subs - please**

The good news is, a good number of members have renewed their subs. The bad news is there are approximately 75 subscriptions outstanding – this will be the last Flight magazine for those folk, unless we receive payment. I will post out a reminder soon but due to cost restraints with postage it will be the last one.

If you are unsure whether or not you have paid please contact me either by email – info@ducks.org.nz or by mail - PO Box 281, LEVIN 5540 or phone 06 362 6675. Please let me know if you no longer wish to be a member to save us both the hassle and postage in chasing your overdue subs.

At time of writing I have yet to post out all the receipts for those people who are due them – e.g. Gold, Silver, Bronze and Business members.

**Jan Abel**

Administration

### **Change of Address - are you moving? Please send us your new details.**

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For membership and general inquiries, Ducks Unlimited, PO Box 281, Levin, 5540,

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