

# Flight



ISSUE 177

September 2019



**Conference & AGM**  
**Fishing in the Gulf**  
**Wairio planting day**

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Whanganui AGM has come and gone and very successful it was, with the bus trip to Bushy Park being a highlight.

My thanks go to William Abel and Adrienne Bushell for organising it for us.

The Wairio Wetland is progressing well with the diversion of water from Matthews Lagoon having been completed late summer although there is still some fine tuning required for it to reach its full potential. With the extra water now coming in it has opened the possibility of developing another seven or eight hectares on the northern end for waterfowl habitat.

A planting day was held there in July in the Victoria University block with some infill planting in areas where nursery plants such as manuka have been planted previously to carry on the research for best practice for wetland restoration. We are planning to build a bird viewing hide on a peninsula in Stage 4 of the wetland in the coming summer.

The board has decided to invest some funding into university research grants for subjects relating to wetlands and a subcommittee has been set up.

Hope the winter/spring is treating you well.

Ross Cottle



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A past director of DUNZ and one of its founding members in 1974, Dudley Bell, left, recently met up with a current director, Dan Steele. Dudley, who lives in Waikato, gets a mention in the 1976 annual report, see p6.

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### Advertising rates:

Please contact the editor to enquire about advertising rates and to book space. Adverts must be camera ready. Waterfowl adverts free to members.

### Editorial:

Contributions, including photographs and letters to the editor, are welcomed. Please send these to the editor before the next deadline, **Friday 14 February 2020** in time for the March 2020 issue.

The editor reserves the right to edit articles for content, length, grammar, style, and readability.

## In search of early Flights

Ducks Unlimited is on the lookout for old copies of *Flight* magazine pre-1981, anything before issue 29, to add to its digital collection. We could arrange to scan them and return them afterwards.

Old annual reports or other historical information would also be of interest.

Please contact the Flight editor, Alison Murray, [flightdunz@gmail.com](mailto:flightdunz@gmail.com), phone 021 124 8095 if you know where any might be lurking.

## Flight is online

Flight magazine, including previous issues, are online and available to download as pdfs at [www.ducks.org.nz](http://www.ducks.org.nz)

**Cover:** A who at Staglands, Akatarawas, Wellington. New Zealand's blue duck has had a productive breeding season, see p4 and p11.

**Photo Andrew McMillan, @\_karora on Twitter**

**Back page:** A brown teal/pāteke pair stand guard in front of their nest at Pukaha/Mt Bruce last month. The wildlife centre's two pairs of pāteke both have nests, with three eggs in each.

**Photo Tara Swan**

# Wairio plays lead role in year's work

This year's Ducks Unlimited New Zealand's 45th conference was held at the Collegiate Motor Inn in Whanganui, with just over 50 attendees. The weather was kind and, after a bitterly cold, wet and windy Friday, turned on the sunshine in time for the field trip on Saturday, 3 August.

President Ross Cottle opened proceedings at the AGM by saying it had been a reasonably quiet year, with only three members' wetlands being developed, however work at Wairio Wetland was going well and good progress had been made.

He paid tribute to long-time DU supporter and Wairarapa Chapter Secretary / Treasurer Joyce Brooks who passed away shortly after the previous AGM.

Treasurer John Bishop, after his traditional warm-up joke, presented his report. He confirmed and reviewed the requirements of being a charitable trust, which include providing a mission statement, entity structure and a yearly report of income, expenditure, activities and volunteer support.

The information for the Charities Register notes DU is reliant on volunteers, with about 8000 volunteer hours a year spent on wetlands assessment and building, swan collection, and advice, education, field days, bittern project, supplying magazine content, Wairio planting and education, supporting schools, fundraising, auctions and dinners.

After running through the financials, which show a slight deficit for the year, John concluded:

"We remain solvent, through support from membership subscriptions, auctions, grants from the Wetland Care Trust, and donations from Treadwells, Pharazyn Trust, Muter Trust, South Wairarapa Rotary and one-off grants."

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The DU Board remained unchanged, with the two directors whose two-year terms were up, Jim Law and John Dermer, being re-elected unanimously.



Top from left: John Bishop, Neil Candy, Ross Cottle and Jim Law after the presentation of the Bill Barrett Trophy to Ross for his work on behalf of DU in the past year. Middle: From left, Myra and David Smith, Graeme Berry, and Barbara Dempsey. Bottom: Diana Chetwin, Di Pritt and Diny Dermer in the Winter Gardens at Virginia Lake.

## WATERFOWL AND WETLAND TRUST

David Smith reported that the trust was in good shape thanks to the sharemarket, and despite paying out \$40,000 to DU, was in a similar financial position as it was at the end of 2017.

He said the trust was doing exactly what it was set up to do: provide money to enable DU to carry on its work.

## WETLAND CARE

Will Abel said that in line with the previous couple of years, there had been few applications for new projects, with most of the wetland creation activities centred on the Wairio Wetland.

A large wetland in Pahiatua that DU committed \$5000 to three years ago

Continued next page



**From previous page**

had been completed, and in Masterton, DU had helped create another large wetland, to which it contributed \$4000.

**ROYAL SWAN**

Will Abel said it had been a disastrous year for the royal swan, with no cygnets available and even the wildlife centre at Peacock Springs, Canterbury, the usual source of swans, was looking for some new breeding stock.

“We have no idea why really, but anecdotally I suspect it is because it coincides with the 50th anniversary of the moon landing,” he said, tongue in cheek.

“If it improves next year, my supposition will be proved correct, and I will present a paper at the next conference on it.”

He said it was fortunate that there had not been many requests for swans.

**WHIO**

Peter Russell reported that the breeding programme had had a good season, with 65 whio reared from captive pairs and 15 reared from wild clutches. A total of 72 were released.

In the North Island, 30 were released. Three older birds from last season were released on the Whakapapanui in December, and 12 birds, six males and six females, were released at Blue Duck Station in January.

The third release, on the Manganui a-te-Ao, was in early March, with eight males released at the Ruatiti Domain and four females released down the river where there was a surplus of males. Three male birds were released on Mangawhero stream on 20 March.

Peter said it was always a great thrill to take part in the releases out on the river. He has been doing them since 1997 and it has changed so much. In 2000 they released seven, compared with 72 in the past year.

In the South Island, 20 birds were released on the West Coast in January in the Wainihinihi, Arahura, Styx and Kawhake rivers; 12 birds were released on the Taipo River in March; in Tasman 10 birds were released.

**MEMBERSHIP**

Paul Mason reported that DU currently had 280 members, with 57 of those unpaid as at the AGM.

He said a second subs reminder would be sent out, following email and postal reminders subsequent to the initial subs mailout.

He noted that in the past three years, payment preferences were moving from cheque to internet banking. Credit card payments remained about the same and PayPal transactions were increasing.

More members were responding to the suggestion that DU communicated with them more by email, he said.

**WEBSITE**

Paul said new articles were added as events occur, with the most recent being the planting day at Wairio Wetland. *Flight* magazines, from No 155 to the current issue, have been loaded on to the site. Issue 29 has also been scanned and added as a PDF file.

Articles from more recent *Flight* magazines are being transcribed and loaded as searchable items – so far back to issue 159. Old issues are being



**Clockwise from left: Will Abel and Ross Cottle explore Bushy Park; the sign that greets visitors in the homestead’s foyer; Jan and Will Abel with Adrienne Bushell inside the entrance; Bushy Park proprietor Dale Pullen, who told guests about the history of the homestead over high tea, and Diny Dermer.**

*Photos Alison Murray/Ian Jensen*

scanned and loaded as PDFs.

He noted a drop-off in website visitors in the past three months and in response had upgraded the site-mapping software and re-registered the site with search engines.

The main files being downloaded were *Flight* magazines and people were also accessing the educational resources files (from Quack Club), he said.

**Continued next page**

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## WAIRIO WETLAND

Jim Law reported that the wetland was in good heart, benefiting from continued restoration work, albeit at a more modest cost to DU (\$4455 versus \$9500 in the prior year). Work focused on more bund wall improvements (\$1700), tree planting (\$2000) and noxious plant control (\$755).

At last, significant progress was made by the Greater Wellington Regional Council to reticulate water from Matthews Lagoon and Boggy Pond to Wairio. Earthworks have been completed but after a “weather event”, remedial work is required. This will be done this summer.

“We had provisionally budgeted to fund a portion of this work but GWRC assumed full responsibility,” he said.

Total expenditure by the Wairio Restoration Committee, not counting volunteer time, since inception 14 years ago, now stands at \$220,000.

The Victoria University of Wellington School for Biodiversity and Restoration Ecology remain focused on their research at Stage 3.

The Restoration Committee is still holding funds (lodged with DU) from fundraising efforts totalling \$10,807. A further \$15,000 grant was recently received by local donors. These funds are also being held by DU on behalf of the project committee.

As mentioned last year, Wairarapa Moana, which includes the Wairio Wetland (administered by DOC on behalf of the Crown), has been included in a Treaty of Waitangi settlement with Wairarapa iwi. “Whilst the settlement has been delayed, the local iwi has assured us that they want us to continue our good work restoring the Wairio Wetland.



“We remain of the view, though perhaps slightly biased, that DU members should be proud of this project,” Jim said.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

Jim Law reported on DU’s new initiative offering scholarships to students doing research in a relevant area. A trial offering a total of \$25,000 over three years in grants of \$5000 per student so far had had little response to date.

Four universities had been approached and it was likely the first recipient of one of the \$5000 grants would come from Victoria University working on the Wairio site.



Clockwise from top: Guests work out their bids for the silent auction; Jim Campbell and Chris Thomas at the dinner; John Dermer and Ross Cottle at an ‘informal board meeting’; Dan Steele gets up close to a royal swan at Virginia Lake, where DU released swans several years ago.

Photos Alison Murray/Dan Steele



## Whistling as he works

The guest speaker at this year's conference, Murray Stevenson, spoke about gun dogs and the importance of training them to suit the terrain. The three main groups of gun dogs – retrievers, spaniels and pointers/setters – all have very different temperaments and purposes.

He stressed the importance of letting puppies play and not putting too much pressure on them too early, saying to fully train a gun dog takes two years or more.

Experience has taught him that eight dogs equals eight times more work. It was important for owners of multiple dogs to give each dog one-on-one time and make sure none were left out.



Ken Barnes and Murray Stevenson with a hare dummy used for training gun dogs.

He brought along some of his \$3000 worth of dog training equipment with him and explained some basic techniques such as teaching pups to respond to a whistle rather than a human voice, and as a first step for them to learn "yes" and "no".

Through a series of anecdotes, Murray described his experiences with different breeds. Labradors, he said, were easy

to train as they were one-dimensional: they liked peanut butter sandwiches and retrieving ducks.

He said the two true bird dogs were the English pointer and English setter. Murray's not-so-successful experience with owning an English setter taught him that they are good in long-range conditions but not suited to bush-covered, short-range conditions, and can be a challenge to train.

His advice for teaching a dog to run in a straight line is to train it along a fenceline, using incremental steps, so the dog can only deviate left or right, not both ways, making it easier to control.

He concluded by saying, "We hurry our training too much. Make sure your dog is 100 per cent right before you move on."

## Winding back the years to 1976

### An abridged version of the president's report at DU'S second AGM.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – I.H. PIRANI

*Presented at the second annual conference of Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated at the White Heron Lodge, Kilbirnie, Wellington on Saturday, 24 April 1976*

This year has been one of rapid growth and progress for Ducks Unlimited. Waterfowl conditions in most parts of New Zealand improved considerably and most regions experienced an excellent breeding season. Prospects for 1976/77 appear most encouraging for the ducks – however, these favourable circumstances must not lull us into a false sense of security or complacency. Our work is just as urgent – the need is still as great.

Your group's financial situation has continued to improve and the financial statement to 31 March 1976 is enclosed for your perusal. Membership has almost doubled and continues to grow at a steady pace. We have welcomed our fifth life member, our third trade member and our fifth acclimatisation society member. We also have a growing membership from persons overseas – in Australia, Canada and the United States. In 1976/77 we

aim to double membership.

'Operation Gretel' is now well under way and results are encouraging. 'Operation Pateke' has attracted much attention and we are delighted with our progress – 1976/77 promises to be a great year for the Brown Teal.

As a fundraising project, our T-shirt promotion produced excellent results and the gift card subscription scheme similarly was most successful and resulted in many new members.

At the end of the financial year, we announced our plans for project number 3 – 'Operation HQ'. The objectives of project 3 are the establishment of a national headquarters comprising a research centre and display area, the latter designed to be a fundraising activity. Already several members have promised their entire waterfowl collections to the centre. We look forward with much enthusiasm to our third project which must, of necessity, be staged over several years.

In 1975/76 Ducks Unlimited has not been entirely inward looking and has interested itself in other related



conservation projects. One such project is the Westshore plan in Napier and our director, Henry Lickers, participated in meetings concerning this matter.

We have enjoyed visits from a director of Ducks Unlimited (Canada), Mr Gerry Malaher, and from the National President of Ducks Unlimited Inc USA, Mr Gaylord Donnelley – such visits lead to a closer understanding and liaison between the international groups. In the same ways, the visit of director, Dudley Bell, to the northern hemisphere was another valuable opportunity – he has now returned with many exciting possibilities for us in New Zealand.

One of the unique attractions of membership in Ducks Unlimited is the opportunity for all to positively participate in field work – in fundraising – and in contributing ideas, knowledge, expertise etc – financial memberships means so much more than just writing a cheque for \$10.

In the short time since we began, with a few hundred dollars to support the dream, significant progress has been made. However, we are still very much in the establishment period. Hard work and enthusiastic support have helped to make the dream materialise and DU is contributing in a positive way to the preservation of New Zealand's waterfowl heritage – but there is a long road to travel.



# A marvellous way to see Hauraki Gulf

One of this year's auction items was a two-night fishing trip in the Hauraki Gulf for four people. **Kees Weytmans** has been there, done that, so here's what this year's winners can expect.

At the 2018 conference auction in Hamilton, John and Diny Dermer and Kees and Kay Weytmans won the two-night fishing trip in the Hauraki Gulf on Brian and Wendy Simmons' 40-foot launch.

It was an all expenses paid trip; food (breakfast, lunch and dinner), private cabins, wine, beer and all the fishing gear.

Late February 2019 was the date that suited everyone and so on a Friday afternoon, we were welcomed on to the launch.

Now, I have done many things in my life (some of which have not been done by many others...) but I never been on a "boat" this size – just MARVELLOUS!

Brian and Wendy were the most hospitable hosts you could have wished for. The conversation was lively, always interesting. We came well prepared with Sea-Legs tablets but we didn't need them. The beer and wine flowed freely and the Drambuie was on tap. Wendy can make really nice meals in a reasonably small place and we ate well.

Brian, with his all encompassing knowledge about the landscape, scenery, history and who owns which boat and which bach was an ever-entertaining host.

We visited Governor George Grey's mansion as well as an old copper mine.

The fishing was excellent in that we caught many, many fish. And that's what's it about – the thrill of the catch. Unfortunately we had put most of them back due to size. But there was plenty for the next morning's breakfast.

We like to thank Brian and Wendy for them being most generous. We had a wonderful time with them.

And Kay and I would like to express our best wishes for a speedy recovery for Brian after his fall. Only at the last conference, did we hear about his accident. We wish him well.

▪ *This year the Weytmans and the Dermers won an auction for a night at Blue Duck Lodge.*



From top left: Governor Grey's mansion on Kawau Island; the 40-foot launch; Brian Simmons briefs Kay and Kees on what to expect on the trip at last year's AGM; enjoying their prize are from left, Kay Weytmans, John and Diny Dermer, with Wendy up front; setting off from the marina – Diny and John with Brian at the helm.



# The evolution of Courtney's Close

On a parcel of land at Mangaone in Raetihi, in an area that was once an unproductive, narrow, boggy drain bound by strong ridges, co-owners Graeme Berry and Paddy Chambers saw a potential habitat for waterfowl.

DU Patron Di Pritt says, "Since Graeme and Paddy Chambers have been involved at Mangaone, from 2004, they have created six major wetland areas – ranging from an acre to 10 acres – which are all fenced and they have planted about 38 acres. Another four major ponds have also been created.

"It is an amazing achievement, and was fully supported by the previous owner, Jon Preston."

Their latest project is Courtney's Close, a wetland area they named after the Horizons employee who helped with the project.

They created it by splitting a 300-acre paddock in half and building a 650-metre deer fence. The wetland area now consists of four ponds outside the fence, and three, with room for two more, enclosed by the fence.

This means animals have access to water but are excluded from the lower wetlands and impurities are filtered out along the way.

Inside the fences Graeme and his partner, Bang, have planted natives, protected from the deer.

Clockwise from left: Looking downstream from Courtney's Close; looking down inside the deer fence; animals have access to water but only the ponds outside the deer fence; the top end of the deer section, where more wet areas are planned. Photos Di Pritt

## A strong supporter

Ducks Unlimited wishes to record the passing of Jonathan Williams Preston, 90, of Raetihi, at the end of last year.

Jon was generous with his support of DU and had enjoyed seeing the land that he previously owned being transformed by Graeme Berry and Paddy Chambers who bought it in 2004.

Jon was also a member of the Wanganui Vintage Car Club for almost 50 years and the owner of some interesting and historic vehicles. He will be missed.





**Left: The wetland's culvert and overflow are on the far left and are much lower than the hill under which the water "escaped". Above: The fence above the washout, hanging in the breeze.**

## You win some, you lose some

In 2012 a wetland was created at DU Director Dan Steele's property, Blue Duck Station in the Ruapehu district, but things haven't gone exactly as planned. Water has tunnelled under the pumice layer – the hills are predominantly pumice – to the

next hard layer, first creating an underground leak, which DU's John and Gail Cheyne noticed during a visit.

Next came the washout: Dan says, "We first noticed pumice floating down the Retaruke River before we

found the washout."

As of publication date, the problem is still waiting for a solution. Meantime Dan has not been idle but had to climb out of his gumboots for a day or two to head to the city, see below.

## 'The biggest conservation project on Earth'

Dan Steele, the man with the gavel at the yearly DU auctions, headed to Wellington the week after the AGM to play to a different kind of crowd – at Homewood, the home of the British high commissioner, as part of Wellington on a Plate, the city's month-long celebration of good food.

Dan and UK chef Jack Cashmore teamed up to offer guests a 10-course degustation menu, finishing the meal with a discussion by Dan on conservation, sustainability and a better New Zealand.

Dan said in an interview after the event: "New Zealand could be the biggest conservation project on Earth.

"For me, the big picture is that New Zealand could lead the world in producing quality products which world-class chefs, like Jack Cashmore, want to use in the best restaurants in the world. We can also lead in the realm of biodiversity management



**The Chef's Table "pop-up" restaurant, accessible only by chopper or four-wheel drive, at Blue Duck Station last summer.**

and conservation.

"It's a big ask to get the primary industries on board to work closely together, but if we can pull it off and be recognised as the biggest conservation project on Earth at the same time as continuing to farm, then every product in New Zealand will become more valuable," he said.

Sharing in his philosophy is Jack, who has worked in two Michelin-starred restaurants and was head chef at Anglo in London. Since meeting almost 10 years ago, Jack and Dan have shared a vision

for both the farm and New Zealand.

Their goal is for Blue Duck Station and its pop-up restaurant, The Chef's Table at Blue Duck Station, which was open last summer, to be the best overnight and fine-dining experience in New Zealand – based on the philosophy of nature conservation and sustainability.

Jack said it was New Zealand's array of biodiversity, open culture, and sense of community that kept him coming back. Now his second home, Blue Duck Station offers him the chance to build a small restaurant from scratch.

# Versatile mudfish underrated

CATHERINE OTT

Most New Zealanders are unaware of the existence of this little known but special species of fish, let alone seen one. If you were to cross an eel with a whitebait – this is what the Canterbury mudfish looks like.

Small, tubular and lacking scales, the adults are 10 to 12cm long, generally nocturnal and are restricted to small isolated freshwater locations, so are seldom seen. The juveniles feed during the day, hiding at night to avoid being eaten by their adult counterparts.

Mudfish may appear unspectacular, but they have some very special characteristics and they are part of our treasured taonga.

To allow them to survive in periods of drought, mudfish bury themselves in damp surroundings such as under logs, tree roots or vegetation to wait for surface water to return. By slowing down their metabolic rate and breathing oxygen through their skin, mudfish can survive up to two months out of water!

There are five species of mudfish and



**A Canterbury mudfish – they are able to survive for two months out of water.**

all are classified as either threatened or at risk under the New Zealand Threat Classification with the most threatened being the Canterbury mudfish.

At the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust in Christchurch, a focus to increase numbers of Canterbury mudfish is being achieved by optimising their pond environment to promote their establishment, removing predator fish species such as eels, trout and salmon and working closely with DOC to monitor and study this endangered species.

A threat to all species of mudfish across New Zealand is the depletion of habitat by the draining of swamps, wetlands and the modification of waterways and drains through mechanical clearance.

Simple mudfish habitat protection can be achieved through:

- Fencing off the wetland from stock to prevent wetland plants being grazed and trampled.

- Plant a native vegetation buffer and DOC can recommend suitable plants for riparian planting.

- Prevent invasive fish species establishing by finding out which species are in your catchment and taking care not to accidentally introduce them.

- Maintain drains and waterways using mudfish friendly methods. Create shade on the margins to minimise growth of freshwater weeds. If physical weed removal is required, clear short sections at a time.

The benefits of wetland protection and expansion are advantageous also for native bird and invertebrate species, allowing them to flourish and multiply for future generations.

▪ *Catherine Ott is the administration manager for the Isaac Conservation Land Wildlife Trust.*

## Fish deaths call for relocation project rethink

When more than 900 brown mudfish in the Wairarapa were transferred to a new wetlands habitat to make way for wastewater storage reservoirs, the district council initially claimed it was a success, but it was later learnt that most of the fish did not survive.

Fish & Game reported that the project in December and January involving 921 mudfish, organised by Carterton District Council, had resulted in virtually none surviving.

In July Greater Wellington Regional Council told the *Wairarapa Times-Age* that it would undertake further monitoring of the translocated population and would be tracking how the mudfish and their habitat were doing.

“Our immediate focus is on creating additional habitat that we believe will be more suitable for brown mudfish,” it

said. “Once we are happy that this new habitat is established, we will relocate the remaining mudfish.”

GWRC believed mudfish were still present in the wetland where they were relocated, but in lower numbers.

“Unfortunately, the habitat created did not develop as we had hoped, in particular in relation to the aquatic vegetation cover that would have provided cover for the mudfish.

“High water temperatures and predation by birds, such as shags and herons, are considered to be among some of the key issues that impacted on the success of the translocation.”

GWRC will continue to work closely with the district council to create a new habitat more similar to the original area the fish were relocated from.

“We will be incorporating the learnings so far to ensure that the project has the best chance of success, in terms of maintaining and enhancing brown mudfish habitat.”

The project will now be led by Alton Perrie, an environmental scientist from GWRC who has “considerable expertise in mudfish”.

Fish & Game Wellington manager Phil Teal has called for an independent inquiry by the Department of Conservation into the transfer.

A Fish & Game senior scientist even advised the project co-ordinators last year that this project was not advisable.

“This is \$160,000 of ratepayers’ money that would be much better used on meaningful conservation projects that would benefit all fish habitat,” he said.

# Whoio exceed target in Fiordland

The Department of Conservation has high hopes for the upcoming whoio breeding season in Fiordland. About 64 breeding whoio were found earlier this year in a survey of a security site for the blue ducks.

Senior ranger Andrew (Max) Smart says this means the northern Fiordland site is the first in the South Island to exceed the target of 50 breeding pairs.

"Security sites are the highest priority whoio conservation areas in the country; there are four in the North Island and four in the South Island.

"The target of 50 breeding pairs is set for each security site through the Whoio Recovery Plan. A couple of sites on the North Island have reached this target, but we're the first confirmed site on the South Island to do so."



A whoio in Canterbury.

Photo Bernard Spragg

Whoio have come a long way since 1999/2000 when only three pairs were found in this security site, Max says. "This year's number is only a minimum and there could be up to another nine pairs.

"Extended trapping efforts and landscape scale predator control have enabled the whoio here, and at key sites around New Zealand, to make a strong comeback."

Whoio are monitored using walk-through river surveys using specially trained conservation dogs. Two surveys a year are planned for each river.

The first survey, in November and December, counts the number of ducklings, as well the number of individual birds and pairs seen. The second survey, generally in January and February, counts the number of fledglings.

Exceeding this target is great news for whoio, but according to Max, there is still a lot of work to do to secure a future for this species.

"We are only doing work over a relatively small area and this is where we are making a difference. Predator control has to be kept up and expanded for whoio to have a chance to increase in number and spread over their natural range."

## GIVEAWAY

**Flight magazine has a copy of *The Forest for the Trees*, a book by Wayne Bennett, of Forest Flora, to give away.**

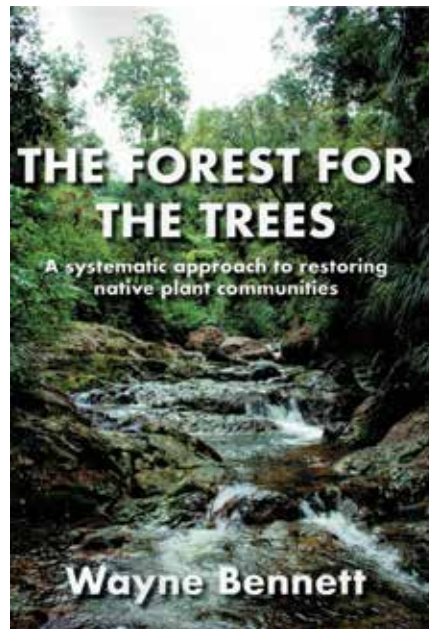
Wayne says his book explains the benefit of observing natural areas carefully and using this knowledge as a template for restoring forests and wetlands.

He is the co-ordinator for Ecosourced Waikato, a project manager for Waikato Rivercare and is on the committee of Ngaruawahia Action Group.

"Our native plants vary across the country and there is value in retaining this natural diversity.

"If we are to ensure we only plant species that cope well with the conditions and want to minimise weed incursions, we can learn so much from observing what remnants we have left of natural areas," Wayne says.

"I may be known to some DU members through the taxidermy work I did



through the 1980s, 90s and 2000s. I have been restoring forests and wetlands for nearly 40 years and learn best from my mistakes. The book does not gloss over mistakes but takes lessons from them."

He says there are many books on the identification of native plants but few describing how they grow, what they

tolerate and what they are vulnerable to.

"These are things that usually only experience can tell but there is a section discussing the ecology of all of the plants mentioned elsewhere in the book, both native plants and weeds.

"There are many native plants, not well known, that contribute to the welfare of waterfowl. This book is intended to help provide that knowledge."

You can access a copy online at: [www.forestflora.co.nz/Forest\\_for\\_trees.html](http://www.forestflora.co.nz/Forest_for_trees.html) for free but for those who like to have a copy to hold and take with you, hard copies are available from [wayne@forestflora.co.nz](mailto:wayne@forestflora.co.nz) for \$45 including GST postage and packaging. An invoice will be emailed out once the book has been sent.

▪ To go into the draw to win a copy, email the Flight editor at [flightdunz@gmail.com](mailto:flightdunz@gmail.com) with "Forest for the trees" in the subject line and provide your name and address in the email.



Photo: Walt Dickson

## Planting day at Wairio

A **planting** day for Victoria University students and Ducks Unlimited members at Wairio came with a few more mod cons than usual, thanks to DU President Ross Cottle.

He arrived in his motorhome with Big Red, the side-by-side in tow, which meant hot cups of tea and sausages for lunch and the easy delivery via SxS of

the plants to the planting site.

There was a good turnout as students from Victoria University's School of Biological Sciences led by Stephen Hartley, director, Greater Wellington Regional Council and DOC representatives, DU members and others all chipped to help with the day's work.

About 300 specimen trees – kahikatea,

tōtara, swamp maire and cabbage trees – were bought with a \$2000 grant from the Department of Conservation.

Many hands make light work, and by the end of the day, the trees were in place as in-fill in Stage 3 of the wetland, the university's "classroom in a wetland", among the nursery trees planted five years ago.

## Bittern steals the show

**Ducks Unlimited** recently received a substantial donation to put towards its restoration work at Wairio Wetland.

Janet and Patrick Velvin, who live in South Wairarapa, are passionate about conservation, particularly water conservation, and contacted The Gift Trust, a philanthropic advisory service, to identify suitable causes they could support.

Cheryl Spain, executive director of The Gift Trust, said they had been impressed with the research on Wairio and DU's partnerships with the Department of Conservation, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Victoria University, particularly its links with the student research projects at Wairio, and had chosen Wairio as a suitable recipient.

The Velvins visited the wetland for the first time and took part in a planting day



Cheryl Spain, Janet and Patrick Velvin, and Jim Law at Wairio.

with Victoria Uni students in early July.

After helping with the planting, they were given a guided side-by-side tour by Ross Cottle, who identified a suitable site on a promontory for a viewing hide, which could be constructed with some of the funds donated by the Velvins.

During the tour, Patrick asked if there were bitterns in the wetland, and as if

on cue, a bittern obliged and flew in front of the them.

Janet became aware of the work at Wairio Wetland through the book *Wairarapa Moana: The Lake and its People*.

Janet said after the tour they were impressed with Ducks Unlimited and happy to give a donation towards the work at Wairio.



Above: Stephen Hartley, centre in hi-vis vest, rallies the troops to finalise their plan of attack. Left: The Victoria University students await instructions. Below: Walt Dickson, Ross Cottle and Jim Law take a break along with the other volunteers beside the motorhome. Photos Paul Mason

**For Ross Cottle, chairman of Ducks Unlimited, it is “enormously gratifying” to see the flourishing ecosystem they have created. “It’s a leader in this region and a template for how to restore a wetland.”**  
 - Wairarapa Times-Age, 25 July 2019



# Pāteke numbers improving

CATHERINE OTT

The brown teal (pāteke) is one of three endemic teal to New Zealand and the only one to fly. Both the Auckland Island and Campbell Island teal are flightless.

Mainly nocturnal and half the size of a mallard, this shy, omnivorous duck spends time on land foraging for invertebrates, seeds, fruit, grass, and foliage. With dark brown plumage, the males are particularly distinctive from their female counterparts during breeding time in late winter.

The slightly larger males in breeding plumage obtain a green iridescence on their heads, a dark chestnut breast plus occasionally a thin white neck ring too.

Like many of our native birds, this small-necked dabbling duck has dramatically suffered from mammalian predators, loss of habitat and hunting, resulting in a plummeting population to only 700 birds in the wild by the 1990s.

Brown teal were once widespread, but thanks to brown teal species



A pāteke at the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust.

Photo Anne Richardson

co-ordinator Kevin Evans and the Department Of Conservation brown teal recovery group, in the past 15 years, this population decline has not only been halted, but reversed, building up to about 2500 birds in the wild today.

Numbers are slowly recovering and there are several contributors to this success:

- Captive breeding facilities across New Zealand that produce birds for release.
- The Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust (ICWT), which provides facilities for flock mating for other institutions, and breeding plus pre-release conditioning and processing (banding, transmitter attachment, worming, disease screening, etc). Every captive raised bird goes to ICWT as its aviaries have stream-fed waterways for foraging, plus special feeders where the brown teal learn to obtain food. These feeders are also located at release sites.

■ DOC together with community groups undertake intensive predator control at release sites.

There are generally four releases of brown teal a year and the latest release of 32 birds was in August in the Abel Tasman National Park in an area managed by Janszoon.

Preparing the birds for release is an exhausting but rewarding task for all those involved at ICWT (assisted by Kevin Evans).

All release sites are vigorously assessed to ensure pāteke are released into areas with adequate protection and habitat to support self-sustaining populations.

*[Ducks Unlimited was instrumental in early conservation efforts from 1975 with its 'Operation Pateke', New Zealand's first large-scale co-ordinated brown teal breeding programme. – Editor]*

## Trapping of predators must continue

Ian Jensen writes about the 'necessity of continuance' in the war against pests.

For several years, no records were kept to show the numbers of predators dispatched on the property, though one Tims trap early on accounted for about 35 ferrets over three years.

In February 2008 a comprehensive record was started, compiled mainly from pests that my dogs found, hares that keen hunters dispatched, along with wasp nests that have been eliminated as well as bait stations for rats and mice.

In 2009, with assistance from Greater Wellington Regional Council, a number of DOC 200 traps were provided, and others have been purchased since.



A weasel, the main catch at Ian's Te Horo property.

Photo Ian Jensen

The property is coastal dunes south of Te Horo, with about 10 hectares of wetland, where there are nine traps located on the wetland margins. Weasels are the predominant catch, followed by stoats, rats and ferrets and a few small to medium rabbits.

It seems bird numbers, particularly pheasants, have increased over recent years along with Californian quail. With the ducks, it is harder to make a

comparison as water levels also play a very important part in the survival of the young and moulting birds.

For my traps I use the juice from 'Sardines in spring water'; I have a small sealed container kept in the fridge that I store it in – once every three months seems to be enough to keep up the interest.

Some say it is not counting the numbers caught that matter, but it is the numbers still around that matter. However counting the numbers caught keeps one well motivated to continue the onslaught.

In 2017 there were 29 weasels and four stoat caught, while in 2018 that dropped significantly to four weasels, three stoats and a ferret.

This year has spiked with 21 weasels, 16 stoats and two ferrets – we also passed the 500 mark with hedgehogs since records began.



# Wetland Care Scholarship

*Interested in studying wetland birds or wetland restoration? –  
the Wetland Care Scholarship could be for you!*



## BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

Wetland Care Research Scholarships are Ducks Unlimited-sponsored scholarships applicable to any student currently enrolled or affiliated with a New Zealand university.

Funds are aimed at encouraging and supporting students who wish to push the boundaries of what is known about wetland restoration and conservation and whose projects are designed to facilitate better management of New Zealand wetlands or their environment.

Up to \$20,000 is available each year to cover one to four separate scholarships of \$5000 each. Funds can be used to support student living costs or to cover the costs of equipment purchase, logistics and consumables.

## CRITERIA

Applications will be accepted from students/researchers affiliated with universities interested in making a difference through wetland conservation.

The student project must be based in

New Zealand. Preference will be given to applications that demonstrate:

- projects of direct benefit to New Zealand based on current wetland conservation issues.
- innovative thinking that pushes the boundaries of what is known about New Zealand wetland conservation.
- research on native threatened wetland bird species.
- research with clear objectives and measurable outcomes.
- research with a strong wetland management and conservation applications.
- research covering any 'preferred research topics' listed on the Ducks Unlimited/Wetland Care website.

## VALUE

Wetland Care will award up to four scholarships a year, in two funding rounds each year for the next three years. The current round, consisting of one or two \$5000 scholarships, is being advertised now for 2020.

The next funding round, consisting of another one or two \$5000 scholarships, will be advertised early next year. Funds will be paid in one lump sum to successful candidates upon completion of the milestones agreed at the time the scholarship is accepted.

## Interested? Or want to know more?

Please email us at [scholarships@wetlandcare.org.nz](mailto:scholarships@wetlandcare.org.nz) with your questions or to request an application pack.

Terms and conditions and an application form are available on the Ducks Unlimited website: [www.ducks.org.nz/wetland-care/scholarships](http://www.ducks.org.nz/wetland-care/scholarships).

**Applications for the current round close on 1 November 2019.**

## DU MEMBERSHIP FORM

YES, I wish to join Ducks Unlimited as a member OR  I wish to renew my membership

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All subscriptions include GST.

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For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

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We deliver and advocate for effective wetland restoration, development, research and education; and support the preservation of threatened waterfowl and the ethical and sustainable use of wetlands.