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Waterfowl at the Sinclair Wetlands — 1981 (The height of the population)



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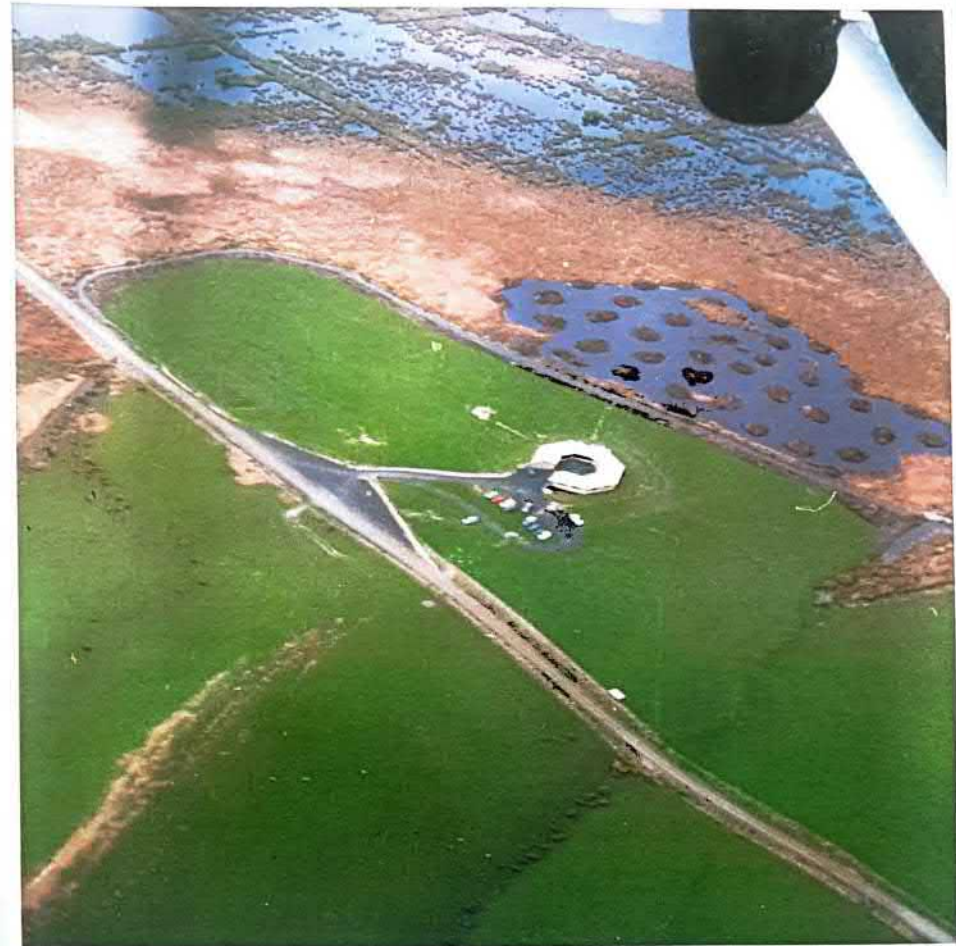
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DUCKS UNLIMITED
QUARTERLY
WATERFOWL JOURNAL

Flight



DUCKS UNLIMITED (N.Z.) INC.,

— FOR WATERFOWL AND WETLANDS —

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Cover Photo: The Sinclair
Wetlands Educational
Center

Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated is a private, charitable, non-profit conservation organisation dedicated to the preservation, restoration, creation and maintenance of wetland habitat in New Zealand, the propagation and conservation of the country's rare waterfowl, and the advocacy of wetlands as a valuable natural resource. This is achieved through six projects each with specific aims. These are: "Operation Pateke", the reduction of the threatened status of the New Zealand brown teal through the release of captive bred birds and wise habitat management; "Operation Grete", to increase the number of grey teal in New Zealand through the provision of suitable nesting habitat; "Operation Whio", the conservation of blue duck through the release of captive bred birds to expand the species range; "Operation Branta", to establish the Canada goose in the North Island as a valuable recreational resource; "Operation Royal Swan", the conservation of Mute Swan through the establishment of a captive breeding population; and "Operation Wetlands", to preserve, create and manage wetland areas through direct funding, technical assistance and public education of wetland values. The scientific study of wetlands and waterfowl is also encouraged through direct funding.

The organisation was founded in May 1974 by a group of concerned conservationists and incorporated by them in June 1975 at Wellington, New Zealand. Membership, in four categories, is open to anyone who supports the organisation's objectives. Junior membership is \$11.00 per annum, Full membership is \$27.50 per annum, Trade and Sponsor membership is \$55.00 per annum, and Life membership is \$550.00. Membership carries with it a subscription to "Flight", the official quarterly publication of Ducks Unlimited which currently reaches 2000 members and friends concerned with waterfowl conservation. Letters, manuscripts and photographs should be addressed to the "Flight" Editor. To assure prompt delivery, members should send subscription renewals and changes of address to National Headquarters at PO Box 44-176, Lower Hutt. Any views expressed by contributors in "Flight" are their own and do not necessarily constitute those of Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated.

Feature Article

The Mallard in New Zealand

by Neil Hayes

Background

The Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) was first introduced into New Zealand by the Otago Acclimatisation Society in 1867, when the society received one pair from Australia. From 1869 to 1876 the Otago Society received a further 12 birds, from the UK. The progeny from these birds did quite well in the wild and the mallard appeared on the Otago game licence in 1915. But it was only when the Southland Acclimatisation Society got into the act that mallard numbers started to really increase and between 1910 and 1918 the Southland Society released 1350 mallards in their district. However, it was not until the 1950's that the mallard population began to spread throughout the country and this was because seven acclimatisation societies had become actively involved in mallard propagation. Again the leader was the Southland Society who, between 1954 and 1963, released over 10,000 mallards in their district — setting the scene for a dramatic increase in mallard numbers.

Population explosion

From the mid 1960's mallard numbers began to increase dramatically, so much so that by the late 1970's the estimated number of mallards in New Zealand was 6 million! Such was the population explosion that some farmers threatened to poison mallards that were by then damaging their grain and pea crops. In response to this Ducks

Unlimited wrote to a number of newspapers and journals about the mallard, pointing out that with careful management the mallard would never be a problem in New Zealand.

Massive population reduction

So, what has happened in the last 7 or 8 years? Well, it now seems that the mallard population has been reduced to a very low level. Reports reaching DU from Otago, Manawatu, Waikato and Auckland clearly indicate a massive decline in mallard numbers. It appears that a combination of factors have been responsible for this and the major factors that have influenced this decline are, I believe:

1. The drought conditions in many areas, at the times of the year critical for brood survival.
2. Continued habitat destruction by humans. Each year more wetland hectares go down the drain.
3. Pond feeding, to attract birds to be shot. This was highly illegal until the early 1980's.
4. Increased daily bag limits — from 10 or 15 to 25 birds per day, in some areas.
5. Long shooting seasons. The season length dramatically increased from around 5 weeks to 3 months.
6. The use of 5 shot semi-auto shotguns in several areas.
7. No limit on decoy numbers.
8. Better educated and better equipped hunters, who now use camouflage clothing, ducks calls, open bored shotguns and good decoy layouts.

9. A drastic reduction in the grain & pea crop harvest — from virtual self sufficiency in grain crops in the early 1980s to the stage where over 200,000 tonnes of grain are now being imported per year!

Present population level

To give you some idea of how the mallard population has shrunk, DU members Horrie Sinclair and George Watson carried out a count of waterfowl in the Lakes Waiholah-Waipori wetlands, and in the adjacent Sinclair Wetlands, in late January. In the whole 12,000 hectares of wetlands they counted just over 200 mallards — in an area which has supported up to 100,000 mallards in January. (See photo on the back of this issue). I would in fact be bold enough to say the present mallard population is under one million, far removed from the six million of the late '70's.

Accurate population figures are needed

Another point which really comes out of the feed-back received by DU is that we don't have an accurate figure for the size of our mallard population. In order to obtain an accurate figure what we should be doing is establishing a similar system to the one used in the UK, where twice each year the birds are counted on every piece of water in the UK. The only population census system used for mallards in NZ is a diary return from duck shooters. While this system produces some interesting material, more detailed information is needed if the mallard is to be successfully managed on a national basis, to the satisfaction of everyone. I believe that greater consideration needs to be given to the future of the mallard in New Zealand, and that very careful management techniques must be applied to ensure the continuance of a healthy mallard population.

I hope these brief notes show that very careful management of the mallard is vital and that notes provide some food for thought. After all, the NZ waterfowl scene would be very dim without the mallard. (Comments on Neil's thoughts would be welcome. Editor.)

Presidents Report

On a recent visit to the Sinclair Wetlands with Neil Hayes, we were fortunate to be able to walk out to "Lonely Island" on the new walkway recently constructed by Lyall Nash.

This means that any persons wishing to get a panoramic overview of the wetland can do so without a lengthy boat tour. To stand on top of this island and witness the tremendous waterfowl habitat stretched out in every direction really makes one appreciate just how Horrie must have felt the day he secured this area to retain it in its present state. Any person can now stand and view waterfowl movements, and evaluate the tremendous foresight Horrie had when he secured the wetland.

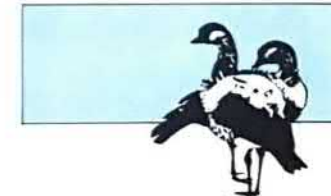
Within some months the Sinclair Wetlands Educational Centre should start generating more income as Horrie welcomes wetland enthusiasts from throughout the world.

The Local Chapter intend to fence the first display pond area in the near future and once this work is complete we should be able to incorporate an interesting display of waterfowl readily accessible to tour parties and the general public.

We thank our overseas D.U. friends for the finance to continue this development; their contribution has given D.U.(N.Z.) an enormous opportunity to expand the tourist areas of these wetlands.

At a special meeting held to discuss Dr Grant Dumbell's paper on the future of D.U.(N.Z.), a policy committee was formed to set out basic directions for the next decade which should ensure continuity in the right direction.

Jim Campbell
PRESIDENT



1989 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 1989 Annual Conference will be held at THC Tokaanu on Saturday & Sunday 8th & 9th July and a Registration form is published in this issue of 'Flight'. As mentioned in the last 'Flight' the Annual Dinner will be limited to 100, so get your registration in pronto. Diane Pritt, Smiths Road, Ohakune (Phone 0658 — 58016) is again co-ordinating registration. There will, of course, be no restriction of members wishing to attend the auction and the Annual Meeting, but a fee of \$10 will be charged to help cover DU's costs.

D.U. National Clay Target Championships.

These will again be held at the Taupo Gunclub on Friday and Saturday the 7th and 8th of July. Full details in the June FLIGHT.

CHANGE TO THE DU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Due to moving from Otaki to Auckland, plus new business commitments, Derek Morrison has had to resign from the DU Board. Derek was also the Chapter Liaison Officer and he did sterling work in cranking-up the Chapter scene. To replace Derek, Dave Johnston of Reporoa, was invited to join the Board and he has accepted. Dave is a dairy farmer and as you will have read in recent issues of 'Flight', it is on his property that the Broadlands Wildfowl Trust have created what must surely be one of the best man-made areas of waterfowl habitat ever established in New Zealand. The area comprises some 25 hectares of shallow water and each area of water can be easily managed, as each has its own control structure. Visiting the area is a must, and apart from Blue duck, all other species of waterfowl present in New Zealand can be seen. A comprehensive predator control programme, for feral cats and mustelids, has been in operation for over two years. The success of this programme can readily be seen as the waterfowl are thriving.

MEMBERSHIP

The wide support for what DU is trying to achieve can be very clearly seen from the ever growing list of Life Members and from

the fact that a further six people have recently taken out Life Membership. Mrs Gina Campbell, wife of the Chairman of the DU (USA) Board of Directors, Euan Bidwill of Taupo, Andre Terpstra of Murupara, Tim, Ben and Sam Pearce of Boggy Creek in the Wairarapa, have all become Life Members. DU Directors sincerely thank these people for their fine contribution to DU's aims and objectives.

Thanks to Grant Dumbell the DU membership records have been re-organised and a new computer program has been established to help keep membership records accurately and more in line with DU's modern membership requirements. In the past, DU has operated a system for membership records that was perhaps a little too flexible and with ever increasing costs of printing and postage the need to 'tighten-up' in this area had become apparent. And let's face it money saved in some areas means that more is available for our waterfowl projects.

In simple terms what this re-structuring of records means is that un-financial members will no longer be members if they have failed to pay their subscription after two reminders.

Recently Grant circulated un-financial members in an effort to encourage them to 'cough-up' (We all know how easy it is to overlook such matters!). We are pleased to report that the Grant has had considerable success and the membership figures are now looking far more encouraging. But we really need your support to help boost membership. Currently plans are in hand to try to boost membership from the present 1,100 to over 5,000 during the next five years. With your help we can achieve this very easily.

When this year's membership renewals are sent out in late March you will find a Membership Drive booklet enclosed. Basically what you have to do is recruit ten new members between April 1989 and the end of June 1989 to be eligible for your name to go into a special draw — the prizes of which will be:

1. A week-end for two at either a Tokaanu hotel or a major Wellington hotel.
2. \$200 worth of goods for Andy Tannock's

Hunting & Fishing Centre, Palmerston North.

3. \$100 worth of goods for Andy Tannock's Hunting & Fishing Centre, Palmerston North.

This is a great challenge to all members and even if you have to 'sponsor' a few members to reach the figure of ten it will be well worth while for such attractive prizes. Prizes which have very generously been donated. Members who are already financial for 1989-90 will, of course, also receive a membership drive booklet. Membership rates for 1989-90 will be held at the present level, but in the near future new categories for Sponsor membership will be introduced. Our full membership rate remains well below that of other conservation groups.

DU RECEIVES OUTSTANDING CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

In the last 'Flight' we outlined plans to employ Dr Grant Dumbell on a contract basis as Executive Director. Thanks to a major contribution from the Department of Conservation, early last year, DU had in fact been able to employ Grant for most of last year and during that time he produced the first accurate figures for brown teal in Northland, organised the programme for the visitors from DU Canada & DU USA, and wrote an excellent investigative 30 page paper on the state of DU (NZ) after the first 15 years — from which a large number of recommendations are at present being implemented by Directors.

To help employ Grant during 1989, the Broadlands Wildfowl Trust has made an outstanding financial contribution to DU — \$15,000. An absolutely magnificent gesture which all DU members will applaud. During 1989 Grant will carry out further studies of the Northland brown teal population, seek corporate sponsorship, carry out DU promotional work, have a major input into DU planning and policy, crank-up the chapter scene, etc. Recently Grant played a major role in organising DU's excellent display at the Auckland Acclimatisation Society's Game Fair.

For some time now DU Directors have felt that while DU has made significant

progress in the last 15 years the need for full time staff has become increasingly apparent. Having worked closely with Grant Dumbell for around five years DU Directors believe there is no better person in NZ to help DU make rapid progress in its vital waterfowl and wetlands work.

DON'T FORGET TO ORDER YOUR DU WINE

By now all members will have received an invitation to purchase a supply of specially labelled Ducks Unlimited (NZ) wine. DU Director Diane Pritt is manager of Waimarino Wines of Ohakune, and Diane has arranged with Nobilo Wines to produce a special Ducks Unlimited wine edition. This is a unique opportunity for DU members to invest in some quality wines — delivered to your doorstep — and at the same time support DU's work with waterfowl and wetlands. If you haven't yet done so please send Diane your order as soon as possible.

THE WILDFOWL TRUST CHANGES ITS NAME

In February the Wildfowl Trust in the UK changed its name to THE WILDFOWL & WETLANDS TRUST, thus bringing the Trust's name more into line with its modern activities. This news arrived only a few days after DU Directors had decided that our slogan "FOR WATERFOWL & WETLANDS" should be used at every opportunity; as the slogan, in association with the Ducks Unlimited title, very clearly states what DU is all about.

FENN TRAPS

A few traps are still in stock at \$20 each — including GST, postage and instructions. A number of members have reported great success with their efforts to crack-down on stoats and ferrets.

UPDATE ON APPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL WATER CONSERVATION ORDERS

Since the Water and Soil Amendment Act of 1981 came into effect, there have been

11 applications for National Water Conservation Orders.

Eight of the applications were initially made through the National Water and Soil Conservation Authority, whose functions were taken over by the Ministry for the Environment earlier this year.

Conservation orders for the Motu and Rakaia rivers were confirmed through Orders in Council in 1985 and 1988 respectively.

Orders for Lake Wairarapa and the Manganuioteao River have recently been confirmed.



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Four draft orders — for the Ahuriri, Maitara, and Rangitikei rivers and Lake Ellesmere — have been appealed to the Planning Tribunal. In these instances, the Ministry for the Environment proposes to convene informal meetings, to see if any of the issues can be resolved by discussion with those who have lodged appeals.

Once possibilities have been canvassed, the Ministry will inform the Planning Tribunal of the outcome and advise it to proceed with inquiries where necessary.

Applications for the Grey and Buller rivers were publicly notified on 27 August with submissions closing on 24 September. The closing date was however extended because of the floods of 12-13 September.

The applications for the Grey and Buller have attracted widespread public comment, largely generated by misunderstanding of what a water conservation order can do.

Over 200 submissions and objections have been received on the Grey application. The tribunal handling the application met

on 31 October to decide how they would conduct the hearing, and what issues needed further clarification, and they have also written to all parties to the application, advising them of the decisions taken to date.

As follow-up, a public hearing on the Grey application was held in Greymouth on 5-9 December. A final decision on the application is expected by March 1989.

In the case of the Buller application, about 120 objections and submissions have been received. A public hearing on the application will be held in Westport in the week of 20 March 1989, and a final decision is expected by June 1989.

An application for the Mohaka River in northern Hawke's Bay is still under consideration, and a tribunal is yet to be appointed.

Brent Couie
Ministry for the Environment

ILLEGAL WATERFOWL TRADING

New Zealand is about to become a signatory to CITES, the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. This convention is enforced by Customs, M.A.F. and D.O.C. and these agencies can, and do, conduct investigations into possible violations of CITES. As a result of these investigations we now know that somebody is offering waterfowl breeders in New Zealand the chance to trade in rare species, and to do this he is posing as a member of Ducks Unlimited. This person is not a member, neither is he working on our behalf. If any member has been approached, or is approached in the future, we would like to know as quickly as possible, so the information can be handed on. Any information should be conveyed to Neil Hayes or Grant Dumbell whose contact addresses are in the front cover of "Flight".

D.U. CANADA VISITOR

Pam Johnston, D.U. Canada biologist working in the Yukon Territory has spent 2 months cycling throughout New Zealand with two other Canadians. She arrived in New Zealand mid January and stayed until mid March.

While visiting the National Wildlife Centre Mt Bruce early February, she made herself known to Glenys Hansen whose address she had obtained from D.U.H.Q. Winnipeg. Glenys and Ted Hansen hosted Pam and her friends for two nights and Ted gave them a Tour of Wetlands in the Wairarapa, visiting Jim Campbell's property, Bill Clinton-Baker's waterfowl collection, the Pearce Wetlands and Home Lagoon. Pam and her friends continued on to the South Island and would be visiting the Sinclair Wetlands late in February.

Pam's position as a biologist with D.U. Canada involves monitoring waterfowl populations, and habitat assessments to establish waterfowl use of the wetlands e.g. staging, moulting, breeding — this is for information which can be used to protect the status quo of the wetlands.

We hope Pam enjoyed her stay in New Zealand.

SPONSORSHIP OF PAGES IN "FLIGHT"

To generate more advertising income for "Flight" it has been decided to seek commercial sponsorship for certain pages in each issue of "Flight". Page sponsorship will be available at the rate of \$25 per page and the sponsored page will carry the name of the sponsoring company, e.g. THIS PAGE IS SPONSORED BY A.N.OTHER LTD OF WAINUIOMATA. If any member is interested in sponsoring a page, or knows of any company which may be interested, please write to the DU secretary.

Project Reports

OPERATION PATEKE

A further release of brown teal in Northland took place in mid-January when 70 birds were released onto the 8 hectare lake on the Purerua Peninsula, north of Kerikeri. Diane Pritt, Neil Hayes and Grant Dumbell, ably assisted by farm manager Dallas Greenway and his daughter Sarah, carried out the release — on a very wet and windy Northland day. The team were fortunate to have a photographer along from the Northern Advocate and an excellent article and photograph made the paper's front page the next day.

The 70 birds had been assembled from as far apart as Invercargill — 15 from Ron Munro — and Dargaville — 19 from Charlie Money. Two large sacks of barley were carried to the lake and Dallas Greenway and his family are ensuring that the transition from captive to wild is not too traumatic for the birds.

The Purerua Lake was constructed by the station owner in 1986 and is now looking quite magnificent. Dallas has also been carrying out extensive habitat enhancement at the head of the lake — as can be seen from the photograph. The overflow from the lake flows into the huge mangrove swamp and the whole area looks ideal for brown teal and the recovery programme. Another 5, or so, similar areas in Northland would most certainly ensure the very long term survival of the species.



The release on the Purerua lake. Northern Advocate photographer on hand.

No brown teal will be released at the Mimiwhangata Farm Park this year as we are aiming to determine whether we have in fact established a self supporting population. Another release at Purerua will take place later in the year.

To date the full complement of releases in Northland is as follows:

DATE	WHERE	NUMBER	SEX RATIO	
			M	F
4.8.84	MATAPOURI	54	29	25
4.8.84	MIMIWHANGATA	42	22	20
9.4.85	MATAPOURI	30	15	15
22.6.85	TAKOU BAY	45	28	17
NOV 85	MOTUROA ISLAND	6	3	3
26.7.86	MIMIWHANGATA	90	37	45
AUG 86	KEAO ROOST	21	(not known)	
26.9.87	MIMIWHANGATA	45	31	14
8.10.87	MIMIWHANGATA	11	(not known)	
28.10.87	TIRITIRI MATANGI ISL	6	3	3
30.7.88	MIMIWHANGATA	39	17	22
30.7.88	URUPUKAPUKA ISLAND	6	2	4
15.10.88	MIMIWHANGATA	23	9	14
29.10.88	MIMIWHANGATA	24	11	13
18.1.89	PURERUA, KERIKERI	70	36	34
	TOTAL	512		



A nice raft of brown teal.

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Project Reports

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See D.U. Sales for ordering details.

OPERATION WETLANDS Sinclair Wetlands — Jewel in the crown of Ducks Unlimited (NZ).

Considerable progress has been made at the Sinclair Wetlands over recent months and the whole complex is steadily heading towards the stage where we will be able to encourage visitors. In spite of no advertising, during the past year, nearly 3,000 people have visited the Educational Centre. Needless to say Horrie Sinclair has been rather busy!

In early January Jim Campbell and Neil Hayes journeyed to the Sinclair Wetlands to plan the construction of the captive waterfowl enclosure. A couple of days prior to their arrival Lyall Nash had been given the go-ahead to finish the walkway to Lonely Island and by the time Jim and Neil arrived it had been completed — subject to discing and levelling. The day after the walkway had been created, Jim and Neil were able to walk to Lonely Island. This

takes about 25 minutes and is well worth while, as the views from Lonely Island are superb — in one direction the vast expanse of Goodies Lagoon can be seen, and in the other direction good views of Ram Island can be had, plus good views of the vast expanse of wetlands.

A large 'L' shaped hide will be erected on Lonely Island.

Lyall Nash then commenced the creation of the first of the captive waterfowl ponds. This was dug in a natural hollow very close to the Educational Centre — as can be clearly seen from the photo.

A team of local members are now busy fencing the captive waterfowl pond and in the not too distant future the first of many birds will be placed in the enclosure.

Lyall then commenced work on a whole series of ponds which will be used to hold part of the captive collection of birds. This area is set-off in around 3 hectares and the whole area will be fenced — to keep birds in and predators out.



Part of the walkway to Lonely Island. The massive GOODIES LAGOON can be seen on the far side of Lonely Island.



The captive waterfowl enclosure taking shape.

OPERATION WHIO

Four wildlife parks — Otorohanga, Willowbank, Hanmer Springs and Hilldale — have recently indicated a keen desire to become involved in the Blue duck recovery programme and DU expects such parks to play a major role in the captive breeding of Blue ducks. At Otorohanga a fund raising campaign has been launched to raise funds for a new Blue duck enclosure. An impressive model of the enclosure has been constructed and we are sure sufficient funds will be rapidly raised.

We have already seen what the Wildfowl Trust in the UK can do in park like surroundings and the Otorohanga aviary will be on a similar pattern to the one at Arundel in Sussex.

OPERATION ROYAL SWAN

Lady Isaac reports a good year at Peacock Springs, with 17 cygnets reared. The annual catch-up at Peacock Springs is expected to be in mid-April, but with around 30 members awaiting pairs we still have a long way to go towards satisfying the demand.

Feature Article

Trapping the enemies of birds

by John Dyer

The excellent English "Fenn Mark IV" mustelid trap has recently been introduced into New Zealand. Several people have asked me if they work. They most certainly do.

The purpose of this article is to describe my findings from research into their methods of use and my practical experience of this in the field. I hope in turn this will not only assist those who have already purchased traps but also encourage others to buy them.

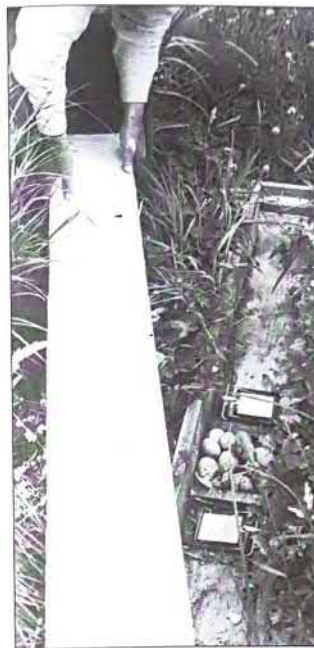
The "Fenn" is so named after the Fenn Engineering Works that makes them. It is a humane kill trap that breaks the animal's back rather than merely holding its leg. Because the trap tends to throw the animal up in the air it is necessary to confine traps within a tunnel or the prey will be thrown clear.

The tunnel's internal dimensions should be 5" high x 6" wide, no more. The length

of the tunnel which is usually made from 3/4" rough sawn untreated pine is anything 20" or over. Traps can be painted but don't use engine oil on them. The smell of linseed oil causes no objection and can also be used to preserve the wooden tunnels by pre-soaking them in it. A trap is set either end of an open tunnel or just back from the entrance on a blind one. The tunnels are best set where mustelids, rats and hedgehogs (the main targets) are to be encountered. Thus woodpiles are excellent as are stone heaps and old logs. Beside a wall or a shed is also productive. Dig the ground over and then place the tunnel in position and set the traps in place, just inside. The tunnels are then covered with turfs, stones, logs and even leaves. From the entrance of the tunnel funnel-like arms of logs, stones, etc., are placed to lead the animals towards the opening and onto the trap(s). Two stout stakes over the entrance are placed each end so as to direct the animal over the trap plate and also to prevent blackbirds, thrushes etc getting caught. The gap should just let the stoat through.

Although the tunnel is an enticement in itself (there might be mice in there thinks the ferret) and the freshly dug earth is an added inducement, such a set-up will catch only occasionally. To really improve catches requires a bait. My experience is that rabbit/hare liver as recommended is fairly clean to handle but not very effective. Felix cat food is the preference of the National Parks Board but I suspect rabbit gut smeared along the wings and inside the tunnel is better. One rabbit can do up to 6 traps or so and a dishwashing mop with a handle reduces direct handling for the squeamish.

How many can be caught? I have had 3 traps set, unbaited, over several months



The Mark 4 Fenn Trap. Horrie Sinclair has caught large number of ferrets and stoats in set-ups such as this — a Fenn trap on either side of a pile of rotten eggs.



A bar across the entrance to the tunnel can be raised or lowered to suit the target predator.

WEASEL



STOAT Brown phase



FERRET



Some of the main predators in New Zealand



The Mark 4 Fenn Humane Trap.

The value of re-introduction to Bird conservation

and have had a steady stream of hedgehogs with the odd rat and one stoat. I recently "commissioned" two more tunnels (i.e. 4 traps) and in 8 days one of these tunnels (which was baited) has caught 3 hedgehogs, 2 rats and another stoat. The last mentioned is especially pleasing as previous waterfowl losses at the adjacent pond were to stoats and the numbers of hedgehogs probably explains the "barren" pairs of Californian quail in the area.

While my trapping efforts have only just been "vamped" up and started to make an impression it might interest readers to know of the catches made at Tony Flexman's property at Pokono.

In the last 20 months using 18, then 40 treadle type cage traps he has caught: — 65 cats, 79 ferrets, 72 hedgehogs, 74 rats, 6 stoats, 3 weasels and 522 possums and sundry extras (4 mynahs) which were either released or used as bait. However unlike these wooden framed cage traps the Fenns are much less prone to needing maintenance. The Fenn is, in fact, the standard trap of the English gamekeeper and they have completely replaced the now illegal gin trap. A further example of the numbers of vermin about is that an English keeper using 130 Fenn traps expects to catch some 1,500 head of "vermin" each year on the one estate. These figures all suggest that the enemies of game are legion and probably can never be controlled. I don't doubt this, however localised reduction is certainly feasible and at Pokono they have noticed a tailing off in the last three months or so.

How many traps to use is a moot point but I have 8 Fenns in 3 open "setts" and 2 blind "setts" around a 1/2 acre pond. I feel that 10 traps would be about right. In addition there are 6 Victor traps (1 1/2 DCS) set for possums and these average one a night except on wet nights. The Victor is available from Mr M Woodcraft, 128 Marine Parade, Mount Maunganui and is, in my opinion, much more humane than gin traps in that it lacks the serrated jaws yet it catches just as well. The possum control is necessary to protect the establishing wildlife plantings. Although the Fenns have caught one 3/4 grown wild cat, cage traps with rabbit, or fresh/smoked fish baits are needed to protect the birds from these.

The cage traps also offer the advantage that neighbour's cats can be recognised and released unharmed so as to keep the peace. However a novel approach is to fit them with a cheap collar and budgie bell before setting them free.

Traps should be checked daily and this needn't be time consuming if they're all more or less visible from your rounds. There is no point travelling 10 minutes out of your way just to check one trap. Traps accumulate dirt underneath so it pays to set them off once a week to ensure they'll still spring and then reset them.

If one trap hasn't caught much compared with the others then it probably needs resetting. Some traps should be handy to the waterfowl pond while others should cover any approaches to it, say a hedge leading toward it. These are the highways creatures of stealth use. Finally if you have any further questions you may wish to contact me care of the following address:
Auckland Acclimatisation Society
PO Box 17032
Hamilton

Christine Reed,
Conservation Officer (Aviculture),
Department of Conservation,
Private Bag,
Twizel.

From November 28 to December 1st 1988, with the aid of a generous grant of \$500 from Ducks Unlimited (in addition to funding from Electricorp, the Wildfowl Trust in Slimbridge, England; and the South Canterbury branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society), I was fortunate enough to attend an international symposium on "The value of re-introduction to bird conservation", held at the Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, England.

The topic "reintroductions" covered the liberations of captive-reared (primarily endangered) stock into the wild and the transfer of wild-caught birds to areas outside the main population(s).

Two other New Zealanders, Dick Veitch from DOC Auckland region and Brian Lloyd from the Science and Research Directorate of DOC in Wellington, also attended to give New Zealand a high profile at the symposium. Dick has had a long involvement through the ex-NZ Wildlife Service in island transfers of many native species including saddlebacks, stitchbirds, Chatham Island black robin and NZ parakeets. Brian has been primarily involved with transfers of kakapo to Codfish and Little Barrier islands.

My own experience has been with the endangered endemic wading species, the black stilt. We established a DOC breeding facility near Twizel for this species in mid-1987, with the aim of parent-rearing young birds for direct release into the wild popula-

tion which consists of a single population of about 50 birds in the Mackenzie basin, South Canterbury. The aviary doors are literally opened wide when the birds are nine months old and they venture out into natural black stilt habitat on a nearby river. Some artificial shallow ponds have also been created around the aviaries and the whole area surrounded by an electrified predator fence.

The symposium began with a welcoming speech from the founder of the Wildfowl Trust, Sir Peter Scott. The trust was established in 1946 to research and conserve wildfowl and their wetland habitat, and to help people gain a greater appreciation of wildfowl, enabling them to enjoy these birds as part of the world's natural heritage. The Wildfowl Trust have pioneered and developed methods for displaying tame waterfowl from all over the world, and wild native species in their natural habitat. Other trust centres have been established at Peakirk, Martin Mere, Washington, Arundel, Caerlaverock, Welney and a new centre is being built at Llanelli in South Wales.

Slimbridge is the headquarters of the trust and contains over 2500 birds of 180 different species, some of which have been reintroduced to the wild. During the symposium, peak numbers of migrating wild waterfowl could also be seen on the reserve from hides, towers and under floodlight at night. Bewick's swans, White-fronted geese, European pochard, wigeon, Canada geese and many wild species were present in large numbers.

Following Sir Peter's welcome, case studies of pink pigeon (Mauritius), Nene

(Hawaii), Kakapo (NZ), Bearded vulture (Austria) and mammal (Africa) reintroductions were presented.

The importance of preparing habitat prior to and following release was then exemplified by barn owl (UK), sea eagle (Scotland) and Cheer pheasant (India) introductions.

The second day of the symposium presented genetic considerations in reintroductions and minimum numbers of released birds necessary to establish viable wild populations. The preparation of birds for release was then outlined by Tom Cade (USA) for raptors, Dick Veitch (transfer of wild birds) and myself. My paper covered the use of hand-rearing, isolation-rearing (using puppets and models), foster-parent rearing and biological parent-rearing techniques in preparing birds for release into the wild. Several Australasian captive reintroduction examples were used, including DU's successful brown teal project, parent-rearing of black stilts, isolation-rearing of takahē and the release of Lord Howe Island woodhens and NZ parakeets following habitat enhancement.

Other topics over the following day and a half of the symposium were: the monitoring of released birds (an essential part of any project), disease transfer and susceptibility in transferred birds, the educational value of reintroductions and the building up of public support for species and habitat conservation.

Discussions following each session identified common principles which should be utilised as guidelines for future reintroductions. These guidelines are presently being drawn up by a joint committee comprising International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP), Wildfowl Trust, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and other individual participants at the symposium. The proceedings, along with the guidelines, will be published as an ICBP bulletin in the next 12-18 months.

In addition to attending the symposium, I was particularly interested to view hide design and placement of viewing trails around habitats containing wild birds. It is hoped that such structures could eventually be used to view captive and wild black stilts near Twizel.

I visited the Wildfowl trust refuge at Welney where 2100 wild Bewick's swans were gathered under floodlights at night, watched by many visitors in a well-designed glass-front hide. The RSPB also have an effective trail and collection of hides around wader and wildfowl habitat at Minsmere in East Anglia. On the final day before my departure from Slimbridge, I wandered the reserve and viewed from hides, the thousands of wild geese, pochard, and wigeon feeding along paddocks adjacent to the Severn estuary.

The short but very rewarding time I spent in England, left me with many ideas for use in New Zealand. It also enabled me to make contact with many colleagues working in the same field of rare bird management, and hopefully gave symposium participants a better understanding of the vast experience and expertise that New Zealand has gained and can offer in the field of re-introductions.

A frequent comment following my paper was that "I didn't realise New Zealand had done so much".

My thanks to Ducks Unlimited for their support of my participation at this symposium.

SALES ITEMS

BOOKS

Coloured Key to the Waterfowl of the World	\$14.00
Ducks, Ponds and People	\$14.00
Managing Wetlands	\$25.00
New Zealand Birds	\$11.00
The Duckshooter's Bag	\$ 7.70
The Duckshooter's Companion — Duckshooter's Bag & Gamebird Hunting	\$15.40
The Hawaiian Goose	\$24.75
The Mute Swan	\$50.00
Wildfowl Management on Inland Waters	\$21.00

VHS VIDEOS

River in Question — The Manganui-a-te-a-o	\$64.90
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APPAREL

DU Hat — Green (one size fits all)	\$22.00
DU Jersey — Red/Green/Blue (state size)	\$75.00
DU T-shirt — White (SM, OS, XOS only)	\$13.75
DU Canada Hat — Red/White/Blue Corduroy (one size fits all)	\$25.00

BADGES

DU Decal	\$ 1.10
DU Lapel Pin	\$ 5.50
DU Cloth Shoulder Patch	\$ 9.35
DU Canada 50th Anniversary Badge	\$ 5.50
DU Duck Head Badge — Large Gold	\$ 6.60
DU Duck Head Badge — Small Gold/White/Green	\$ 5.50
DU Duck Head Stick Pin	\$ 5.50

STATIONERY

DU Ballpoint Pens — per box of 12	\$ 6.60
DU Maxipens — per box of 10	\$11.00
DU Maxipens — single	\$ 1.50
Janet Marshall Bird Cards — set of four	\$ 5.40
Waterfowl Writing Paper and Envelopes — set of 10	\$ 9.00
Waterfowl Note Paper and Envelope — set of six	\$ 6.00

GENERAL

Canada Goose Place Mats — set of six	\$28.00
Canada Goose Coasters — set of six	\$10.00
Mallard Duck Coasters — set of six	\$10.00
Fenn Traps	\$20.00
DU Duck Head Flag 62cm x 44cm	\$40.00
DU Cam-o-paint	\$10.00
DU Ashtray	\$ 4.50
DU Bottle Opener	\$ 4.00
DU Key Ring	\$ 4.50
DU Key Ring Nail Clippers	\$ 4.00
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DU Tea Caddy Spoon	\$ 4.00
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The Education & Research Centre at Slimbridge — the headquarters of the Wildfowl Wetlands Trust.