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*Canada Geese in the High Country. Photo Gary Girvan.*



**WINCHESTER**

MORE THAN A NAME. A LEGEND.

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# Flight

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Cover Photo: Brown teal in the wild and in captivity - an adaptable bird.

## MISSION STATEMENT

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 Who", 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 \$35.00 per annum, and Life membership is \$550.00. Membership carries 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.

## Presidents Report

Since Grant Dumbell joined the DU team he has played a major role in the DU Chapter scene and we now have active chapters in Auckland, Eketahuna (Wairarapa), Central North Island, Wellington, Bay of Plenty and Manawatu. The progress and success of chapters, like all clubs, revolves around one or two people and while it is often hard work the continued successes of DU in New Zealand is very rewarding.

In the near future I hope to see active chapters established in the Waikato - which was the founder area for DU Chapters - and in Dunedin.

The ground rules for chapters are very straightforward and their main functions are fund raising and socialising. Chapters usually hold only three functions per year - annual dinner and auction sporting clay shoot and a field trip. The general feeling is that three functions is a sufficient number and that chapters should stay well clear of the monthly meeting syndrome which is followed by so many groups.

DU Chapters have an increasingly vital function in the welfare of Ducks Unlimited and in the future of our waterfowl and wetlands.

Any members interested in establishing a DU Chapter in their area should contact Grant Dumbell.

The decline of the mallard in New Zealand continues to be debated and my item on the subject in the March issue of FLIGHT aroused considerable interest amongst readers. Consensus on some points seems to have been reached and I thought I would use this privileged position to make a few more comments. Generally, agreement seems to have been reached in three vital areas, for example:

(a) We do not know, with any degree of accuracy, the size of the NZ mallard population. Some people saw my comments on this as being critical of the Waterfowl Diary Scheme, which is supported by around 1,300 waterfowl hunters each season, and which was introduced by the Wildlife Service over 20 years ago. As a major contributor to this scheme for 20 years nothing

could be further from the truth and the scheme continues to provide much vital information. My only criticism would be that a great percentage of participating hunters are very serious about their sport and invariably crop far more ducks than the average hunter. As a result, their figures, when used to determine population levels, provide an inflated level.

A number of prominent ornithologists have supported my premise that it would be a relatively simple exercise to institute a annual mallard counting day (why stop at mallards?), so that over a period of time we could establish an accurate population figure and, just as importantly, accurately establish population trends throughout the country.

(b) There has been a serious decline in mallard numbers. This has now been confirmed by many observers throughout the country. Mallards were certainly in plague proportions in the 1970's and I well remember witnessing over 5,000 mallards invading a standing pea crop and large flights of them completely destroying a standing crop of barley!!! I was on the Wellington Acclimatisation Society Council during this period and also remember the continual demand from farmers for bird scaring guns, and the many applications being made for permits to disperse crop preying mallards.

(c) Lack of habitat is a key factor in the decline of mallards. Over the last five years few areas in the country escaped from the droughts that were experienced. This, coupled with continual drainage in many areas, has seriously depleted mallard numbers. At the Sinclair Wetlands we are seeing very small numbers of mallards and in most other areas a sharp decline in numbers has been reported. It is, of course, not all bad news as the grey teal population continues to increase, the scaup population is also steadily increasing and the Paradise shelduck population is at an all time high and booming.

From the game management viewpoint the formula for success is simple:

GOOD HABITAT = GAME BIRDS = HEALTHY LICENCE SALES

Of course, waterfowl habitat can also benefit a whole range of different species and one only has to view the numbers of NZ Dabchicks using created wetlands to appreciate the immense value of habitat.

For waterfowl it must be the right sort of habitat and steep sided small farm ponds, with deep water, do not generally provide good waterfowl habitat. What is needed for our declining dabbling duck populations is restoration of the thousands of small wetlands that have either been drained or seriously affected by drought. The restoration of Home Lagoon and the Wairoa ponds in the Wairarapa are classic examples of what can be achieved.

The creation of wetlands is also vital to healthy waterfowl populations and there are numbers of boggy areas throughout New Zealand which lend themselves ideally to inexpensive waterfowl habitat creation - see below what Alan Wilks has done (with DU's assistance) with a bog that continually swallowed up sheep. Such small wetlands are undoubtedly some of the most productive waterfowl habitats and can be the key to healthy waterfowl and wetland bird populations.

There are few areas in this country that do not lend themselves to the creation of waterfowl habitat, as there is an abundance of streams, creeks and rivers, which can be diverted, pumped, dammed or syphoned to maintain the water levels in created or restored waterfowl habitat.

I am confident that the mallard population can bounce back rapidly, but, as I said in the March FLIGHT, some very careful and thorough management techniques need to be applied.

I am also confident that we can all work together to ensure that lots of good habitat is created, restored and preserved, for the benefit of our waterfowl. And ensure a quality environment for all.

Neil Hayes PRESIDENT



A superb piece of habitat created by Alan Wilks. This is an area of around 1 hectare of very shallow water and a good number of islands. The oak tree in the foreground is one of two which Alan transplanted from Greytown - both are doing well.

# Some Early Waterfowl Introductions in New Zealand

The Acclimatisation Society movement is currently undergoing a restructuring which will include a change of name to Fish and Game Council. Readers of Flight will be interested to know about the different types of waterfowl that were introduced into New Zealand by the societies in the latter part of last century and the early part of this century.

## Order ANSERIFORMES

### Family Anatidae

No fewer than 25 species of this family have been introduced into New Zealand, but only one — the Australian black swan — has completely established itself, while the mallard and the Canadian goose have been partially naturalised. Domestic ducks appear to have been first introduced by the missionaries, either at the time of Marsden's first visit in 1814 to the Bay of Islands, or very shortly afterwards.

### Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*)

In 1865 Captain Norman liberated six of these birds on Adam's Island, one of the Auckland Islands lying to the south of New Zealand. They failed to establish themselves.

### English Pochard Duck

(*Nyroca ferina*)

The Wellington Society imported six in 1894, and three more in 1895. Two years later, in conjunction with the Canterbury, Nelson, Taranaki, and other societies, a number more were imported. Private individuals and dealers apparently also brought in several. The only report of these is a negative one, the Taranaki Society stating in 1902 that "we have not seen anything of the pochard ducks which were liberated in 1898".

### Canvas-back Duck (*Nyroca callisera*)

In 1905 the Government imported some of these birds, but only two appear to have arrived, and these were handed over to the Wellington Society. There is no further information obtainable about them.

### Pintail Duck (*Dafila acuta*)

In 1885 the Canterbury Society received some from the Royal Zoological Society of London, and in 1896 the Otago Society imported some, but in neither case is any information obtainable as to how many were introduced, or what was done with them, and there is no further record.

In 1905 the Government imported a number of birds. Four of these were sent to the Otago Society and were kept for breeding purposes at the Clinton hatchery, but did not increase. Six were handed over

to the Wellington Society, and went to their game farm in the Wairarapa. Again there is no further record.

The species is almost exclusively a migrant in Britain, which it visits only in winter. It breeds in the Arctic regions of both hemispheres, and winters in various parts of Europe and North America, India, China, Japan, and Central America. It occasionally breeds in Britain. It is no wonder therefore that it did not settle in New Zealand.

### English Teal Duck (*Nettion cinerea*)

In 1897 an effort was made by the Wellington, Canterbury, Nelson and other societies to introduce this bird, and several were imported and distributed. But there is no record in any of the societies' reports as to what came of them afterwards.

The teal is a palaearctic species, breeding chiefly in Northern Europe and Siberia, but occasionally in several other countries. It has been found as far south in winter as Abyssinia, and abundantly in India, China, Formosa and Japan.

### Widgeon, Wigeon (*Marva penelope*)

In 1868 the Canterbury Society received eight young birds from Messrs Nairn and Crawford, who had apparently imported a number. In 1885 some were received from the Royal Zoological Society in London.

In 1896 the Otago Society received eight birds from London, and these were sent down to the Clinton establishment for breeding purposes. The following year another lot from London were handed over to Mr W. Telford of Clifton, who liberated them in his ponds.

In 1904 the Government imported a number of these ducks. Of these four were handed over to the Wellington Society, and a dozen (six pairs) to the Westland Society, which liberated them at Lake Karere.

It is very doubtful whether the species will establish itself in this country. It breeds in the northern portion of temperate Europe, extending northwards beyond the limit of forest growth, and occasionally in the British Isles. It winters in Southern Europe, India, South China, Formosa, and Japan; it is only a partial resident in Britain.

It is one of the remarkable facts of the attempts made to naturalise foreign animals in New Zealand that the country formerly possessed a native quail (*Coturnix novae zelandiae*) which has been allowed to become extinct, and also that it still possesses a grey duck (*Anas superciliosa*), a small brown duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and a sheldrake or paradise duck (*Casoua songata*), all fine game birds, and that not one of the societies ever put forth any effort to preserve or protect these birds, except in the way of limiting the seasons for shooting them. In recent years bird sanctuaries have been set aside in many

parts of the country, but very little else has been done to increase the supply of native game. Yet the little brown duck is quite as good a bird as the English teal, and well worthy of conservation.

### Gadwall's Duck, Gadwall (*Chaulestas mus streperus*)

The Wellington Society introduced some in 1894 and 1895; but have kept no record of them.

The species is only a partial resident in Britain, where it mostly winters; breeding in Iceland, North Russia and Central Europe.

### Korean Duck (*Eumetta falcata*)

The Wellington Society received some (date) from Sir F. Sargood, and since 1905 have reared a considerable number. They have apparently no later record of having turned them out.

### Mallard, English Wild Duck (*Anas boschas*)

In spite of the fact that the native wild duck of New Zealand (*Anas superciliosa*) is as fine a bird both for sport and table purposes as any species of the family that can be introduced, the various acclimatisation societies have for many years made continuous efforts to naturalise other species, and notably the mallard.

The Otago Society got a pair in 1867 from the Melbourne Society, and later from London introduced five in 1869, four in 1870, three in 1876, and nine in 1881. Apparently none of these early introductions thrived, for there is no record of their increase or distribution, except that some were sent to Kakanui, and others down to Riverton. In 1896 21 birds were received from London. Of these ten were forwarded to the Southland Society, and the rest were kept at Clinton for breeding purposes. In 1897 another lot was imported and these were handed over to Mr Telford of Clifton to be bred from. In more recent years numbers have been reared in different localities and have been liberated in such quantity that shooting was allowed in 1915. Between 1910 and 1918 the Southland Society have also liberated nearly 1350 birds in their district. They may, now, therefore, be considered to be established in the southern portion of the South Island.

The Auckland Society imported two in 1870, and four in 1886, and kept them in the Domain for breeding purposes. But there is no record of their further progress.

In 1873 the Canterbury Society had 12 in their gardens kept for breeding purposes, but there is no record of any results achieved. In 1897 this society joined with some others in importing a number from London.

In 1893 the Wellington Society imported 19, which they kept in their Masterton enclosures for breeding from; and they also distributed eggs. But stoats and weasels destroyed nearly the whole stock. Some

placed in a reserve on Mr Martin's run, Wairarapa, increased rapidly however. In 1901 the Society received four pairs imported by the Government, and in more recent years they have reared and distributed several hundred birds. The species may therefore be considered as established in the Wairarapa, but without careful protection it is not likely that it will increase to any great extent.

In 1898 the Taranaki Society received a number from one of the other societies, but in four years all the birds had disappeared.

Mr Dansey of Rotorua tells me that subsequently to 1906, Mr McBean liberated a number of mallard on Lake Okareka, and that they increased to a flock of about 200. Some of these were presented to the Tourist Department, but there is no information as to the disposal of the birds on Mr McBean's death a few years ago.

In 1911 the Southland Society inaugurated an identification test. They liberated 100 mallards, which were numbered 1 to 100 on leg bands. I have not heard that any of these birds have since been identified.

In 1917 ducks were shot in south Canterbury which were believed to be hybrids between the native grey duck and the mallard.

At Temuka in the Acclimatisation Reserve a pair of hybrids between the mallard and the paradise duck have been reared.

Mr W.W. Smith states that the native grey duck hybridises readily with the domestic duck, and that the hybrids are fertile.

The mallard is a partial resident in Britain, but in many cases is only a winter visitor, nesting in Southern Greenland, Iceland and in Northern Europe. Some of the introduced birds and their progeny may have inherited the migratory instinct.

### American Black Duck (*Anas obscura*)

The Government introduced a number of these birds in 1905, giving six to the Southland Society, and four to the Wellington Society. The latter body reared a number of young. They also reared a number of hybrids between this species and the mallard. Whether such hybrids are fertile or not is not stated. As an experiment in acclimatisation it may be interesting, but it is doubtful if it has any scientific value, especially if the results are not collected and published.

I have not heard that the species has been liberated, or if so that the birds have been seen.

### American Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*)

The Auckland Society introduced two in 1867; the Canterbury Society one in 1871; the Wellington Society two in 1894 and four in 1899; and the Otago Society one in 1906. Probably others have been brought in since.

They appear to have been kept as aviary birds in each locality, except in Wellington, where the last four received were liberated. There is no record of increase, except in Christchurch, where they were reported to be thriving in 1908.

Mr Dansey of Rotorua informs me that in 1906, Mr McBean introduced and liberated some Canadian wood ducks (presumably this species) on Lake Okareka, which lies in a basin between Rotorua and Tar-

awera Lakes. They were seen there for some years, but no young were ever observed.

### Mandarin Duck (*Aix galinula*)

The Auckland Society received one in 1876; the Canterbury Society two in 1871, and a number in 1885 from the Royal Zoological Society of London, and the Otago Society four in 1907. Private dealers also frequently introduced this bird. There is no record of their increase, or of their liberation.

### Black Indian Duck

I do not know what species is referred to, but it is probably the tufted duck (*Fuligula cristata*, known to Indian sportsmen as the "Golden Eye").

In 1870 the Auckland Society received five from the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria.

Mr Dansey informs me that along with the Canadian wood ducks, Mr McBean in 1906 introduced some Indian ducks, which were also liberated on Lake Okareka, but they never increased.

Probably most of the species of geese referred to in this list are more or less migratory species, breeding near or within the Arctic Circle, and wintering in temperate or warm temperate regions.

### Egyptian Goose; Cape Goose

(*Chenalopex Aegyptiaca*)

Sir Geo. Grey brought eight or ten of these birds from the Cape with him in 1860. They bred freely at the Kawau, and many of them crossed over to the mainland. They were not long in spreading through the country, and were found from Te Aute in Hawke's Bay to the Kaipara. Apparently, however, all were destroyed in later years.

The Auckland Society introduced some of these birds in 1869, and kept them in their aviaries for several years, but there is no record as to whether they increased or were liberated.

### Sandwich Island Goose (*Nesochen sandwicensis*)

The Auckland Society introduced a pair in 1871, but the record is the same as that of the preceding species.

### Brent goose; Black Brant Goose

(*Branta nigricans*)

In 1871 the Canterbury Society received a pair from the Zoological Society of London, but there is no further record of them.

In 1905 the Government imported some from America, and the Wellington Society got a pair, but there is no further record.

### Canadian Goose; Maine Goose (*Branta canadensis*)

The Wellington Society imported three in 1871, and 15 in 1879. These were liberated and were seen for some months afterwards, but ultimately disappeared. It was reported that some of them were killed by paradise ducks.

In 1905 the Government imported a considerable number of these birds and distributed them widely, 11 going to the Southland Society, ten to Otago, a number (unspecified) to Canterbury, and six to Wellington.

The Southland Society liberated their birds at Lake Manapouri, and sent three more there in 1909. Others were sent up to Lake Te Anau, where they were reported to be thriving in 1918.

The Otago Society lost two in the first few years, but after a time sent some to the poultry farm at

Milton where young were reared. Ultimately in 1912 some were liberated on Mr Telford's lagoon at Waiwera; and in 1915, 12 were sent to the head of Lake Hawea. These are doing well.

The Canterbury Society liberated a number at Glenmark in 1907, and these increased; in 1912 some were sent to Lake Sumner and others to Mount White. Mr E.F. Sivad (April, 1916) reports that "they are thriving". At Glenmark they breed freely every year. Those at Lake Sumner are doing well. Mr Ayson reports in 1915 that "they are doing well in several parts of the domain".

I am told this species is a migrant in its original habitat, in which case its establishment in New Zealand is rather interesting.

### Chinese Goose (*Cygnus cygnoides*)

The Canterbury Society imported some of these birds about 1874, when there were eleven in their enclosures, but in 1877 there were only four, and there is no further record.

### Common Goose; Grey-Lag Goose (*Anser cinereus*)

The common goose is particularly interesting as the first species of land which it was attempted to naturalise in New Zealand. When Captain Cook was at Dusky Sound in March-May, 1773, during his second voyage to New Zealand, he liberated some geese. In his Journal he says:

"Having 3 geese out of those we brought from the Cape of Good Hope, I went with them west morning to Goose Cove named so on this account, where I left them. I chose this place for two reasons: first, because here are no inhabitants to disturb them, and secondly, here being the most food, I make no doubt that they will thrive, and may in time spread over the whole country, and fully answer my intention in leaving them."

Dr McNab, commenting on this in "Murihiku," says:

"The success of the importation of geese was doubtless due to the depredations of the waka. It shows how deadly the waka could be to the harmless geese, the author mentions a case which came under his own notice in Dusky Sound. The party departed a swan (black swan) sitting on her nest, and although less than an hour elapsed before they reached the spot, the solitary egg, which proved to be quite fresh, had in that short time been tapped by a waka, and the contents partially extracted. No imported geese could successfully contend with such an ever-present foe."

The waka is no doubt responsible for the failure of many attempts to establish introduced birds, but it is only one of the agents.

The next recorded attempt at naturalisation was made by the Southland Society in 1867, when seven geese were liberated on the banks of the Mataura River. They were duly advertised as protected, but evidently that did not protect them from pot-hunters, for they disappeared.

A more successful attempt was made by the Otago Society, which in 1892 placed a number of goose-eggs in black swans' nests on Lakes Kaitangata and Waihola, Lake Omslow near Roxburgh, and in the Upper Taieri. At first these half-wild geese were shot, but later on they were allowed to increase, till in 1905, permission to shoot them was granted, when they were nearly or quite exterminated. The average (so-called) sportsman is a man out to kill something, and he does not concern himself as to the amount of



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trouble and expense which has been gone to an order to provide him with the thing to be killed.

Except where strictly preserved the goose has no chance of surviving, for it never becomes truly wild in New Zealand.

In 1865 a flock of about 20 geese frequented the east lagoon on Rangatira in the Forster Straits; they were very wild and after being shot at with rifles through none were obtained; they appear to have shifted their quarters, Mr W. Traill, of Ulva, to whom I am indebted for this information, says that some years later a flock used to be seen about Bench Island, but when persons went to shoot them, they make off to the extensive swamps at the head of Lord's River. These were grey geese, probably belonging to the common species, but specimens have never been secured for identification.

**White-fronted Goose** (*Anser albifrons*)

In 1945 the Wellington Society received two of these birds, which were imported by the Government. There is no further record. The species is only a winter visitor in Britain; it breeds in the North, mostly within the Arctic Circle.

**Oregon Wild Goose; Snow Goose** (*Chen hyperborea*)

In 1877 the Auckland Society received ten from Mr T. Russell, and ultimately liberated them at Mata mata. They failed however to establish themselves.

**Cape Barren Goose; Australian Wild Goose** (*Chenopsis novaehollandiae*)

The Auckland Society liberated two of these at Riverhead, some time before 1869, but they disappeared.

In 1871 the Canterbury Society received two from Mr G. Gould, but no further record of them was kept.

In 1912 the Otago Society received two, and sent them to the Government Poultry Farm at Milton, where several young were reared. From these, four were placed at the head of Lake Hawera in 1915, and others sent down to the Society's hatchery at Clinton. They appear to be doing well by latest reports.

**Adelaide Goose**

The Auckland Society introduced two birds in 1867, under this name. I do not know what species this is unless it is the manded goose, *Chlamydomon pabata*.

**Australian Black Swan** (*Chenopsis atrata*)

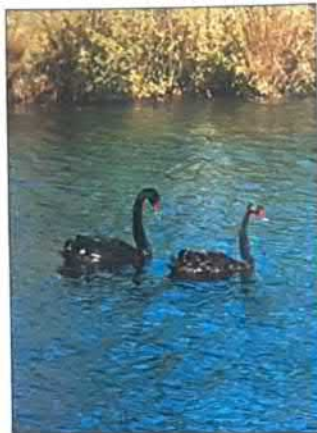
This is one of the pronounced successes of naturalisation in New Zealand.

Some time previous to 1864 the Nelson Society introduced seven birds into that district.

In 1864 the Canterbury Society received four birds from Sir Geo. Grey, and liberated them on the Avon; and later two more from Mr Wilkin. In 1866 the same society received one from Mr Mueller, and four more from Sir Geo. Grey.

But the big effort came from the Otago Society, which liberated one in 1866, 42 in 1867, four in 1868, six in 1869, and eight in 1870.

The black swan and the white or mute swan, two of only nine species of swan in the world. The black swan has naturalised perfectly, while the mute swan is uncommon.



The Southland Society also liberated six in 1869.

The birds quickly established themselves, spreading into all parts of the island from Stewart Island and the West Coast Sounds to Cook's Strait. Their whistling flight is a common sound at night.

Sir W.L. Buller says, "the first were introduced into the North Island in 1864." The Auckland Society liberated four in 1867. They were plentiful in the Kaipara district ten years ago. They were also reported to be abundant in the Chatham Islands a few years ago.

Sir W.L. Buller states, and Mr Drummond repeats the statement, that wherever the black swan is found, the wild duck (*Anas septentrionalis*) disappears.

Sir Thos. Mackenzie records a case of a black swan being killed by a weasel.

**White Swan** (*Cygnus albus*)

This bird has never gone wild in New Zealand, but is still, as in Britain, always associated with preserved ponds and streams. The Canterbury Society received two in 1866, the Otago Society three in 1868, and one in 1869, the Auckland Society two in 1869 (from Sir Geo. Grey), and 12 in 1871 (from Captain Hutton). Several were also introduced by private individuals and by dealers. It is nowhere common.

Taken from "The Naturalisation of Animals and Plants in New Zealand" by G.M. Thomson, Cambridge University Press 1922.

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# Escaping Fitch and disappearing birds

by John Dyer  
Field Officer  
Auckland Acclimatisation Society

Acclimatisation Society predator and trapping displays at the Game Fair and Mystery Creek Agricultural Fieldays were inundated with reports from the public of escaping fitch (also called ferrets or polecats).

Fitch are bred for their fur with an economical number being in excess of 4,000 animals on a single farm. Following the collapse of the over-supplied market in 1987 New Zealand's 350 odd farmers mostly went bankrupt. Many just opened their doors and let the whole lot go. Of the 50-90 farms that remain many through lack of legally required security, have regular and sometimes large escapes. The immediate flow on effect is that neighbouring free range poultry and wildlife up to 20km away completely disappear.

You're probably saying there must a law against it. Well there certainly is but the maximum fine is \$100. That seems a shade too light for the farmer who let 800 go into the Mamaku Forest Park. Six others went broke in his area but we don't know what happened to their stock. Fitch farmers don't blow a trumpet before they open their doors. In fact some are downright sneaky. They travel into other districts and let animals go down quiet country lanes along with a block of frozen meat. In several cases 30 or 40 at a time are found like this but they quickly disperse when the meats gone.

Sometimes these events are widely publicised such as when a Nelson possumer caught 100-150 fitch in bush adjacent to a recently bankrupted fitch farm. The possumer and his catch appeared in local papers but to date I've not heard of a single prosecution for any such releases. The big problem is to prove the animals came from that particular farm.

Why are we so worried about fitch. After all the Government introduced them 100 years ago to control rabbits. More about, one woman told me, would be a good thing. Well it would if they ate rabbits. However after being present in Otago for over 100 years fitch have yet to perform the miracle and now myxomatosis is touted as the new "fail-free" biological control. Incidentally the man who introduced this virus into Europe in 1952 Dr Armand Delille was subsequently sued for millions by outraged French rabbit hunters.

If fitch didn't eat rabbits with any great gusto then it should be obvious what facilitated their spread throughout both islands. Our ground dwelling, flightless and tame native birds are the answer and fitch and their close relatives the stoats and weasels started appearing where no rabbit had ever been seen, such as deepest Fiordland.

Predation is not a well understood subject and what little study has occurred in New Zealand showed most of it occurs either during or just after nesting. Most mallard brood losses occur at the nest and during the dangerous trip overland to the nearest water.

Wildlife Service studies at Pupuke Lagoon suggested ferrets, by virtue of being the most abundant predator, were the most likely predation cause in that area. However, several broad areas of New Zealand are fitch free. DSIR reports in the early 1950's and 1960's revealed Northland, Bay of Plenty, Taranaki, Nelson and Westland to be either fitch free or supporting very low numbers. While legislation controlling fitch farmers prevented them using fitch free off-shore islands it failed to recognise these fitch free mainland areas. The result is all the aforementioned areas received fitch farms (except possibly Westland). Now all these areas have had fitch escapes. Fitch are turning up on the roads, in traps, in poultry runs and in wetlands (even entering grey teal nest boxes).

The Department of Conservation has the statutory responsibility to bring prosecutions against negligent farmers who allow escapes or those who deliberately release animals. However, short-changed as they are they're in print as saying they have "neither the cash or the priority to monitor ferrets". Fitch owners have long known this however and as no one inspects their sheds they have not complied with the security conditions laid down by the Conservation Minister several years ago. Having checked every fitch farm from Whangarei to Taumararui I can state not one had a security

fence which ironically only costs \$3 per metre. While most have some wirenetting around the building sides this was the type of security specifically identified as unsuitable by the Minister. Furthermore most were semi-dilapidated. There were holes in the netting, large enough for labradors to jump through. Bits of cracked roofing iron was used to plug gaps and beer crates used to hold doors shut. All this to hold in an animal often referred to as "Houdini". I'd often been puzzled that the netting size seemed too large to prevent fitch escaping but I now have a MAF report in front of me which states the netting was never intended for this role. It was only there to keep stray dogs and cats OUT. These animals are very vulnerable to trapping. In Spain and almost all of the United Kingdom wild polecats were eliminated by gin traps early this century. Just 7km north of one failed fitch farm a co-operative of enthusiasts have caught 107 fitch using cage traps in the last two years.

This farm is on the edge of the outstanding Whangamarino Wetland, home of the largest remnant of New Zealand bittern among other rarities. Wildlife officers playing tape recordings of spotted crake, in the Whangamarino, called into range ferrets instead. Clearly the presence of so many of these animals, who on several documented occasions have killed entire flocks

Fitch on a farm. Poor economic returns have seen some farmers release animals into the wild.



# D. U. MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

DR GRANT DUMBELL

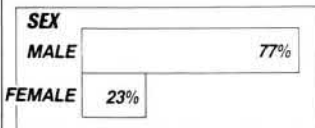
## MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

Members will recall seeing a Membership Survey Questionnaire published in the September and December issues of "Flight" last year. This survey was designed to help show us some of the characteristics of Ducks Unlimited members, as we have been experiencing quite rapid expansion of our membership recently, and since launching the survey we have received replies from members up and down the country. We have now closed the survey, and analysed the results, which are summarised below as a series of bar graphs relating to the various survey questions.

Survey returns as a percentage of total membership = 10.2%

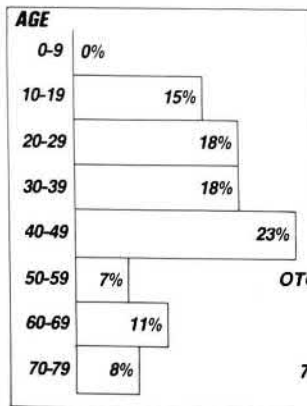
**Members Sex:** Ducks Unlimited has a strongly male dominated membership with just over three quarters of the membership being men. However, women are well represented in Ducks Unlimited, as although they only make up 23% of the membership they account for 17% of the national board members.

GRAPH 1



**Members Ages:** These have been grouped into eight 10 year groups, ranging from zero to eighty years, and it is encouraging to see such a predominance of young members. Almost one in six DU members is aged under 20, while three quarters of members are aged under 50. This should guarantee that Ducks Unlimited has a strong future.

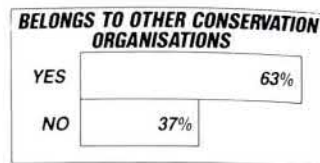
GRAPH 2



**Question 1:** Do you belong to any other conservation organisations?

Almost two thirds of Ducks Unlimited members belong to other conservation organisations, indicating that people do not belong to Ducks Unlimited in isolation from other organisations that are involved with environmental issues.

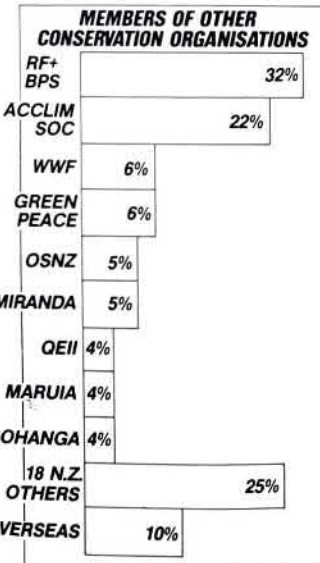
GRAPH 3



**Question 2:** Which ones?

A whole range of other organisations concerned with wildlife and its conservation are supported by Ducks Unlimited members. These include 27 based in New Zealand and seven based overseas. However, only the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society and the Acclimatisation Society movement are supported in any numbers. The RF&BPS is the largest conservation organisation in New Zealand, while the Acclimatisation Society movement has been involved with waterfowl for over 120 years.

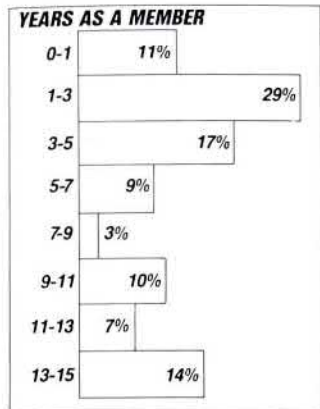
GRAPH 4



**Question 3:** How long have you been a member of DU?

Ducks Unlimited has now been operating in New Zealand for 15 years, and member's length of membership has been scored into eight categories between zero and fifteen years. Our strong membership growth is reflected in the first two categories which show that 40% of members have been involved for less than three years. Membership loyalty also appears to be strong as 31% of members have been involved for more than nine years.

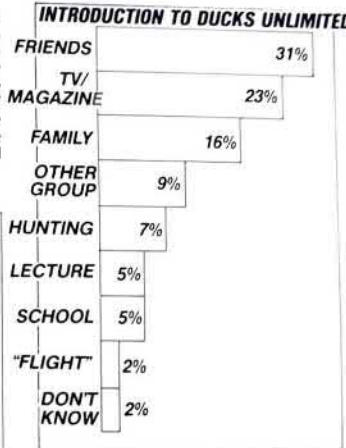
GRAPH 5



**Question 4:** How did you find out about Ducks Unlimited?

In excess of half of Ducks Unlimited's members have found out about Ducks Unlimited through word of mouth from friends, family, or hunting companions. Another quarter of members have found out through having heard about Ducks Unlimited in the media, indicating that these two methods of gaining members are very effective.

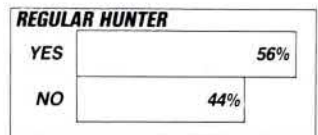
GRAPH 6



**Question 5:** Are you a regular duck hunter?

This question was included to find out to what extent our membership base was hunting orientated. Many people have believed that Ducks Unlimited was made up largely of hunters, but these results should firmly scotch that belief as it is clear that just over half of our members are regular duck hunters.

GRAPH 7



## SUMMARY

The overall picture of our membership is very encouraging and suggests that Ducks Unlimited has a strong future. With the current level of expansion in membership, we should have few problems of reaching our goal of having 5000 members within five years. There is no doubt that there are many

sources of new members that have not yet been tapped, and this years membership competition gave us a great boost. In fact, we are still receiving a steady flow of new members who are being signed up by members using the membership competition coupons. These are still able to be used. However, if any members

## MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION

Earlier this year, we also undertook a complete revamp of our membership recording system. All our records have now been transferred from Lower Hutt to Auckland, where they have been re-computerised using a system designed specifically for handling the membership data. This has allowed us to partition the membership records into regional lists, to make it easier for the chapter committees to keep in touch with their members, as well as simplifying the job of keeping track of membership renewals.

We have established 18 regions throughout the country, twelve in the North Island and six in the South Island, plus one for our overseas members. A summary of the membership in each of these regions is also set out below, along with the growth rate that has occurred in each region for the seven months from the beginning of April to the end of October. To convert these figures into annual growth rates, the figures listed below must be multiplied by 1.7, indicating that some regions are currently expanding by approximately 50% per year.

REGION	% MEMBERS	% GROWTH
Auckland	14	28
Bay of Plenty	1	0
Coromandel	8	26
Canterbury	4	0
Central Plateau	1	0
Gisborne	4	26
East Coast	1	0
Hawkes Bay	1	6
Marlborough	1	29
Manawatu	8	20
Nelson	1	10
Northland	4	18
Overseas	3	0
Otago	10	0
Southland	3	17
Taranaki	1	0
West Coast	0	0
Wanganui	2	29
Waikato	8	18
Wellington	14	14
Wairarapa	13	9
TOTAL	100	14

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# THE PEARCE WETLANDS

## DUCKS UNLIMITED'S WAIRARAPA WILDERNESS

**D**uring 1988, Ducks Unlimited purchased the Pearce Wetlands, a 309 acre piece of the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa, and one of the last areas of shoreline still in private ownership. We made this bold move once it became apparent that the Department of Conservation, crippled by Government imposed funding cuts, could not take up their option on the property. In our ownership, the area's outstanding wetland values will be protected for the future, something that could not be guaranteed had someone else beaten us to it.

And outstanding its wetland values truly are! This area is used by a staggering array of birds, something which is hard to imagine when standing on its flat, soggy, landscape. Yet it is these very characteristics which make it the jewel in Lake Wairarapa's crown.

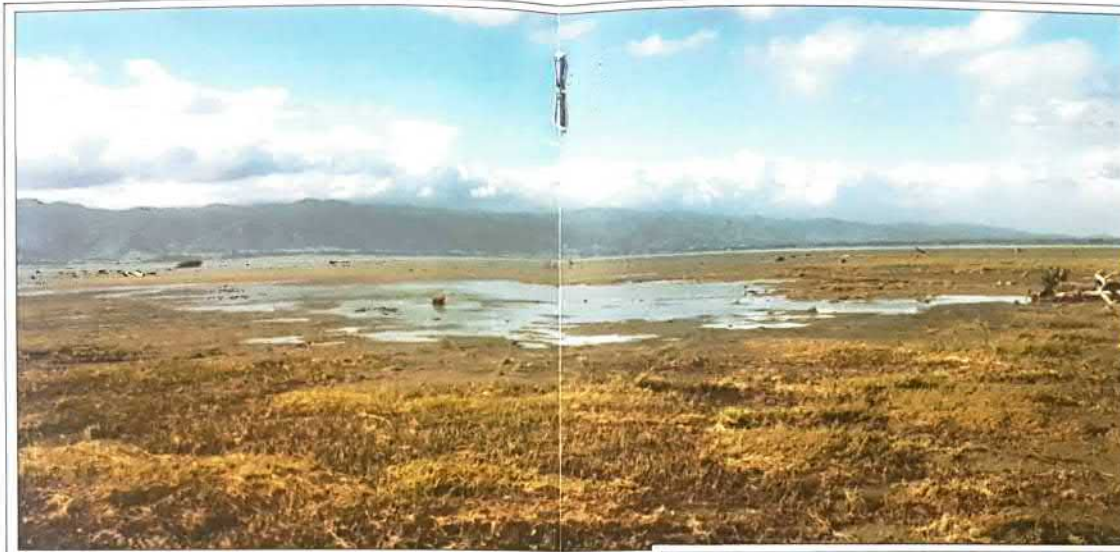
When the nor-wester blows the lake reclaims the area and floods it completely. When the weather is more settled, the waters recede and the flocks of ducks, geese, swans, stilts, herons, oystercatchers and ootterrels move in to feed the shallow pools that remain.

Spring migrations bring waders with names like Yellowlegs, Greenshanks, and Sandpipers from Siberia and Alaska, while winter migrations may bring the Black Stilt, the world's rarest wader, from the braided riverbeds of Canterbury. The odd Australian visitor also appears, whether it be a Glossy Ibis or a Chestnut-breasted Shelduck.

In order to let the secret of the Pearce Wetlands out, Ducks Unlimited is now launching a Pearce Wetlands fundraising drive. Members who wish to contribute to this project can help by simply clipping the coupon and sending a donation. As with all Ducks Unlimited's fundraising, contributions are tax deductible and we will issue you with a receipt.

However, if you want to become more closely involved with the project, Ducks Unlimited is offering a strictly limited number of Foundation Sponsorships. Should you wish to have more information about this scheme, please send us the coupon below indicating your interest. We will mail you our in-depth brochure, "The Pearce Wetlands: An Introduction", which outlines in more detail the benefits of becoming a Pearce Wetlands Foundation Sponsor.

If you are "For Waterfowl and Wetlands," as we are, you will realise that this project is a significant undertaking for Ducks Unlimited. We hope you will support our continuing development by supporting the Pearce Wetlands.



Views of the Pearce Wetlands. A magnificent area for waterfowl and wading species.



A shoveler drake, a common species at the Pearce Wetlands.



Pied stilts and herons on the wetlands.

### PEARCE WETLANDS FUNDRAISING APPEAL

Please send me more information on becoming a Pearce Wetlands Foundation Sponsor YES / NO

Please receipt my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My cheque is enclosed YES / No

Please charge my VISA / BANKCARD No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expires: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO DUCKS UNLIMITED ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

## DU NATIONAL RAFFLE

The results of the national raffle, which was drawn on September 20 are as follows:

1st prize Dr M Hicks	Waterfowl Painting.
2nd prize G McLean	Framed print.
3rd prize E.B. Jenman	Binoculars.
4th prize M.F. Shepherd	Camera.
5th prize J. Withers	Perfume.
6th Prize M. Campbell	Book.

Congratulations to all the winners.

The Directors would like to thank all members for their assistance in this important fund-raising effort, especially mark Newcomb, who once again organised a very successful raffle which raised over \$5500.00 for waterfowl habitat.

## DU PHOTO LIBRARY

The Board of Directors has agreed that it is time that Ducks Unlimited began to assemble its own photographic library for the future. If any members have publication quality photos of New Zealand's waterfowl and wetlands, and are willing to donate copies to Ducks Unlimited, we will see that they are collated and stored for the future. If the photo is a print, we would like to receive a high quality reprint, if you are unwilling to part with the negative. These should be at least 6" x 4". If you use slides, again a high quality copy will be sufficient. Along with the photo, we will require information on where it was taken, when it was taken, who the photographer was, an exact description of the subject matter, and where the original negative or slide can be located. Should Ducks Unlimited use any of these photos in the future, we will ensure that the photographer is fully acknowledged.

## TAURANGA ESTUARY PROTECTED

The QEII National Trust, announced in its latest newsletter, that it had secured an open space covenant on an important 16 hectare estuarine area in the Tauranga Harbour. This area, known as the Matua Wetlands, is home to a number of rare and endangered species including fernbird, banded rail, spotless crane

and marsh crane. A management plan is currently being prepared by the Tauranga branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society in association with DoC.

## ANOTHER WATER CONSERVATION ORDER

On 21 July, the Minister of the Environment, announced a draft water conservation order for the whole of the Buller River catchment, including a preservation order on Lakes Rotorua and Rototoi. The Buller is now the largest, relatively unmodified, river system in the country and the conservation order will prevent it being dammed in the future. There will also be constraints on the issuing of water rights throughout the entire catchment area. Application for the order was made in September 1987 by the Nelson Acclimatisation Society and the Council of South Island Acclimatisation Societies.

## NEST BOXES FOR SALE

These are essential items for anyone with Grey Teal in their area, and are available through the Auckland Chapter. These front entry nest boxes have been built out of tanalized ply, according to the plans outlined in the June "Flight". They cost \$20.00 each, and to save freight boxes will be supplied as kitsets, ready to be nailed together. They are available by sending your order to: Marie McEntee, 26B Rocklands Ave, Balmoral, Auckland 4. Please make all cheques payable to - Ducks Unlimited Auckland Chapter.

## FEEDER HOPPERS FOR SALE

Another essential item for anyone who has a wetland or pond, especially if you have birds that require feeding. The feeder hoppers have been built out of tanalized ply, to ensure that they last a long time. They are large enough to hold several buckets of food, while at the same time keeping it waterproof. This means that you can be assured that your pond is adequately supplied with food, even when you are not there. The boxes are available fully constructed at \$50.00 each, by sending your order and payment to: Marie McEntee, 26B Rocklands Ave, Balmoral, Auckland 4. Please make all cheques payable to - Ducks Unlimited Auckland Chapter.

## EKETAHUNA CHAPTER CLAY SHOOT

The Eketahuna Chapter held another successful simulated field shoot in October. Eighty-eight shooters attended with excellent scores being achieved on a brilliantly fine day. The Sos Savage Memorial Acclimatisation Society Trophy was won by the Manawatu A team. The chapter challenge was keenly contested and was duly won by the Manawatu Chapter. A good profit was made on the day, helping to boost Chapter funds.

The next simulated field shoot will be the Eketahuna Chapter Championship which is to be held at the Eketahuna Gun Club on February 4 1990, beginning at 10.30 a.m. BYO lunch.

## MANAWATU CHAPTER ANNUAL DINNER

This was held in Palmerston North on October 7. This was the Manawatu Chapter's second dinner and again this year, a feature of the evening was a game style dinner which included trout, duck and venison. Also featuring, as an invited guest of the Chapter, was Horrie Sinclair from the Sinclair Wetlands in Otago. Horrie spoke about the declining waterfowl populations in Otago, and the ever increasing need to preserve habitat. The evening's auction was well supported with over \$7000.00 being raised.

## SINCLAIR WETLANDS DISPLAY PROVIDED

Horrie has advised us that the No 1 Display Pond at the Sinclair Wetlands is now complete and awaiting the arrival of the captive waterfowl collection. Birds will be sent to Otago once the necessary permit has been issued by DoC.

Horrie and Paul Galloway, from Waihola, have completely ring fenced the pond with a predator-proof electrified fence and have bird-proofed the culverts to keep the birds in as well as the predators out. Paul generously donated his tractor and post rammer for the job, as a contribution to the Sinclair Wetlands, as well as heavily discounting his time. Ducks Unlimited is most grateful for the excellent job that has resulted.

*The 260 metre predator proof fence around the waterfowl enclosure at the Sinclair Wetlands.*



## BAY OF PLENTY CHAPTER FORMED

A new chapter has been formed in the Bay of Plenty, after members in the region were invited to attend an inaugural meeting on September 19. Thirty people attended this meeting along with the Executive Director, the National Secretary and Dave Johnston, a National Director from the region. To start the meeting, the Country Calendar video was shown as a brief introduction to DU. This was followed by a variety of questions about DU's aims and objectives, after which nine people were appointed to form the chapter committee. As the Chapter encompasses a wide area, the committee has representatives from Rotorua, Whakatane, Te Puke and Tauranga. David Crawford was appointed as the Chapter Chairperson and his address is, No 1 Rd, R.D.2, Te Puke.

## DUAK BADGES AND POLO SHIRTS

It is common in the States and Canada for each DU Chapter to have a badge of their own. DU Auckland has decided to bring this idea to N.Z. As such, they have designed a badge that identifies their region. The badge depicts the DU international duck head logo over Rangitoto Island. The background is in royal blue, while the lettering is in white, in keeping with Auckland's traditional colours. Also available are same top quality polo shirts in royal blue, with the Auckland logo embroidered on them. These are unisex and are available in S, M, L and XL. The badges are \$60.00 each and the polo shirts are \$35.00 each. These can be obtained by sending your payment to: Marie McEntee, 26B Rocklands Ave, Balmoral, Auckland 4.

## CONSERVATION LOSES TWO KEY FIGURES

Sir Peter Scott, one of the founding fathers of world conservation, died in August just two weeks before his 80th birthday.

Peter Scott seems to have been blessed with more lives than most other people - and had the energy and talent to live each one to the full. He always gave his profession as 'painter', but he was also ornithologist, naturalist, author, broadcaster, Olympic yachtsman, gliding champion, and above all conservationist. He was born in 1909, son of Captain Robert Falcon Scott, who died on an expedition to the South Pole in 1911.

"Make the boy interest in natural history - they teach it at some schools" wrote his famous father in his last message to his wife. That phrase, with hindsight, gains a poignant significance. Sir Peter's life-long interest and achievement must have surpassed his father's wildest expectations.

He studied biology and the history of art at Cambridge University, attended art schools in Munich and London and held his first exhibition in 1933 when he was only 24 years old. Since then he wrote or illustrated hundreds of books and articles.

Peter proved to be a man of many talents. In the Navy during the Second World War he served with skill and gallantry, received the DSC and Bar, was three times mentioned in despatches, and received an MBE in 1942. A superb yachtsman, he won a bronze medal in the 1936 Olympic games. He was British gliding Champion in 1963. He was also an accomplished scuba diver and reef fish expert. He embarked on a series of broadcasts on television and radio - 'Look' and 'Nature Parliament' - and proved to be a brilliant communicator capturing attention and loyalty from his large audiences.

In 1946 he founded the Wildfowl Trust - now

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust - as a non profit-making organisation devoted to conservation. In the 1950's he worked closely with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and in 1962 became Chairman of their Species Survival Commission. He organised the Red Data Books which list plants and animals under threat and which conservationists studying threatened populations have come to regard as their 'bible'. In 1961 he helped to found the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - now the World Wide Fund for Nature - designing its famous panda logo. He was a very active Vice President of WWF - UK and Chairman of WWF - International for over 20 years. In 1982 he was made Honorary Chairman of the WWF International Council. He was also President of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (FFPS), and held office in many other conservation organisations in Britain and around the world.

Hardly surprising that in 1973 he was knighted for services to conservation, becoming the first person ever to receive such an accolade. Fourteen years later, he was made a Companion of Honour and elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

During the last forty years, Sir Peter travelled to most of the countries in the world, delighting in the wildlife and promoting conservation wherever he went; whales and Antarctica have also featured strongly in his recent crusades. In every continent the name of Sir Peter Scott commands not only a deep and abiding respect but a great deal of affection and gratitude.

## VALE BILL PRITT

DU (NZ) lost one of its great supporters when Bill Pritt (WJ. Pritt) of Ohakune died in August. Bill was responsible for the creation of well over 200 wetlands in the Ohakune district and it was through his efforts that the area supports very high levels of waterfowl. Bill was born in 1914 in Bootle in England's Lake District and became well known for "fell racing", which is a form of cross country running, and for Cumbrian wrestling - in which he won the world championship title for his weight.

In 1939 he came to New Zealand but six months later war broke out and he returned to Europe, where he spent six years at war, three of them as a prisoner of war.

Mr Pritt was first captured in Greece but escaped and went to the Middle East where he joined another section of soldiers who went to Greece to bring out the Greek King and his Prime Minister. They walked out of Greece over Mount Olympus.

For this mission Mr Pritt received the Silver Cross of St George.

He was later captured in the North African Desert and spent the rest of the war as a prisoner, first in Italy, where he also escaped, and then in Germany.

When he returned to New Zealand he bought the property on Smiths Rd, between Raetihi and Ohakune, and named it "Mitreedale".

A keen deerstalker and duckshooter Mr Pritt instigated the first gun club in the Waimarino and in 1963 became the New Zealand single rise clay target shooting champion.

He also played rugby for Ohakune and Raetihi.

His interest in outdoor pursuits led him to take an active part in the Waimarino Acclimatisation Society for many years.

He helped initiate the farmponds scheme for waterfowl habitat and helped put in the lower Rotokuru Lake Dam which is now a conserva-

tion reserve. "No water, no ducks," became his catch phrase.

He was on the Ohakune Primary School committee for eight years and helped build the Ohakune baths and Ohakune Mountain Rd.

Mr Pritt married his wife, Audrey, in 1951 and they had three daughters, Christine, who lives in Wanganui, Diane, Ohakune, and Lois, Australia.

He continued his love of sport through watching his daughters play hockey and golf and was a familiar sight on the golf courses in Wanganui, following Christine's career for many years.

Bill joined DU in 1975 and over recent years established a major Canada goose population at "Mitreedale".

Bill will be sadly missed by all who knew him, and by the country's conservation movement.

Sincere condolences to Audrey, Diane, Christine and Lois.

## PROMINENT CONSERVATIONIST HONOURED - DON MERTON QSM

The name Don Merton is synonymous with Black Robins. However, his name is tied to many other endangered species and conservation projects.

Don was interested in birds as a youngster. He kept a few cage birds and even in those early days tried a little "egg manipulation" - raiding local Goldfinch nests and putting their eggs under his canaries! Don's interest in birds was noticed by the late Archie Blackburn, of Gisborne, later President of the Ornithological Society. Archie's encouragement and direction was responsible for Don joining the Wildlife Service as a trainee.

Don's training involved all facets of the work of the Wildlife Service, but his goal was to work with protected fauna. Shortly after completing his training he had a trip overseas on a Churchill Fellowship, during which he visited many wildlife institutions. He also worked for a period as a technician with CSIRO Wildlife Research in Australia, studying the Lyrebird.

As protected fauna officer in Auckland he had his first experience with endangered species work - NI Saddleback transfers. This was followed shortly after by the rescue operations for St Saddleback, Stead's Bush Wren and Stewart Island Snipe, following the invasion of Big South Cape Island by rats. Then he took a major role, as field leader, in the Ornithological Society's 25th Anniversary expedition to the Kermadecs. During the 1970s he had 2 years secondment to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service as Conservator of Wildlife on Christmas Island.

His work with the Black Robin and Kakapo is well known. The former is now past the critical point in its recovery and Don is hoping to be able to concentrate on Kakapo. Despite these major commitments Don has continued to contribute to the international scene. He was successful in translocating the Noisy Scrub-bird in Western Australia and more recently he led the team which removed rabbits from Round Island, Mauritius.

Don's friends and acquaintances were all thrilled to hear he had been awarded the Queens Service Medal. All agree it was a fitting award for years of dedication to the conservation of endangered species.

Don has been a DU member for some time and his totally positive attitude towards our waterfowl recovery programmes has been a great encouragement to all.

## Project Report

### OPERATION PATEKE

#### Captive Breeding Results

The final figures for the captive breeding side of operation PATEKE, and the successful breeders for the 1988-89 season, were:

Charlie Money, Dargaville	22
Ron Munro, Invercargill	18
Neil Hayes, Wainuiomata	15
Hilldale Zoo	15
Otorohanga Zoo	12
National Wildlife Centre	11
Clayton Putt, Taupiri	10
Heritage Park, Auckland	7
Ann Graeme, Tauranga	5
Glennys Hansen, Eketahuna	4
Wellington Zoo	3
Murray Powell, Hamilton	3
Murray Dench, Hamilton	3
Dave Johnston, Reporoa	2
Masterton Intermediate	2
Will Wright, Waikanae	1
TOTAL	133

133 reared is the third highest total achieved to date and an impressive effort by all involved. Otorohanga Zoo was the first to breed birds from the Great Barrier Island birds which joined the programme in 1988, rearing 3 males and 1 female from a pair caught in late 1987. These progeny have now been added to the flock mating programme for 1990 and this should widen the gene pool considerably.

The Parks and Recreation Dept of the Invercargill City Corporation have joined the programme having erected two impressive aviaries in a secluded part of their deer park. A couple of other members have taken additional pairs, but we do need more members joining the programme if we are to continue our progress towards ensuring a wild population of brown teal on the NZ mainland.

#### Releases of Captive Reared Brown Teal

Following on from the successful release of 70 birds at the Purerua Peninsula Lake, near Kerikeri, a further 25 birds were released at the same site in late October, bringing the total released in Northland this year to 101. The good news from Purerua is that a brood of Brown Teal have been recorded amongst other birds.

Counts of brown teal at the Mimiwhangata Farm Park are averaging around 80 birds and there is every indication that a self sustaining population has been established.

During 1990 it is expected that releases will continue at the Purerua site.

#### Successful Breeding on Tiritiri Island

A further two broods of brown teal have been hatched on Tiritiri Matangi Island in the Hauraki Gulf - confirming yet again that captive reared brown teal can survive and breed in the wild. All they need is an environment similar to the one which they had before humans did their best to destroy it - habitat, no predators and no duck hunters trying to kill them.

#### New Brown Teal Paper Published

A new paper outlining the progress of operation PATEKE has just been published in WILD-FOWL 40 - the scientific waterfowl publication of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. Copies of this paper, which was written by Neil Hayes and Grant Dumbell, can be obtained from DU for \$5 per copy. The whole project continues to create considerable interest overseas.

#### Further Research Planned

It is hoped that early in the New Year Grant Dumbell will be able to continue the vital Brown Teal research work started last year. The Dept of Conservation will again be providing financial assistance towards this research.

#### Demise of an Early Bird

Neil Hayes reports that the male bird of a pair of brown teal he received in 1976 has died. Neil received the pair as adult birds, which means they were at least 14 years old this year. The female of the pair, who reared 6 birds in the past season, is still looking healthy, although she is now a little grey on top and around her tail feathers. For such a small bird this is a quite remarkable life span and during this pair's period in captivity they only failed to produce young during one season. It will be interesting to report the life span of the surviving bird. We should mention again that during his research programme on Great Barrier Island Grant Dumbell caught two banded brown teal which had been originally banded as adults ten years earlier. While on the subject of life spans of birds in captivity Neil Hayes also reports that he has a grey duck, still alive and looking very healthy, which was received as a

three week old duckling way back in 1971. The bird is a female and she will be 19 in January. Neil says the bird produced many offspring during her years in captivity, but stopped breeding around 5 years ago. If any members have interesting items of a similar nature we are sure that members would like to hear about them.

#### Revised Avicultural Handbook Available

Our Brown Teal Handbook has been out of print for some time, but a revised edition will be available very soon. The revised edition will concentrate solely on the aviculture of brown teal - flock mating requirements, aviary requirements, feeding requirements, project participation and so on. Whilst the handbook deals with the captive requirements for brown teal, much of what has been written is also useful for the captive management of other wild waterfowl and a copy of the handbook should be in the hands of all who are interested in captive breeding.

Neil Hayes and Grant Dumbell have produced this new edition, which will sell for \$20 per copy, including GST and postage.

### OPERATION GRETEL

DU Director David Rice has taken Operation GRETEL under his wing and aims to see at least 100 new nest boxes erected before the next breeding season. These will be erected in the Waikato and David will be organising working parties to build, erect and maintain all boxes in the Waikato.

DU is keen to see members more involved with GRETEL and we need members to inspect and maintain the 150 boxes in the lower North Island. Any member interested in contributing a couple of days per year should contact David Rice in Auckland - phone 299-8330 or Jim Campbell - phone (05925) 869.

### OPERATION BRANTA

Members interested in establishing small flocks of Canada's should write to the DU Secretary.



Two excellent brown teal aviaries erected by the Parks and Recreation Department of the Invercargill City Corporation.

## Project Reports

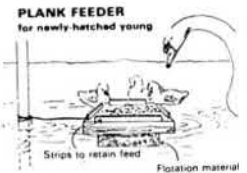
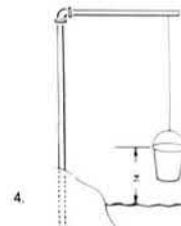
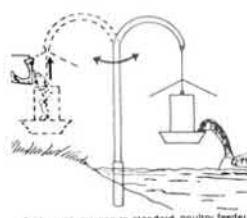
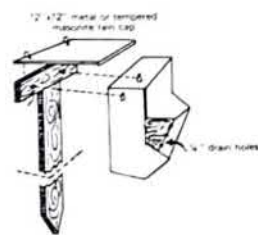
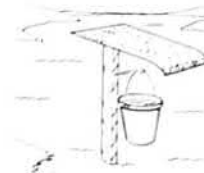
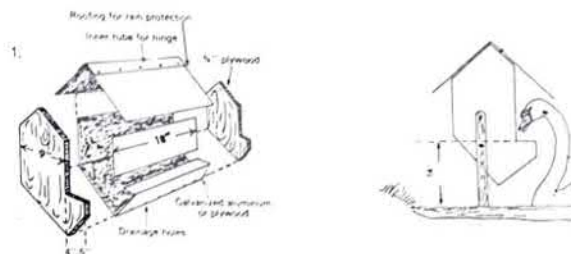
### OPERATION ROYAL SWAN

Jim Glover reports that he has over 18 names on the list for mute swan pairs, so it is unlikely that everyone will receive a pair from this seasons breeding; although the news from Peacock Springs is that good numbers of eggs are being incubated.

The other good news is that Jim Campbell's pair have again done their stuff by hatching four cygnets in mid October.

If any members are interested in joining the Mute Swan Recovery Programme drop Jim Glover a note. Please supply Jim with a photo of the water area where you intend to keep the birds. One of the most important aspects of keeping mute swans is ensuring that they have access to at least one bucket of food per day. Unfortunately a few birds have been lost because members are not feeding the birds sufficiently well. Remember these are the world's largest (in weight) species of waterfowl we are dealing with and their food intake is also the largest. Only the Trumpeter Swan is larger - in size.

### SWAN FEEDER ARRANGEMENTS



### TIPS ON FEEDING MUTE SWANS

An adult male mute swan weighs 15kg with the female weighing in at 10kg. These large birds when kept in a pinioned state need supplementary feeding. Even in the wild these birds do not find well for themselves. Participants in DU's Royal Swan Scheme may be interested in the types of feeders shown here. A good food mix is 50% barley or wheat and 50% protein such as Hi-lay pellets. All feeders should have drainage holes in the bottom as mouldy food can kill swans. It is also important to clean any mouldy and caulked food from the feeders on a regular (weekly) basis. Swans also love greens such as lettuce, cabbage, silver beet and fresh grass clippings.

Mute swan owners must watch their birds carefully - are they getting enough feed? It is difficult to tell if a swan is getting enough feed without catching the bird and weighing it or feeling the breastbone which must not be too prominent. Some DU birds have died of starvation. Make sure your swans are well fed. Any queries regarding your birds should be sent to: Ducks Unlimited, P.O. box 44-176, Lower Hutt

### GARBAGE CAN SWAN FEEDER

Where you have a lake with super lush vegetation, it is possible your very lucky swans can thrive on what mother nature provides. But, it is best not to count on such good fortune. In most all situations, supplemental feeding is essential.

To the right is illustrated a Swan Feeder made of a garbage can with a 10 inch hole for the swans to feed. A split piece of rubber hose is necessary to give protection against the sharp edges. A sufficient number of holes is important in the bottom to provide drainage plus a round piece of plywood for the bottom. We recommend that a rain protection hood be added above the hole, to prevent water getting inside.





## Project Reports

### OPERATION WHO

**More Blue Ducks Distributed to Members**  
Mary Atkinson of Hamner Springs, Otorohanga Zoo and Hilldale Zoo have recently received pairs of blue duck from the National Wildlife Centre, bringing the total number of pairs in captivity in New Zealand to eleven. Hopes are high that we will see a boost in the number of blue ducks reared in captivity.

#### Further Success Overseas

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust centre at Arundel, in the UK, has had further success in its blue duck captive breeding programme, rearing four birds in only the second season of the programme. The same pair, which produced one duckling last season, produced two clutches, from which four birds were reared. New aviaries are now being constructed to house additional pairs. The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust is, of course, the only place outside of New Zealand, to hold blue ducks.

#### Project Participants Needed

Assuming members manage to breed blue ducks this season, we will have an urgent need for more people to join the programme. The basic requirements for an aviary to hold one pair of blue ducks was given in the September

FLIGHT. Contact Neil Hayes if you are interested.

#### Blue Duck on the Cover of the September FLIGHT

Top marks to DU member Owen Mapp of Paraparauamu who was the first to point out that the ducklings on the cover of the September FLIGHT were mallards, not blue duck ducklings. Several other members spotted this. The photograph was taken by Churchill Fellow Rod Hall, who came to New Zealand in 1987 to take two pairs of blue duck to the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. FLIGHT did in fact report some time ago that the first clutch, produced by the female blue duck on the cover of the last FLIGHT, was removed and incubated artificially and that her eggs had been replaced with mallard eggs - nine of which hatched and she reared them all.

#### Stop Press

The Otorohanga Zoo reports that 2 blue ducklings have hatched and are doing well - full report in next FLIGHT.

#### MAJOR FUNDING RECEIVED FOR BLUE DUCK WORK

To assist with its Blue Duck programme, as part of operation WHIO, the Otorohanga Zoo

logical Society has received a grant of \$17,000 from the NZ Lottery Board. The money will go towards the building of what will be the country's major blue duck breeding facility. This is great news and gives the blue duck recovery programme a real boost.



Blue ducks being released at Hamner Springs by Mary Atkinson.

Blue ducks at home at Hamner Springs.



## Project Reports

### OPERATION WETLANDS

In a joint project between Ducks Unlimited, the Dept of Conservation and the Wellington Acclimatisation Society over 100 hectares of wetlands, adjacent to the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa, are being restored to their former glory.

Known as the Wairio Ponds, this area was previously high quality waterfowl habitat before being drained and cleared in 1982 for development as pasture. However the development scheme was abandoned and the land is now administered by the Department of Conservation.

A 3.5 year enhancement project is foreseen. To date drainage channels have been blocked, a water intake structure built and low banking constructed. This allows water from high lake levels to be retained. An extensive landscaping and planting operation is planned as well as the development of an alternative summer water supply.

This is certainly one of the largest, most important, and most exciting projects undertaken and in a future FLIGHT we hope to show aerial pictures displaying the full extent of the project.



Bill Clinton-Baker's pond in the Wairarapa.

#### NZ WETLANDS NOMINATED FOR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Two of New Zealand's most important wetlands have been nominated for inclusion in an

international convention on wetlands of world-wide importance.

The convention's aim was to stem the loss of wetlands around the world and it was relevant to New Zealand, where about 90 per cent of wetlands had been drained over the last 150 years, he said.

Whangamarino, near Meremere in Waikato, and Kōpūatai peat dome on the Hauraki Plains had been nominated because Whangamarino was the biggest remaining wetland in New Zealand and Kōpūatai the last largely intact peat dome in the North Island.

Most of Whangamarino's 5060 hectares of peat bogs, mineralised areas and open water was crown land, but 730ha was owned by the Auckland Acclimatisation Society, which supported the listing.

Kōpūatai and Whangamarino were the habitat of nine threatened or vulnerable species, including black mudfish, fern birds, bitterns, an orchid, a fern and a moss.

If the nomination is accepted, Whangamarino and Kōpūatai will join Farewell Spit and Waituna wetlands at the northern and southern ends of the South Island on the convention's list.

Last January about 2000 hectares of Whangamarino were burnt in a devastating fire scientists said would take 20 years to get over.

Conservation Department staff and members of the Native Forest Restoration Trust recently planted 1000 trees, the start of a 100,000 plant revegetation project expected to take several years.



The Wairio Ponds wetland development.

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