

Flight

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DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC.

For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

Bill Barrett Trophy

1998 Recipient: **Bill Clinton-Baker**



*DU Chairman Alan Wilks presents the trophy to Bill Clinton-Baker (right).
Photo: Jan Clinton-Baker.*

In awarding the trophy to Bill Clinton-Baker, Ducks Unlimited was able to acknowledge the contribution he has made over many years - both as a member and a staunch supporter.

In 1986, Bill C-B (as he's known) bred 32 brown teal for release and won the Breeder of the Year award for that year. He holds the record for raising the largest number of birds in one season.

The Clinton-Bakers hosted the garden visit and lunch during the 1996 Annual Conference held in Masterton. For the past six years, Bill has donated all income from breeding native waterfowl to the New Zealand Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust. He was overseas for this year's AGM and Alan Wilks accepted the trophy on his behalf and presented it to him on his return.

The trophy is named after the late Bill Barrett, an Australian and a longtime supporter of DUNZ and its first overseas Life Member. A keen conservationist, he was personally responsible for the construction and erection of over 10,000 nest boxes for chestnut teal throughout South Australia.

The trophy, a carved blue duck on a kauri base, was donated by Bill Barrett to be presented annually to a person who, in the opinion of the Board, has done an outstanding job of promoting the aims and objectives of the organisation in New Zealand. The first recipient was founder member Jack Worth, in 1984, father of the current treasurer and vice-president, Craig Worth. Bill Barrett's memory lives on.



OBITUARY

Horace Alexander Sinclair, MBE

Honorary Life Member Horrie Sinclair died on August 31.

Horrie spent 25 years fighting to retain the values of the Sinclair Wetlands before gifting them to Ducks Unlimited in 1984 (see page 11). Anyone who knew him would agree that he was a character, a dedicated and outspoken waterfowl and wetland conservationist with a dream to preserve his beloved wetland for all time, which DUNZ helped him achieve.

Of the many tributes paid to Horrie, perhaps the following, inserted in the Otago Daily Times by the Strong and Scott families, best sums him up:



*Long may the grey duck and scaup fly,
And the fern birds flit through the flaxes;
For without your dream it would have all been gone,
"Without habitat we have nothing".*

Horrie Sinclair's dream and memory will live on at the Sinclair Wetlands.

INSIGHT

Graham Gurr

President

King George VI had it right when he said: "The wildlife of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust; we must account for it to those who come after."

Last month I had the pleasure of visiting Mt Albert Grammar and discussing with John Wright, the Head of the Science Department, and Peter Ladyman, the Agriculture/Horticulture Curriculum Leader, the wetland development they are undertaking to assist in the teaching of a variety of subjects. The benefits will include an understanding of wetland values for all students who take science and agriculture courses. The Andrew Dixon MacMaster Trophy and grant will be awarded to the school for 1998. This recognises the part that education and young people play in the shaping of what is to come. The future belongs to the youth of any nation. If we do our part in providing a good basis for their development and an understanding of the environment and how we interact with it, in the long term the wild places and their inhabitants which we cherish will remain.

The 24th Annual Conference has come and gone. I think that all those who were present would agree it was one of the better ones, and all credit must go to the local Chapter for their organisation and enthusiasm. For me, one of the highlights was the wetland trip and, while this lacked a winery tour like the Auckland one last year, all who tasted the mulled wine served with lunch will agree it will not be easily forgotten.

Then there was the auction - a major part of any annual conference. This year we had the services of one of the funniest auctioneers I can remember. Bob Wood was superb as he extracted the money from those present. On a couple of occasions I was laughing so much I couldn't remember bidding - but I must have, as the items were knocked down to me.

One of the good things about being President is that you get to present things and give things away - especially to those who make a signal contribution to achieving the mission of Ducks Unlimited. At the Annual Conference I was able to present the Chapter Challenge once again to Manawatu for the fifth year in a row. I also awarded the Bill Barret Trophy to Bill Clinton-Baker - an award which was more than well deserved. This was a special pleasure because I had sat next to Bill at dinner at the very first annual conference I ever attended. I might add that at the same table were, from memory, five others who have over intervening years also been awarded the trophy for services to DU.

As this is the last issue of Flight for 1998, I would like to take the opportunity to wish you all my very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.



OUR MISSION

We are a voluntary membership-based society dedicated to the conservation of New Zealand wetlands through:

- wetland restoration and development;
- conservation programmes for threatened waterfowl;
- advocacy and education of wetland values.

By these means we seek to ensure the ethical and sustainable use of wetland resources by all existing and future users.

Cover Photo: DU member Natalie Price (centre), sister Sharleen (left) and Amanda Drummond and friends. Photo: Paula Price.

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OUR People

Ducks Unlimited is a focus for the energy and enthusiasm of people of all ages and many whose involvement is reported in Flight trace an interest in wildfowl and wetlands from an early age. Often, the effort and interest involved is something shared between generations of our people...

A Letter from Natalie

Hi, my name is Natalie Price and I'm 12 years old. I would happily join in DU activities, especially if there are others my age because I'm a bit shy around adults.

I love ducks and that's probably because I grew up with them. When I was about four, and my sister was five, we were allowed down to the creek (actually rather like a drain). We weren't allowed in the water and mud, but we were allowed to feed the ducks that were there - bread and dried peas and anything else they would eat.

Two ducks which were really friendly visited our creek each year and we called them Amy and Donald. The next year, Donald went missing but Amy visited our house every year for the breeding season until I was ten. Then I didn't see her again.

Amy nested in our garden and brought her ducklings up to our doorstep (messing everywhere) and she would let us pat the ducklings, let them sit in our laps and run around us. When Mum dug the garden, we would pick out the worms for them. Amy told all her friends about our place and soon we had thirty ducks on our back lawn.

One of these was Whitering, so called because of the white ring around her neck. She was very bossy and if any duck other than her mate was at the front of the decking, she would chase them off onto the ground. Sometimes, in summer, when it was too hot to have the door closed, Whitering would wander inside and look in the pantry because she knew that was where the bread came from. Once, she and her nearly fledged ducklings went in one door and out the garage.

Amy once flew into our lounge (she was a bit of a weird duck and once swallowed a white marble).

Whitering still visits, bringing some of her children with her. Dad doesn't like us feeding the ducks but Sonja Davies, who lives down the road, feeds them all the time, so even though the creek is now shut down and we can't feed the ducks any more, Whitering still visits us.

DU Member Natalie Price
Masterton



MacMaster Trophy to Colyton School



Students of Colyton School receive the trophy from DU Chairman Alan Wilks. Photo: Ken Cook.

The Andrew Dixon MacMaster Trophy was established and is funded by retired American teacher, and DUNZ Life Member, Dr Tony Reiger, in memory of his father-in-law. The trophy is provided to encourage student involvement in wetland conservation and DUNZ is indebted to Tony Reiger's support in assisting in conservation education in New Zealand schools.

In August the trophy was awarded to Colyton School near Feilding for 1997, as we were unable to find a suitable recipient last year. The school provided an excellent proposal outlining their long-term and future involvement in a local wetland development project.

Some four years ago, retired farmer Peter Olsen shared with senior Colyton students his vision of "turning nothing into something". Students later visited the site to mark out possible pond areas and listened to a talk given by DU member Alan Fielding. Peter Olsen has developed a low cost and interesting four-pond wetland, fully fenced and only 200 metres from the school.

Since the completion of earthworks, for which the contractor exchanged topsoil for machinery hire, the students have observed the results of clearing introduced flora and of replanting at a Feilding park. They have worked weekends erecting a windmill to supply water for irrigating the cuttings they have planted. The school intends to use the grant (US\$250 made up to NZ\$500 by DU) to build a shade house and compost bins for propagating native seedlings for the wetland.

The Colyton students and local groups such as cubs, scouts and even pre-schoolers will have an invaluable education resource which will encompass art, English, science and technology. It is intended to enter into an agreement with Peter Olsen regarding supervised access to the wetland for educational purposes.

DU commends Peter Olsen for his foresight and enthusiasm for this project. He has a wonderful rapport with the students -but it costs him a packet of barley sugar each working bee. This proposal is truly worthy of the MacMaster Trophy and DU welcomes Peter Olsen as a new member.

LIFE MEMBERS

Ducks Unlimited is pleased to welcome Dr Steven Messerschmidt of Juneau, Alaska, and Andrew Lowe of Havelock North as new Life Members.

AUCKLAND CHAPTER

The Auckland Chapter held a very successful dinner and auction at Sarmajaz on September 11, attended by 88 members and friends, raising nearly \$5,000. Auctioneer Noel Osborne's input was warmly appreciated.

NEW WAIRARAPA CHAPTER CHAIR

Ken Barnes is the new Wairarapa Chapter Chair. He was elected at the Eketahuna/Wairarapa Chapter's AGM on August 13 at the Copthorne Resort Solway Park in Masterton with 12 members present and seven apologies received. Ken Barnes will be supported by Glenys Hansen as Secretary/Treasurer. Bill Clinton-Baker queried the Eketahuna name of the Chapter and suggested that Wairarapa would now be more appropriate. After brief discussion it was unanimously agreed that the Chapter would in future be known as the Wairarapa Chapter.

Ross Cottle was congratulated for his efforts in acquiring and selling duck feed which raised \$70 for the 97/98 year. This is an ongoing project.

Glenys Hansen suggested an informal wetlands tour plus barbecue lunch for members and friends and it was decided to hold this in March next year. Details will be published in the January 1999 issue of Flight. A vote of thanks was accorded retiring Chapter Chair Ross Cottle.

The Chapter dinner and auction were held on September 12, also at the Copthorne Resort. This was a very lively and enjoyable evening aided by the first-ever woman auctioneer, Prue Hamill, and \$3,000 was raised by 65 members and friends, many of whom generously donated items.


MANAWATU CHAPTER

Manawatu Chapter again won the Chapter Challenge trophy for 97/98, raising nearly \$6,000. Neil Candy accepted the trophy for the Chapter from DU President Graham Gurr at the AGM dinner. While Manawatu are to be congratulated, other chapters need to regard this as a challenge.

The Manawatu Chapter dinner will be held at The Coachman, Palmerston North, on October 17. Donated auction items would be appreciated. Contact Neil Candy (06) 353 6132 for details and dinner bookings.

HAMILTON DINNER

This has been arranged for October 8 at The Hungry Horse, Victoria Street, Hamilton. It is hoped that this will re-establish a Waikato Chapter which once was very strong. Members are urged to make an effort to support this function. A lot of work is being put in by local members towards its success and it is sure to be a fun event. Contact Craig Worth (07) 854 0494, Dale Stevens (07) 839 7224, or Michelle MacKay (07) 824 1087 for bookings at \$30 per head and donations of auction items.



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WELLINGTON CHAPTER

Shandon Golf Club, at the eastern end of Jackson Street, Petone, will be the venue for this year's Wellington Chapter dinner and auction on November 7. DU has recently subsidised an extension to the club's wetland (see Operation Wetland report in the July 98 Flight). The club is donating the use of their premises and offering a full three-course meal for \$25 per head, with bar service available. Numbers are limited to 65, so those planning to attend will need to book early. This promises to be a great evening and Wellington members are urged to come. William Abel is organising the event and can be contacted for bookings, offers of help and auction items, (04) 586 2752.

25TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

For old times' sake this has been organised at Tokaanu next July 23 -25. DU will need to take over the hotel and some indication of room requirements would be appreciated NOW, room rate: \$45 per head. Please contact a local director or send a note to P.O.Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland, ASAP. Your response will decide whether or not DU is able to achieve this nostalgic return.

WATERFOWL EXCHANGE, BUY OR SELL

An item will be published in the January 1999 issue of Flight to assist members in this area. Please forward any information you would like publicised to Waterfowl EBS, 73 Wood Street, Greytown 5953 by December 1.

OPERATION GRETEL

Foundation member Jack Worth has offered to reinstate this programme and erect and refurbish nest boxes in the Waikato area. The Board has gratefully accepted his offer and next year will allocate a small budget to assist him. Contact Jack Worth (07) 846 3808.

DU AT MYSTERY CREEK

DU received a generous offer from Taupo Native Plant Nursery to share their stand at the last Agricultural Field Days at Mystery Creek-from 10 to 13 June this year. Graham Gurr set up a photographic display, and he and Dale Stevens, David Smith, David Johnston and Craig Worth manned the stand over the four days. A good number of brochures was handed out and the most of the opportunity to promote DU was made.

The WWT Wetlands Centre, Barnes, London:

A Wetland in the Metropolis

When the Victorian reservoirs at Barn Elms, Barnes, four miles from the heart of London, became redundant, moves were set in train to create one of Europe's most ambitious wildlife projects. Partners in the scheme, due to be opened in early 2000, are the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and Thames Water and Berkeley Homes.

The former Barn Elms reservoirs were already home to waterfowl, and the new Wetland Centre is designed to maximise all aspects of the habitat for these. Well before the planned opening of the facility, several species not seen in the London area for many years have taken up residence

The project has involved breaking up 40 hectares of concrete-edged reservoir, shifting and sculpting over 500,000 cubic metres of spoil, forming over 30 lakes, ponds and marsh areas and building 27 water control sluices. A quarter of a kilometre of walkways, 27 bridges, over three kilometres of paths and 27,000 trees, topped off with a 2,500 square metre visitor centre complete the design.

The latest technology is being installed to help visitors discover the wonder of

the wetlands - touch screen computers, tv monitors to relay pictures of the reserve via fibre optic cable, and an observatory with a 30 foot high glass wall to allow stunning views of the reserve and surrounding city skyline. As well as the Peter Scott Centre, and

a "discovery centre" with hands-on activities for visitors, a three-storey viewing tower and two main exhibition areas will complete the immediate facilities. Plans for the future include a tropical wetland environment and a conservation training centre.



*The WWT Wildlife Centre four miles from the heart of London.
Photo: Mike Hughes/WWT.*

1998 Annual Conference Report

Ducks Unlimited Chairman Alan Wilks reports on events at this year's Annual Conference held in Palmerston North in July.

The outstanding job that Conference Convenor Ken Cook did, ably assisted by the Manawatu Chapter committee, in organising such a successful and enjoyable weekend must be acknowledged. Planning and executing a conference programme takes a lot of time and effort and DU is grateful to everyone who contributed.

About 30 members gathered at The Coachman in Palmerston North on the Friday evening for drinks and it was great to meet and greet new members of only two weeks Joan and Bob Butts who had come from Takaka. While directors took the opportunity to discuss DU business with some members, everyone else seemed to have a whale of a time. Unfortunately, when people eventually decided they should eat, The Coachman couldn't cater for us so we walked a short distance to the Bangkok Restaurant for an excellent and reasonably-priced Thai meal.

The AGM

Saturday morning dawned bright and clear and, after coffee, the AGM began promptly at 9.30am. All reports and the financial statements had been published in *Flight* and were accepted by the meeting. Nothing contentious was raised by the 28 members present. President Graham Gurr closed the meeting at 9.50am - an alltime record.



*Auctioneer Bob Wood in action during one of the conference highlights.
Photo: Alan Wilks.*



Andy Tannock's wetland extension visited by members on the Annual Conference wetland field trip. Photo Alan Wilks.

Abridged Minutes of the 24th Annual General Meeting

Present: Alan Wilks (Chairman), Graham Gurr (President), Craig Worth (Treasurer), Glenys Hansen (Minutes Secretary), Board Members David Smith, Ken Cook, David Johnston, Dale Stevens, William Abel, and 19 members.

Apologies: Murray and Lois Tapp, David Wilks, Audrey Pritt, Ian Jensen, Ross Cottle, Chris Bindon, Anne Johnston (moved D. Pritt, seconded J. Campbell).

Alan Wilks extended a welcome to all those members attending the 24th AGM and weekend activities.

It was resolved that the minutes of the previous AGM be confirmed (D.Pritt / N. Payne).

President's Report

Alan Wilks tabled his Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 1998 as published in the July issue of *Flight*, outlining the progress that had been made during the year with the sale of the two properties. These property sales have made the financial position of the organisation very strong (K. Cook / D. Stevens).

Alan Wilks then handed the meeting over to the incoming President, Graham Gurr.

Treasurer's Report

It was resolved that the 1997-98 Annual Accounts as published in the July issue of *Flight* be adopted (C. Worth / D. Stevens).

Project Supervisors' Reports

Reports for Operation Whio (Peter Russell), Operation Wetlands (Ken Cook), Operation Royal Swan (David Johnston) and Operation Pateke (Alan Wilks), as published in the July issue of *Flight*, were open for discussion.

(Continued on page 10)

WAIKOKO WETLANDS

The Watering Place for Many Tui

The Waikoko Wetlands project on Mana Island, off the Kapiti Coast, has involved Ducks Unlimited working closely with the Department of Conservation in a significant habitat enhancement.

Jim Campbell provided details for this report on the development....

Mana Island lies south of Kapiti Island, approximately three kilometres from the coast and about seven kilometres by boat from the marina at Paremata. Owned by the Crown, it covers some 217 hectares and was leased for farming until taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for experimental purposes. Now it is administered by the Department of Conservation as a nature reserve similar to Kapiti Island.

Farming has removed most of the native bush from the island. The DOC officer in charge of Mana, Jason Christiansen, has an ongoing programme of seed collection on the island and is propagating some 27,000 trees annually which are being planted by volunteers. (The only other permanent staff member on Mana Island is Grant Timlin. His cheery disposition was to be of help through many challenges during the job ahead, and he proved capable of turning his hand to

anything at any time.)

The island has been made absolutely predator-free and DOC is to be congratulated that there is not even a mouse left where once there was a plague. Takahe have been released and are successfully breeding. Mana Island is also home to the gold striped and common gecko.

The partnership began through an informal approach by Jason Christiansen to DU member Jim Campbell last year (his parents are neighbours of Jim's) to seek his assistance and advice on a proposed wetland restoration programme on the island. DOC landscape architect Robin Gay had already done an enormous amount of work planning the project and getting the necessary resource consents.

Jim, accompanied by DU Wetlands Supervisor Ken Cook, visited the island and they could see the enormous potential for possible release of brown teal along with improved wetland habitat for all flora and fauna.

Following this visit, the formal aspects of the project took shape, with Jim and Ken giving advice on the logistics of the operation. On March 6 this year Jim, Wairarapa DU member and contractor Gary Thomson, and DU Chairman Alan Wilks made a further inspection.

The crossing was a little rough - Alan was drenched by an enormous wave - and the party had to stand up in DOC's aluminium boat and hang on like grim death. It seemed more like seventy kilometres than seven. But the visit confirmed that this would be an exciting project.

The wetland project involved one gully pond, an existing pond to be cleaned out, creating several small ponds, and restoring a large silted area to hold open water. It was agreed that an eight tonne digger, a small bulldozer and a dump truck could handle the job. Dates were set for the gear to be barged over from Paremata and a contract drawn up. Jim Campbell donated his time to drive the 'dozer as a contribution from DU.

On the morning of March 23 the barge from Picton arrived at Paremata and dropped its ramp on the beach. Gary Thomson, having left Eketahuna at 4am, was there with the digger, dump truck and 'dozer. First on the barge, which is capable of taking 100 tonnes, was the truck. Hume's arrived with pipes and concrete culvert wing-walls which were loaded along with seven tonnes of potting mix for Jason Christiansen's plant propagation.

By this time, the tide had receded and the stern of the barge was aground. The digger had to be used to push the barge out before it, too, was loaded. But eight tonnes of digger grounded the barge again. After a lot of slewing back and forth, the tug managed to free the barge and we were away.

It was another rough crossing. As the wind increased - at one point the only sign of the barge from the tug above a huge wave was the 'dozer exhaust - Gary Thomson committed himself and his gear to King Neptune's care. But the gods were kind and the team and the gear arrived at Mana Island and were safely unloaded.



Waikoko wetlands prior to the development. Photo: Alan Wilks.



Loading the barge at Paremata. Photo: Alan Wilks.

Work started in what is known as Weta Valley at the southern end of the island. Two ponds were created, one quite deep, of roughly a quarter of a hectare, and a silt-trap pond was excavated at the lower end of the main valley to handle all the water flow from the catchment.

Then work started at the northern end of the main area, trucking the spoil to build the extensive low wall around the largest wetland. As this is comparatively shallow, the existing waterway through the centre was deepened and widened, hopefully to retain water during dry periods.

Finally, an existing pond was cleaned out and the top gully pond created which only required a short wall. It was encouraging that the borrow pit started to fill immediately, probably from a spring which had been tapped.

It wasn't all unrelenting toil. The team remembers things like the view from the picnic table on a clear night at the top of

the island, Cook Strait with the sun setting on Tapuaeuenuku in the Awatere Valley, Marlborough, to the south, with Kapiti Island and the distant lights of Paraparaumu to the north. And walking down the track home they could see the lights of Titahi Bay and Paremata. At



Work under way on the creation of ponds. Photo: Jim Campbell.



The wetlands in May 1998. Photo: Robin Gay.

night, too, there was the sound of blue penguins, along with kiwis calling.

Fire is a constant threat because Mana, with its expanses of grassland, is so dry most of the year. Grant Timlin was up early as usual to get the generator going. He was walking past the living quarters where Jim and Gary were staying when he heard the smoke alarm. He burst through the door to find a sheepish pair eating burned toast which had set off the alarm. This was the only time Grant even mildly panicked.

Then there were the numerous progressive dinners, typical of island social life, and the DU team learned how to cook paua properly. While gathering paua, Jim was seen to walk on water when Gary alerted him to a black fin close by. (It turned out to be a stingray.)

Disturbance of the local fauna was to some extent inevitable, and the 'dozer once had to be stopped to make sure a North Island robin returned to its perch

on a coprosma, having partaken of grubs in the freshly turned earth. A gold striped gecko was saved from certain death from beneath the 'dozer tracks, and a common gecko and the odd giant weta shared the bathroom.

In good conditions with very little rain, the wetland project took about ten days, with a further 10 days of track work and related activities to maximise the use of the machinery while it was available.

At the time of writing, the wetlands were holding water, and everyone involved looks forward to a viable wetland hosting a wide range of waterfowl. Eventually, too, it is hoped that our endangered brown teal will be able to be released into a habitat which will allow their numbers to increase.



Otangaki Wetland Project

at Ashhurst Domain

The April issue of Flight (DU News) reported on the Manawatu Chapter's exciting project at the Ashhurst Domain. The area contained an oxbow wetland, part of the Pohangina River system, approximately 1.2 kilometres in length largely choked with raupo. When the project was mooted, the area was useless for waterfowl and the intention was to remove large areas of raupo to create a usable wetland once more. Planning has involved DOC, Forest & Bird, Fish and Game, Palmerston North City Council reserves staff and the Manawatu Chapter.

DU has had the responsibility of carrying out the work and supervising it. Funding for the whole project has come from the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust.

To date, \$15,000 has been spent restoring about half the degenerate ancient riverine wetland. The Manawatu Chapter will supervise the expenditure of another \$10,000 to complete the restoration stage of the project, with excavation work being done by Chapter member Peter Dobson.

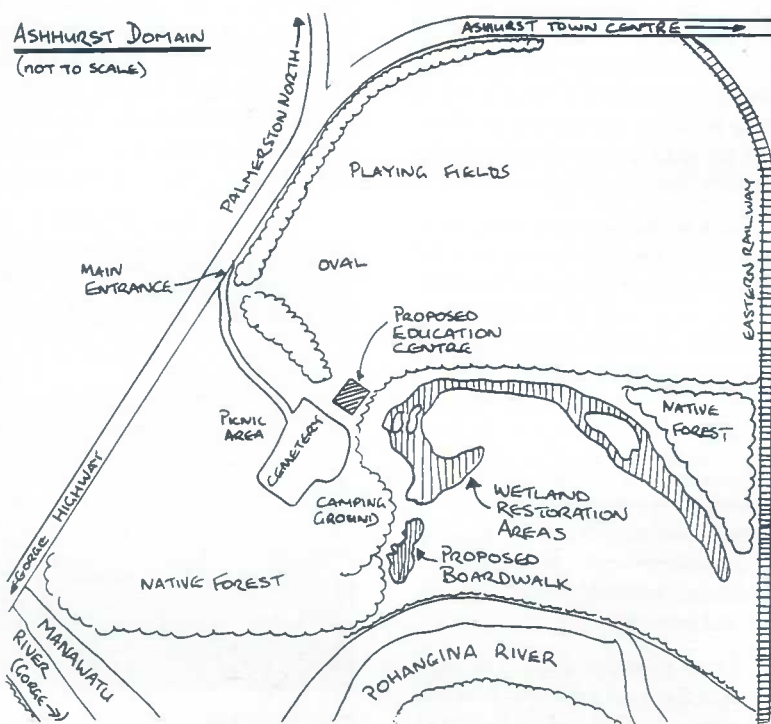
For the future, \$45,000 has been offered for the educational facilities to accompany the project. These will include a boardwalk, hide and signage within the reed bed and open water. A bird observatory and education centre are to be built on the river terrace top,

allowing a unique view of the wetland. Additional funding will be needed for these developments and major applications are in progress.

A number of local and national businesses have offered support to supply various chattels. Initial discussions have taken place with a local house construction franchise, and the Palmerston North City Council's City

Enterprises Business Unit is considering input in terms of technical design and engineering. The city's development unit has given environmental design input. Local schools are showing enthusiasm for the project.

DU Manawatu Chapter spokesperson Alan Fielding says "The project is working on the basis of do it once and do it well, with input from far and wide."



1998 Annual Conference Report (continued from page 7)

Election of Directors

The following members were re-elected to the Board as non-permanent directors: Ken Cook, David Johnston and William Abel.

New non-permanent directors elected to the Board were Neil Candy and Tom van Dam.

Graham Gurr made special mention of Alan and Di Wilks for their hospitality at Hatepe for the Board meetings. This was recognised by a small presentation on behalf of the Board.

General Business

Non-toxic Shot Debate - the Board has elected to enter the debate and a document is to be prepared.

An outline was given of the complete review of the captive breeding programme for blue duck. DU has decided to give some funding to DOC for this purpose.

Alan Wilks advised the meeting on the procedure that Flight takes to get to publication. He asked for feedback from members. All members present agreed that Flight presentation is very good and the content excellent. Thanks were given to Di Wilks for her input.

A member raised the question of the sale of the Sinclair Wetlands, considering that the Board had sold it for "peanuts". David Smith outlined the condition of the sale and that the obligation to Horrie Sinclair for his lifetime was also taken over by the purchasers.

Members agreed that an article in Flight regarding the sale of the Sinclair Wetlands would be worthwhile (see page 11).

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.50am.

(Continued on page 12)

THE SINCLAIR WETLANDS

There was a request from the AGM for a brief history of DU's association with the Sinclair Wetlands to be published in Flight.

In 1984, Horrie Sinclair gifted the property at an agreed value of \$90,000 for the purposes of gift duty and undertook to gift \$27,000 a year.

The then DU Board of Directors agreed to raise funds to build a complex on the property and entered into a contract with Horrie to house him for his lifetime, pay him an after tax manager's fee of \$5,000 per annum, and meet any operating costs above any income.

A \$250,000 building was erected from funds raised and \$90,000 had to be borrowed at a later stage.

The operating costs of some \$18,000 a year plus the debt servicing, all of which had to be raised by members, was

of deep concern to subsequent boards. The ownership of the Sinclair Wetlands had become a liability which DU could not afford, yet the organisation had a contracted obligation to Horrie for his lifetime.

The opportunity arose last year to sell the property, with the prospective purchaser prepared to meet all commitments to Horrie and retain him as manager. Because the purchaser was taking over all DU's obligations, the property had to sell at a discount.

Horrie had only gifted part of the original value, so \$36,000 was still owing. This was paid to him on settlement.

Several years before the sale, DU had arranged for the Sinclair Wetlands to be protected for all time under a QEII Covenant, which will remain and bind any subsequent owner.



ELECTRONIC BANKING

DU members wishing to make payments to DUNZ can now do so via electronic banking.

Our Bankers are:

The BNZ Frankton Branch

Account number: **02 0312 0038729 00.**

The information we require is:

Your name (if different from that on invoice or statement)

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Make a Contribution to FLIGHT

Flight communicates DU's work in wetland restoration and development and conservation programmes for threatened waterfowl. It's also part of DU's advocacy of and education in wetland values.

Readers are warmly invited to suggest ideas for future articles: things you'd like to see covered in Flight; past stories you'd like updated; events relating to wildfowl and wetland conservation in your area (which need not necessarily involve DU); or information you'd like to know and which might be of interest to other DU members.

Send a brief note to: Flight Editorial, 73 Wood Street, Greytown. Include a contact phone/fax number.



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1998 Annual Conference *(continued from page 10)*

Wetland Tour

Following the AGM, conference participants headed for the Ashhurst Domain to view the development funded by the Pacific Conservation Trust (Rainbow Warrior reparation). This has produced an extensive wetland from an old oxbow of the Manawatu River and further funding to extend the project is expected (see page 10). Ken Cook, risking life and limb by standing on someone's shoulders, erected a DU Partnership sign on a pine tree.

It was then on to Opiki to view the excellent Candy Consortium wetland which was featured in the April 98 issue of Flight. The wetland has been fenced,

with an ongoing planting programme planned. DU is grateful to the consortium and for the co-operation of the landowner.

Trevor Douglas's property at Okuku Road was the next venue. A walk around his extensive wetland was followed by drinks and a barbecue at his converted cowshed. Manawatu Chapter committee member Phil Budding produced mulled wine which was eagerly sampled. Phil had never mulled before but he gets 10 out of 10 for trying! Thank you, Trevor, for your hospitality.

After an excellent lunch, the tour moved on to Andy and Michaela Tannock's property (apologies for "Mirabelle" in the

April Flight) to view their wonderful wetland which their new home overlooks. With a DU subsidy, the wetland has been recently extended with the clearance of willows and further digger work and the whole area is a credit to the Tannocks. It was literally a bit of a dump when they took over, but it is now a viable living wetland. Another DU Partnership sign was erected at their gate.

The field trip ended back at The Coachman where directors held a brief special Board meeting to discuss the criteria the Board is establishing to process wetland subsidy applications. These will be published in Flight when finalised.

Dinner and Auction

The conference dinner began with drinks at 6.30pm, followed by an excellent meal. After the presentation of the Bill Barrett Trophy (see inside front cover) and the Chapter Challenge (see DU News, page 5), the inimitable Bob Wood got under way with the auction. The main and silent auctions were well supported and DU is grateful for the many donated items.

Sunday morning's programme saw Ken Cook running an informal workshop which gave members a chance to exchange ideas and experiences and it was voted a huge success. This ably covered a slight hitch when the predator-control speaker failed to appear. Vice President Craig Worth formally thanked everyone for attending and closed the conference at noon.

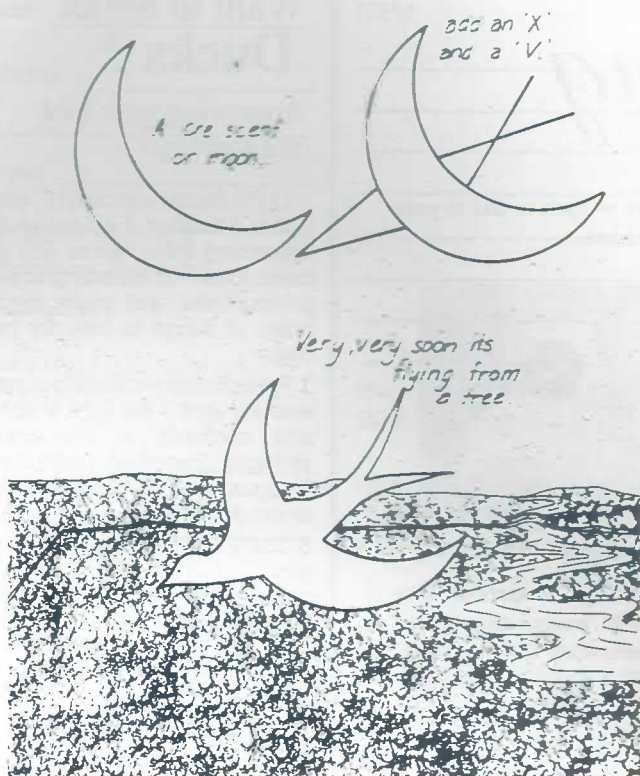


Disgruntled members sacking and looting a nearby mall. Photo: Alan Wilks.

The Wetland at Pikihiua In April this year, DU subsidised a wetland development in South Wairarapa on Murray Nix's property, Pikihiua, close to Lake Ferry. A small existing pond which had washed out was repaired. Two small gully ponds were created with a lower boggy area producing the main wetland with three islands in open water of approximately a hectare (pictured below -before, left, and after, right). Contractor Garry Pilcher carried out the excavation. All ponds are now full and Murray Nix is busy planting. This valuable project is already attracting wildfowl. *(Photos: Alan Wilks)*



DRAWING: The Welcome Swallow



...a regular feature introducing a simple drawing technique for new wildlife artists.

The welcome swallow (*Hirundo tahitica neoxena*) is a self-introduced native. Before the 1950s it was a rare straggler from Australia, hence it has no Maori name, but since then the population has exploded and spread southward from the north. It is fully protected.

Both sexes are alike, 150mm from beak to tail, and easily recognised from their streamlined shape, blue-black colouring and deeply forked tail. Their flight is swift and irregular, often skimming low over the surface of water to take their only food of insects on the wing.

Welcome swallows are found mainly near rivers, estuaries, lakes and farm ponds on the New Zealand mainland, plus Great Barrier, Auckland, Chatham and Kermadec islands, and in southern and western Australia.

Both sexes build a mud-cup nest attached to a rough vertical surface or sloping ledge, under bridges or on buildings. The hen lays from three to five oval, brown-flecked white eggs. Both sexes feed the young and raise up to three broods a year.

Illustration republished courtesy of Alan Fielding.



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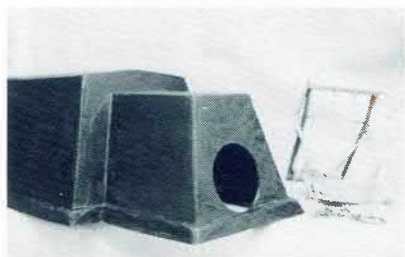
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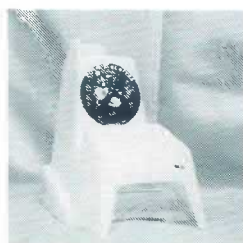
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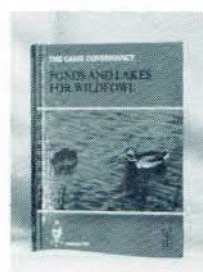
ESSENTIAL READING

NEW ZEALAND WETLANDS: A MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Far and away the most comprehensive New Zealand guide to managing wetlands. This has a load of answers to your questions about how to build a wetland, what to plant, what lives in a wetland, what legal controls apply and where to go for further information. This book is required reading for anybody who is serious about looking after wetlands. **\$25.00**

PONDS AND LAKES FOR WATERFOWL

Published in Britain by the Game Conservancy, this book covers the development and improvement of waterfowl habitat with many interesting ideas. **\$54.00**



So You Want to Shoot Ducks ?

Improving your bird photography

1. Don't expect success on every visit to a location. Find out what's happening there before you go, make a visit not expecting to take photographs, and make mental notes of things to look for next time.
2. Take photos in morning or early evening light - the light is softer and contrasts in the scene stronger. Experiment with faster films such as 200 ASA or 400 ASA which don't require bright light.
3. Study the birds' behaviour for a while, noting their activity patterns. This will increase your chance of getting the action you want and give you time to assess and choose backgrounds. Try for backgrounds which make the bird subject stand out.
4. Try dramatic shots with lots of birds in the frame. Think about mood - a combination of light, patterns formed by vegetation, water surface conditions, placement of dominant features. A tall photo is an action photo - a landscape shot more restful.
5. Go for a pictorial approach, if you don't have a telephoto lens. Balance land and sky, keep the horizon horizontal in the frame, include some close foreground to add depth.
6. Keep equipment to a minimum. Look for sites where you can spend time in some comfort and become part of the environment. You may see more than if you are constantly on the move.
7. Tracking birds in flight is best done from tracks or open areas, which means you have to be ready to shoot at a moment's notice.
8. Remember the landscape itself. Wetlands are usually good settings. Position yourself so you are not photographing into the sun. Look around at the surrounding skyline. Get as close as possible to the birds so they aren't lost in the landscape in your photos.
9. If your camera allows, try experimenting with different settings, shutter speeds and exposure times. Consider using filters for dramatic cloud effects.
10. Take an extra roll or two of film, just in case.

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Flight Eco-File Wetlands in Town and Country



If we're not in fact entering a period of climate change, we're experiencing apparently increased climatic instability. The recent East Coast drought and more recent northern deluges are saying something.

This year's wettest spring on record in the UK came after a three-year drought, and has highlighted water shortage as a major social and wildlife issue likely to continue into the next century. For much of the world, an increasing shortage of water is a reality. This highlights the importance of wetlands as crucial parts of the water cycle.

In regions of the world such as the UK, population and land-use patterns have meant establishment of efficient drainage systems. These mean that rainfall is quickly channelled into drains, streams and rivers and floods out to sea without regenerating aquifers and water tables. Where wetlands have been destroyed, the water available to people and wildlife is lessened and puts pressure on what is available in reservoirs. In urban areas, natural vegetation is replaced by roads, large car parks and impervious structures which efficiently channel rainwater into stormwater systems (along with pollutants and sewerage).

In the UK, where water use is metered, there are real incentives for users to conserve water. Some of the conservation measures which have been suggested not only save the consumer money, but can have a positive benefit for the environment and wildlife. For example:

- diverting surface drainage water from factories, business and residential areas into "soakaways" or ponds which can have recreational uses and support wildlife;
- installing soak pits and underground storage on private sections to divert run-off from sewers and stormwater systems, help recharge groundwater, and provide alternative supplies for gardening and toilet flushing;
- installation of systems which recycle water from baths, showers and washbasins for use in toilet flushing, car washing and gardening.

Some water authorities in UK have instituted rebates for consumers employing some of these measures. There's

evidence that wildlife under pressure from disappearing habitat is quick to move into urban ponds and wetlands.

In rural areas, restoring large wetland systems helps recharge reservoirs and underground aquifers. In urban areas, water conservation measures which include saving rainwater, recycling household waste water and creation of ponds and smaller wetlands, improves the quality of the environment, eases pressure on water resources elsewhere and, in the long term, saves everyone money.

- Adapted from "Down the Plug-hole" by S. Pickering, in *Wildfowl and Wetlands*, Autumn 1998, No. 125, published by The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

Wetlands Ease Impact of Drought on Waterfowl Populations

Waterfowl populations respond to the cycles of drought and water abundance. Populations in North America plummeted to all-time lows in the drought years of the 1980s, but experts agree they have responded to a recent series of years with above-average rainfall.

Experts also agree that waterfowl have responded positively to wetland restoration work by Ducks Unlimited and others, as well as government programmes that provide habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

The July 1998 fall flight index from the US Fish and Wildlife Service forecast 84 million ducks would make the annual journey from northern breeding and nesting grounds to wintering areas in the southern US, Mexico and South America. This is down on last year's record fall flight of 92 million ducks. The lower numbers are the result of a dry winter and warm early spring on the prairies of the north-central US and south-central Canada where most ducks breed and nest.

"As long as there is adequate habitat in place, in wet years waterfowl are able to make up for losses in numbers," says Dr Bruce Batt, Chief Biologist at DU National Headquarters in Memphis. Optimum breeding habitat includes adequate water and cover.



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Wetland at Opiki, Manawatu. Photo: Alan Wilks.

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