

# Flight

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1999

ISSUE 99



**DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC.**

For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

# Stormwater Mallards of Manukau

by Nancy Payne

**M**anukau City is the fastest growing city in New Zealand. The Howick Ward is no exception, sprouting to the south at an alarming rate in the last four years.

As part of the solution to drainage problems associated with these large subdivisions, the local authority has combined an existing open stream with a number of stormwater ponds. This has created a wetland which enhances what might otherwise be raw new subdivisions and industrial development.

The wetland is within the Dannemora Estate. The Logan Carr Reserve and, to the east, the Kilkenny Drive Reserve combine to form a linear reserve which runs from Point View Drive down to the corner of East Tamaki Road and Dannemora Road. This forms a green belt of open space with walkways for the public.

The stream running through this begins in a patch of native bush at the top of the ridge and, interspersed with stormwater ponds, flows down through existing native bush and further plantings of both native and exotic trees.

The major pond is at the western end of Logan Carr Reserve and the ducks lost



**Solving an urban drainage problem creates an amenity for people and wildfowl.**  
Photo: Nancy Payne.

no time in discovering the area. The park adjoins a busy road and an extensive commercial area, under which the overflow from this drainage system is piped over a distance to the nearest arm of the Tamaki River.

A viable and attractive wetland has been developed within an extensively built-up area. The Manukau City Council supplied me with maps of the area which showed existing plantings and proposed plantings of native and exotic trees.

Contractors had constructed the wetland ponds. I was impressed with the work that had gone into an upper stormwater holding area. The walkways are well maintained and well used. When I visited, people of all ages were out walking - some with toddlers clutching

bags of bread with which to feed the ducks.

Waterfowl - mallards in particular - are very adaptable. They find a home on any piece of water, be it a drain, pond, lake, estuary or a stormwater pond. Their ability to find these places shortly after they have been created has been borne out in the Howick area.

Manukau City Council is to be congratulated on retaining a stream and developing wetland areas which can be appreciated and enjoyed by residents, including the new feathered arrivals.

*Urban wetland development need not be restricted to new subdivisions. On page 12 of this issue of Flight a plan to develop a wetland in an older part of Auckland is outlined.*



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# INSIGHT

Graham Gurr

President

Recently I had the great pleasure of meeting Tony Richardson, the Executive Director of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in UK (see page 8). He told me a story about the brown teal which were on display at the WWT Slimbridge centre. One day a staff member moved the brown teal to another enclosure but neglected to move the notice advising the public what the birds in the enclosure were. Because of the secretive nature of brown teal, it was six months before anyone realised that they had been moved.

The story loses something in the re-telling but speaks volumes about attitudes to brown teal. Everyone knows that they exist; some people can even tell you that they are almost extinct on the mainland but are on one of the islands in the Gulf. But that is about it. They are very secretive by nature and anecdotal evidence would suggest that there are more brown teal about than most people realise.

The fact remains, though, that brown teal are threatened. Predation on the mainland has kept their numbers declining since the turn of the century. The Great Barrier Island population is steady but not expanding. It could be wiped out by disease, a toxic spill or any one of a number of man-made or natural disasters.

But out of sight and out of mind, for most people. It's not an issue that they want to consider. Ducks Unlimited, through the brown teal recovery plan and captive breeding group, has tried to keep the plight of the brown teal and the possible solutions moving forward. To this end we have, with the help of Lottery funding, undertaken a feasibility study to re-introduce brown teal to the Chatham Islands. Even further out of sight, you might think. But the Chathams offer the best possibility of creating a separate and viable population which could ensure the continued survival of this unique species. DU is currently applying for funds to make this happen.

We'll keep you posted.



## SPECIAL FEATURES

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Stormwater Mallards of Manukau**

by Nancy Payne

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## 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: Smew at Slimbridge. Photo: Graham Gurr.*

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# OUR People



## MURRAY TAPP

A Life Member for over 20 years, Murray was born in Hamilton and now lives at Waipu with his wife Lois, also a Life Member. They have three sons.

Educated at Waikokowai Primary and Huntly High School, Murray spent his working life farming west of Whangarei where he developed 3,000 acres over 35 years and gained wetland experience building 30 ponds on the property, the largest of which covered over four acres.

Murray has now moved to a smaller unit. He served six years with the Hobson Acclimatisation Society and six years as a QEII representative. He has always had a great interest in conservation and introduced Kiwi Salvage to Northland. He has now established his own wetland consultancy company (see below), building and reinstating wetlands.



## GARY THOMSON

Gary will be familiar to readers from the Mana Island wetland development reported in the October 1998 issue of Flight. He has been a member of Ducks Unlimited for seven years.

Born in Pahiatua and educated at primary and secondary schools in Eketahuna, Gary now lives there with his wife Gaye. They have two sons.

Gary started his working life with an earthmoving contractor on projects all over the North Island. He farmed and started his own contracting business which he has devoted his time to for the past 35 years.

Clay bird and duck shooting, hunting, jet boating, tennis and motorcycle touring are among Gary's interests. Ten years ago he built a two acre pond on a friend's property which he has developed with planting. He has created in excess of 20 wetlands in Wairarapa, most in association with DU. His favourite saying: "You can move more dirt with your head than with a bucket."

## WETLAND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES:

### WETLAND VALUES ADD VALUE



*"Our aim is to give constructive and sound advice in the establishment, enhancement and further development of wetland environments."*

Elsewhere in this issue of Flight is evidence that wetlands have in the past been regarded as areas to be drained or filled in for agricultural or urban development in ignorance of their importance as unique ecosystems.

Wetland Development Services is the business of Murray Tapp and puts into practice Murray's long-held belief that with judicious planning, conservation and land production can be complementary.

For many years Murray Tapp has been concerned at the over-draining of land. He has taken every opportunity to encourage landowners to consider re-establishing and

enhancing remaining wetlands. He also encourages local councils and surveyors to consider the development of wetlands prior to subdivision of land.

Murray Tapp's work through his company promotes the belief that wetland development can enhance land values, provide a source of water for uses like stock watering, fire fighting, irrigation and recreation. Wetlands encourage populations of wildfowl and other wildlife to establish. Their aesthetics add to the quality of the environment and the richness of environmental ecosystems.

Through active involvement with organisations like the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, Murray Tapp brings added benefits to the services he offers, enabling him to facilitate the interaction of these groups and others within each project.



## 25th AGM - TOKAANU

A packed conference programme from Friday evening until midday Sunday is promised, including a bus tour and barbecue on Saturday and the chance of seeing blue duck in the wild. Saturday evening's after-dinner auction should have something for everyone, and donated items for this will be welcomed. We hope to see many of DU's "old hands" there to celebrate this 25th birthday and a nostalgic return to Tokaanu, July 23rd - 25th 1999.

Members are urged to book as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. Numbers are limited. Bookings can be made through Graham Gurr, DUNZ, P.O.Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland.

## PROJECT GRETEL

Jack Worth has taken up the job of convening Project Gretel which has, since 1974, been aimed at the recovery of New Zealand's grey teal population. Project Gretel was the very first project initiated when DU was formed in 1974.

Jack Worth was able back then to convince the DU Board of the value of the programme. There was a need to introduce DU to the New Zealand public through an interesting and unique project designed to assist waterfowl. The project aimed to increase the population of grey teal, estimated at the time to be around 20,000. It was decided to instigate a nest box scheme after the example of North American efforts with wood duck and the Australian chestnut teal nest box effort.

In the beginning, it was hoped that if the project could succeed in increasing the New Zealand grey teal population to 100,000, then it would be reasonable to approach the authorities to request that a small limit be allowed during the game season.

Project Gretel is now in its 24th year. Jack Worth is keen to refine the results to date on a scientific basis so the scheme's feasibility can be established. He is interested in establishing the number of nest boxes erected, the locality of each box, and the availability of people to service the boxes each year and report their findings.

Please write to Jack Worth with any details you can provide at: 151 Newcastle Road, Hamilton. (07) 846 3808.



Grey teal nest boxes on Pokeno wetland.

## TAWNY PORT

This is a special and not available to the general public. Produced by Rongopai Wines at \$15 a bottle, it will be on sale at the AGM at Tokaanu or, send your order to Rongopai Wines, P.O. Box 35, Te Kauwhata.

## RAFFLE

The annual DU raffle is selling well, but members are asked to return butts and money or unsold books now. The raffle closes on April 2 and will be drawn on April 16. Butts and books which are not returned cause problems for Dale Stevens in meeting Police requirements.



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### *A Unique Opportunity to Visit Mana Island*

DU has received a request from the DOC officer in charge of Mana Island to assist in the planting of the new wetlands (see *Wetland Development on Mana Island: Waikoko Wetlands*, in Flight 97, October 1998).

A maximum of six people (a boat load) would be required for either one or two days. Accommodation is available and those taking part would need to supply bedding and food.

A date will be set once expressions of interest have been received.

Phone William Abel, (04) 586 2752 (evening), Alan Wilks, (06) 304 9729, or Neil Candy, (06) 353 6132.

#### **MAKE THE DU PUBLICITY PAMPHLET WORK**

Included with your copy of Flight is the DU publicity pamphlet. Please don't throw it away. If you haven't a friend or neighbour who you can perhaps interest in becoming a member, leave the

pamphlet in a visible place at work or in the waiting room next time you visit the doctor or dentist.

DU really does need to raise public awareness of what we are now achieving.

#### **WELLINGTON CHAPTER**

William Abel is greatly encouraged. He has had an offer of help from a local member and is extremely grateful. Are there a couple more members in the Wellington region who would take an interest?

#### **MANAWATU CHAPTER**

The ever-popular clay shoot was held on Sunday March 28 at Julie and Neil Candy's property at Foxton. This was the annual Andy Tannock's Hunting and Fishing Miroku Shoot of 100 clays spread over two fields. Results will be published in the July issue of Flight.

# Blue Duck Conservation

**The past year has seen the best breeding season to date with nine ducklings reared by breeders around the country. More breeders had enjoyed success in breeding blue duck, and this follows from attendance at the workshop held in Palmerston North last year.**

Two of the successful breeding pairs were new pairs and produced ducklings. All of the ducklings have been hand reared or reared under bantams. This is a really good result for the Captive Breeding Programme.

There were two deaths, one at Otorohanga Kiwi House and another at Auckland Zoo. Both birds were old, one 14 and the other 15 years old.

#### **Breeding Results**

Peacock Springs	1
Hamilton Zoo	2
Palmerston North	1
Staglands	2
R. Langdon, hatched at Peacock Springs	3
Total:	9

The duckling being reared in Palmerston North has been sexed by Massey University, the DNA sexing being done using two feathers from the bird's wing. The cost of this operation is \$40, with the cost reducing as more birds are done.



**Peter Russell with a captive-bred blue duck. Photo: Manawatu Evening Standard.**

All the ducklings reared in the 1999 breeding season will be released onto Mt Taranaki early in the year 2000. Wild ducklings at fledging have been released on Taranaki this year and two broods have been swapped over from two different catchments.

The husbandry manual and Blue Duck Review should be completed by March and I have begun work on the Captive Management Plan, which I hope to have finished later in the year.

All in all it has been a very good year for our efforts to conserve blue duck.

- Peter Russell

#### **BLUE DUCK UPDATES**

- Successful blue duck breeding in the Apias (North-eastern Ruahine Ranges) has been followed up by a dispersal study by DOC staff. Radio

transmitters have been attached to eight juveniles and their movements monitored. One bird was located in four different catchments between March and June 1998.

- In the Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy, brood transfers of blue duck were planned for late summer to Taranaki. Further banding of monitored populations is planned for later in the year.
- In the Motueka area, year one of a blue duck survey has begun. While it is relatively easy to establish the presence or otherwise of blue duck in an area, determining exact numbers for comparison between areas and in different seasons is more difficult. A range of survey techniques includes walking, using kayaks, and helicopters.

*(Acknowledgement: Rare Bits. No. 31, December 1998. Department of Conservation.*

# The Brown Teal of Moturoa Island

from information supplied by  
**Paul Asquith,**

*Chairman, Moturoa Wildlife Committee*

**M**oturoa is one of many islands in the Bay of Islands. It has been privately owned by a group of 20 shareholders since 1968. In 1960 the island was formally gazetted as a Wildlife Refuge by the then owner. In 1995, the island received a Department of Conservation award.

Of the island's 140ha, some 45ha have been retired from grazing and fenced off with stock-proof fencing. The areas enclosed have been designated as "wildlife areas". They are generally all the cliff and steep faces and include several regenerating bush valleys. The remaining 95ha of the island is farmed, carrying some 1000 sheep.

Over the past 20 years or so, a wildlife management policy has been followed aimed at promoting and enhancing the wildlife areas. This has included planting over 40,000 native trees and shrubs and developing and extending wetlands which include four new ponds. Monitoring, eradication and containment of weeds is also in place.

The habitats for birds have been improved to enable the release of threatened or endangered birds. Releases



**Moturoa Island, Bay of Islands. Photo courtesy of Paul Asquith.**

have included North Island brown kiwi, brown teal, red crowned parakeet, banded rail and North Island saddleback.

A rat and stoat eradication programme was undertaken in 1993. Predator monitoring and control has continued since then. There are three permanent trap lines of double Fenn traps on the west of the island plus random dispersed traps and poison bait stations. The Island Managers' duties include regular checking of the traps and bait stations, and bait drops are made over wide areas around traps which are found to have rats in them. During last December and January, egg bait lines targeting stoats were laid out. Catches of rats and stoats from these and other trapping measures

have suggested that these predators are well under control. This is backed up by evidence over time of an increase in bird species like tui, grey warbler and silvereye, as well as waterfowl species.

In the report on bird and related activity on Moturoa for the year to January 1999, a section is devoted to brown teal. The island had three resident pairs of mixed banded (ex DU) and unbanded birds. The teal population includes one hybrid brown teal/grey duck male, dubbed a "great". It is unknown if this was raised on the island.

The breeding season showed good results, with the first hatching realising three broods of five ducklings each, and the second hatching giving two broods of four ducklings. The season gave a probable successful total of 20 fully fledged juveniles - similar to the previous year's results. The great fathered one brood which seemed not to show any evidence of hybrid characteristics.

Among other species established on the island, for example, are New Zealand pipit, Californian and brown quail, which have both bred again over the year.

The management of Moturoa Island are keen to buy or receive pairs of grey teal, scaup and shoveler. If you can help, please contact Paul Asquith, 56 Rothesay Bay Road, Auckland 10. Ph. (09) 478 3919, Fax. (09) 476 2375.



**Adult and four young teal, Orchard Pond, Moturoa Island. Photo courtesy of Paul Asquith.**

# Twitcher in the Hide

*Graham Gurr renews his acquaintance with blue duck at WWT Slimbridge...*

**W**hen three male blue duck were transferred to the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust National Centre at Slimbridge in UK in February 1997, the attendant publicity around the transfer, including articles in *Flight*, was such that I'm sure many of you would be interested to know how they had fared.

I had the dubious pleasure of the company of the blue duck in my warehouse before they departed for Slimbridge. Apart from the odd soft whistle and chirp, and the regular noise of duck poo hitting the tarpaulin protecting the floor, they said very little. But we formed quite a bond and when I was in UK last Christmas, I rang Slimbridge to see if I could check up on my old tenants. Tony Richardson, Director of WWT UK, invited me to visit on the following Saturday.

I slept in on the day and was an hour late leaving London to drive to Slimbridge. On the UK motorways I was somewhat surprised to find myself travelling at 70 miles per hour (the legal limit) and being overtaken by everything that moved.

Only a couple of hours late, I arrived at Slimbridge, down the proverbial English lane and across the Sharpness and Gloucester canal. Although Slimbridge at first sight looks like a building lot, they have received a very substantial grant from the UK millennium fund to build new facilities for both visitors and workers. These will add enormously to visitor interest (not to mention staff comfort).

I announced myself to the woman at the visitor entrance who informed Tony. After a short delay (I had arrived at the same time as another guest who was already somewhere in the depths of Slimbridge with my host) Tony arrived and invited me for coffee in the restaurant. There we talked of many things and about my reason for being there: the blue duck.

Sadly, one of the three had mysteriously died. But the others were breeding furiously, with the usual high percentage of infertile eggs. Despite the years of breeding behind them, Slimbridge are only holding their own with overall

numbers. Infertile eggs and sudden deaths from no discernible reason have kept the breeding programme just ticking over. Even sadder, from our point of view, was that when we sent the blue duck they had an imbalance of males. Last year's deaths and breeding has reversed the situation and they now have too many males.

After coffee, Tony took me to meet the wife of one of my boyhood heroes, the late Sir Peter Scott. In the study overlooking the lake where Scott had his studio, and did some of his best and most famous paintings, I met Lady Scott. As we sat in the studio I was introduced to the other guests who, that morning, were returning to Slimbridge the original painting by Scott which was used for Slimbridge's logo.

Surrounded by original paintings and memorabilia of a remarkable man, and in the company of one of the most charming women I have ever had the good fortune to meet, looking at what appeared to be half the world's population of tufted duck



*Tony Richardson with one of the young blue duck at Slimbridge.*





**A pochard - one of many species at WWT Slimbridge.**

through the picture window, my mind went totally blank. My contribution to the conversation was probably nil. Fortunately, Tony recognised the symptoms, made our goodbyes and took me off to more earthy matters.

First we visited the blue duck, which are kept away from the public display in a controlled environment to encourage them to do what comes naturally. The first pair shared an enclosure with a pair of smew - the first I have ever seen alive. The other blue duck, along with this year's breeding successes, were in a large enclosure with separate pens for the different species. The young blue duck were healthy and obviously used to humans, as they rushed to greet us.

My photographs do not do justice to the birds, as the light was rather dim, but I

have one of Tony with some young blue duck which to my mind is just right.

Tony and I discussed many things as he showed me around. There is an annual budget of seven million pounds, six million of which have to be raised every year. There is the problem of getting people interested in ducks. The main competition, as Slimbridge and the other WWT centres are finding, is from shopping malls and the great British pastime: shopping, which you can do seven days a week and 12 hours a day. Slimbridge is in serious danger of becoming an entertainment, which Tony had some interesting thoughts about.

Slimbridge has a series of hides which allows the public to move around unobserved by the wildfowl and sit in reasonable comfort while looking out at

the great mass of wildfowl which gathers at Slimbridge on what they call the "new grounds" each year.

From these hides we saw Bewick's swan and white-fronted geese as well as many other waders and local feral geese, including large numbers of Canada geese. I was also amazed to see pheasant wandering around just beside and close to the hides. Most of the hides had their resident bird watchers, armed with very high powered binoculars, eyeing the flocks of birds in the hope of finding one of the rarer specimens such as a lesser white-fronted goose. The discovery of just one, Tony assured me, would mean upwards of a thousand additional people through the gate. Such is the power of "Twitchers" in UK.

Sadly, Tony had to attend to other matters and left me after a couple of hours to explore Slimbridge on my own. The captive collection set out by regions of the world occupied me for the afternoon, as well as the problem of trying to take photographs in the low level light that is a winter afternoon in UK. By 3.30pm the light, as far as I was concerned, was gone. Although other people were walking around enjoying the collection by twilight, my available time was gone and I had to return to London.

My thanks to Lady Scott and Tony Richardson for making me feel so welcome. We look forward to welcoming them to our shores soon.

*Photos for this article by Graham Gurr.*



**Bewick's swan, white-fronted geese and other species on the New Grounds, Slimbridge.**

# Twitcher in the Hide

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*Tony Richardson with one of the young blue duck at Slimbridge.*



**A pochard - one of many species at WWT Slimbridge.**

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*Photos for this article by Graham Gurr.*



**Bewick's swan, white-fronted geese and other species on the New Grounds, Slimbridge.**

# "What a Hell of a Good Place ..."

by Mike Camm

**T**wo years ago, my wife Jane and I, following a lifelong urge to help preserve some New Zealand flora and fauna, purchased the back of a farm quickly establishing itself in regenerating bush at Ngunguru, east of Whangarei.

Contiguous with a DOC reserve, it met our criteria of providing a significant habitat area we could assist to recover, after years of indiscriminate grazing of the understorey.

We have recently left our Auckland house and are living in a caravan on the property. Life has taken on a new dimension - I think it's called paradise.

Of particular note was a swampy stream area that had for years resisted attempts to turn it into a hay paddock. With the help of a digger, we figured, we could return it to a wetland for native water birds.

Enter Murray Tapp of Ducks Unlimited. He took one look, waded a hundred metres downstream and said, "What a hell of a good place for a dam!"

January and February 1999 have seen the construction of the dam with a drop pipe outflow and 300mm base pipe including



**The back of the farm, quickly re-establishing itself in regenerating bush. Photo: Graham Gurr.**

butterfly valve, 30m flood spillway, preparation of the lake base and islands, and removal of the waterline vegetation. The total cost of the wetland development has been approximately \$20,000, including a contribution from DU of \$5,000.

Thanks to Murray, we will finish up with some 2.5ha of surface water, a variety of shallow water feeding zones and deep water flocking areas well suited to native brown teal once common in the area. We can't wait to shut the valve!

Again, thanks to Murray, the selected contractors -Leathwick Construction Co.

of Whangarei - were terrific. They were easy to work with and considerate and sensitive to the environment. Their real feel for the project added a certain something that contributed to the final quality of the result. Special thanks to John, Kevin and Bruce.



**Water, about a metre deep, filling the base of the lake after the machinery has done its bit. Photo: Mike Camm.**

# National Wetlands Centre Proposed

*On the eve of World Wetlands Day (February 2) a proposal for a national wetlands centre was floated by the Waikato Conservation Board.*

A national wetlands centre based in the Lower Waikato, where three of New Zealand's internationally recognised wetlands are located, would help implement objectives of the Government's recently released draft Biodiversity Strategy (see Flight Eco-File, page 15), says the Waikato Conservation Board Chairperson, Megan Balks.

The board is trying to generate interest in the scheme for the Waikato as a Millennium 2000 project and has

applied to the Millennium 2000 Project Committee for funding.

"Our ever-diminishing wetlands are crying out for a first class centre where people can learn about their importance, and the remarkable diversity of life which exists in them.

Megan Balks says New Zealand has successfully protected native forests over the past century, with national parks, forests and scenic reserves, and people relate easily to these areas because they can get out and walk around in them.

"Access to our wetlands is more difficult and they have a much lower profile because of that. Wetlands have long been considered waste areas and treated as dumping grounds."

The national centre would house static and live displays, and provide material for public information and research.

Although the board does not have a particular site in mind, somewhere near the main highway near Meremere or Te Kauwhata and the Whangamarino wetland is possible.

"A national wetlands centre here in the Waikato would be a great start in sharing New Zealand's knowledge of wetland management and would help meet the objectives of the draft Biodiversity Strategy, which notes the low level of public understanding of the special characteristics, values and vulnerabilities of freshwater biodiversity," Dr Balks says.

## Photography for Flight

Each issue of Flight publishes photographs to accompany articles and features. Photographs are also used on the front and back covers.

Additional photographs are required from time to time. Photographs of wetlands and waterfowl are sought for future issues and payment for suitable photographs used will be negotiated.

Send standard colour or black and white prints for consideration, or description of photographs able to be supplied, to:

Flight Editorial,  
73 Wood Street,  
Greytown.

## Selling Covenanted Land?

If you are selling land with a covenant on it, please notify the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust or the regional representative in your area.

The Trust needs to know who the new owners are so the representative can visit them and go through the covenant document and discuss ongoing management of the area.

Also, if you are the initial covenantor, your new address will be needed so the Trust can continue to send its newsletter and Trust information to you.

The Trust has over 20 years of its existence assisted landowners with foresight who wish to protect elements of New Zealand's unique landscape for future generations to enjoy.



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## MacMaster Trophy

### Mt Albert Grammar's

# Wetland Development in an Urban Setting

*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 and to Dr Steven Messerschmidt, new co-sponsor.*



**1999 Recipient:**  
**Hiona Intermediate School,**  
**Masterton**

The MacMaster Trophy and Grant for 1999 is to be awarded to Hiona Intermediate School, Masterton.

The school plans to build a viewing hide next to their wetland.

Mt Albert Grammar was the recipient of the MacMaster Memorial Trophy in 1998.

DU President Graham Gurr presented the trophy and cheque to the college last year. The development will be part of the curriculae for science and horticulture, designed to give students a better appreciation of wetlands and the vital role they play in our environment.

John Wright, HOD Science, prepared a submission in support of the college's application for the award. In this he said: "The winners, of course, will be our students, with the potential spin-off increasing the awareness of the importance of a wetland area in an urban setting". A condensed version of this highlights the rich learning opportunities the wetland presents for the college and its community:

Awareness of the value of biodiversity to the ecological stability of New Zealand is something Mt Albert Grammar's science teaching seeks to promote. We can readily focus on modified habitat (our farmland, neighbouring walkways, streams) but the urban setting limits opportunities to provide other accessible learning experiences to students.

The college's farm provides opportunities to develop a large number of habitats - one of which is a natural wetland/forested region near a stream. Preliminary development has been undertaken and the staff member responsible for Agriculture/Horticulture has developed

landscape plans with a wetland focus. Progress in development has been restricted by the time and money available.

Mt Albert Grammar participates in the "Trees for Survival" project and intends to further develop an area by the horticultural block to create an area representing some of New Zealand's natural biological communities.

Opportunities taken by pre- and primary school children to visit the college farm and take part in farm activities will be extended to include wetland visits.

The wetland development fits into the Junior Science programme (studying biological communities) and the Senior Biology programme (studying succession, ecological niche, habitat analysis, biodiversity, resource management). The wetland will add to facilities for helping students grow in their observational skills, appreciation and understanding of the importance of animal behaviour.

It is intended to advance the monitoring of the local habitats close to the college. This provides an immediate, real and engaging context for students. A long term database and analysis programme is to be developed. This will form part of students' immediate educational development and also as a link between the college, the local community and the local/regional authority. Information will be passed on to interested parties with the aim of reinforcing the links between them.

The college envisaged using the MacMaster Grant to undertake further planting and vegetative development. Physical development of the wetland is planned as a further stage.

## PREDATOR FILE

### Keeping the Pressure on Rats - Kapiti

The declaration of rat-free status on Kapiti Island was an important stage in the conservation of this habitat and the species on it. Removing predator rodents was a difficult and painstaking exercise. Making sure the eradication programme had really worked was also an involved business, as the survey undertaken in mid-1998 shows.

In April, bait stations, 1736 in all, were placed at 50m intervals along tracks in every catchment and along parts of the shoreline where there weren't already permanent bait stations. The stations were unbaited at first and then, in May, were baited with a smorgasbord of non-toxic baits reckoned to be attractive to all rats. Bait included "detex", soap, wax and white chocolate. Graw sticks were placed beside each station. Bait stations were checked and re-baited every 14 days until August.

The survey took four people eight days to check every station, working in pairs from opposite ends of the island. After 16,000 bait-station nights, no evidence of rodents was found. But regular monitoring of permanent bait stations on Kapiti and off-shore islands continues.

### Predator-proof Fencing

Trials of various predator-proof fence designs were made in DOC's Wellington Conservancy last year to identify designs for

predator-free areas in the Chathams. Fences able to exclude pigs, cats and weka were required. Electric fence options were excluded because of possible harm to sea birds. But feral cats were identified as the major predators the fences would have to combat.

The trials indicated that a fence of 2m in height was necessary, as cats have been able to jump and pull themselves over fences 1.8m high.

### Keep an Eye on Hedgehogs

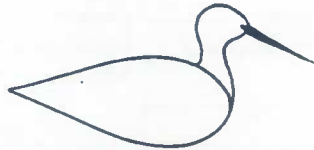
The listing of hedgehogs among serious bird predators runs counter to their generally benign image as useful animals to have around the garden because of the pests they eat. Evidence which further underscores the damage they can do to ground-nesting bird species comes from studies associated with the DOC Twizel Area Office Project River Recovery. Video surveillance of banded dotterel and black-fronted tern nests has caught ferrets, cats and hedgehogs preying on nests. Hedgehogs emerged as important egg predators, and autopsies on several hundred hedgehogs revealed some with down from chicks in their gut.

*(Items in this article adapted from Rare Bits. No. 31, December 1998. Department of Conservation.)*

# DRAWING: The Pied Stilt



Turn your page around to draw a drip from a pipe with a leak...



Now simply add on the neck, head, and a beak...



finish off with a pointed wing, long thin legs and feet

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

This bird (*Himantopus leucocephalus*) is also known as poaka or the white headed stilt.

It is black and white, 380mm from beak to tail, with a long black bill and very long red legs which extend well beyond the tail in flight. Both sexes are alike although the male is usually taller. It has a distinctive yapping call.

Pied stilts are easily recognised in flooded paddocks, swamps and coastal lagoons throughout New Zealand. Although they are rare on Stewart Island and the Chathams, this native also occurs in the Phillipines, Java to New Guinea and in Australia close to water.

Nesting in small colonies, usually surrounded by water, pied stilts lay one clutch of four oval brown-buff to olive eggs heavily marked with brown-black blotches. Both parents incubate and the eggs hatch after about 25 days.

The pied stilt is not to be confused with the black stilt which is totally black and is now one of the rarest wader species in the world.

Illustration republished courtesy of Alan Fielding.



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# &c.

Up until several issues ago, the list of Life Members was regularly published in the inside cover of Flight. This was suspended to allow the list to be updated, and it was again published in the January 1999 issue. Life Member Tom Pearman of the USA was omitted from the revised list. He has been a longtime supporter of DU and we apologise for the omission.

The New Zealand shoveler or spoonie has made its presence felt in Christchurch. Member Howard Egan supplied the following which was included in a Christmas card from friend John Truscott, an experienced wildfowler: "This month (December) the spoonies have arrived on the Bromley ponds, Christchurch, in large numbers. What a lovely sound they make when you flush about 500 birds. There would be approximately 3,000 to 4,000 here at present."

In A Trick to Growing Oaks (Flight, January 1999, page 10) Graham Gurr shared his experience of planting oak trees as a measure to enhance the environment and provide food for wildlife. The first sentence in the final paragraph should have read: "At the time of writing we have three-month-old [not nine-month-old] and less oaks which are already above the tops of the containers..."

The Saga of Quentin Quail began when, four or five months ago, three Californian quail appeared on the property of a Wairarapa member:

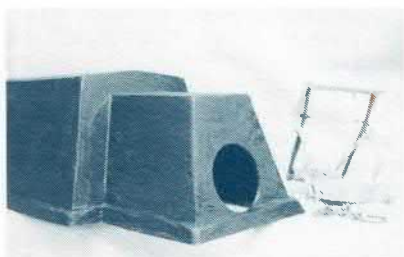
"Two cocks and a hen quail arrived. This was a delight, as we had never seen any on the western side of the main road where we are. Later, we saw the two cocks having a bit of a dust-up and the pair disappeared, leaving Quentin, as we named him, alone and plaintively calling for company. Next thing, he seemed to be spending a lot of time on our terrace looking at his reflection in the ranchslider. If it was open, he started to come inside, presumably looking for the one he'd seen.

"Has anyone else experienced this behaviour? Quentin is still around but has stopped visiting and calling. We feel sorry for him and wonder if naming him Anthony would have made a difference?"

## IN FLIGHT

# Shopping

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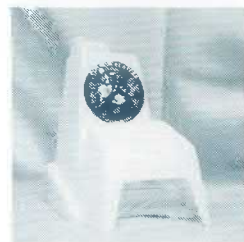
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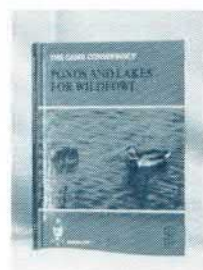
### ESSENTIAL READING

#### 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**





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*Flight* ECO-FILE Issues affecting wetlands and waterfowl around the world...

**Volcanic Island Wetlands**

Wetlands are not usual on emergent islands in the middle of oceans due to the absence of large rivers and remoteness from sources of colonisation by continental wetland flora and fauna. But several small wetlands on the inhospitable shores of nine Portuguese islands of the Azorean Archipelago are examples which illustrate the natural tenacity of wetlands as well as their uniqueness within an overall habitat. The wetlands have developed within recorded history, including one which has formed in a quarry, each developing as a habitat quite different from that of the surrounding rocky coastline terrain. Where there has been interaction between marine erosion and wave action and freshwater seepage from the mountains behind, lagoons have formed, colonised by seagrass and prawns, algae and flies. They are used by resident and migratory birds for feeding and resting.

The former quarry, a little over a decade old, has filled by seawater percolation and natural groundwater. Plants and animals have colonised it, seeds being blown there by the wind, and animal life being brought by birds (gulls, terns, waders) frequenting the remote location.

These Azorean wetlands are biological gems in a biologically uniform scene of black lava shores and pounding seas, focuses of high levels of biodiversity. The danger is that they will suffer the fate of wetlands world-wide - unappreciated for what they are, considered to be wastelands ripe for draining and development.

(Adapted from Brian Morton, "Wetlands on Volcanic Islands in the Ocean", in *About Life*, magazine of World Wide Fund for Nature, Winter 1998.)

**Wetlands Consciousness Rising**

During recent years, the ongoing degradation of wetlands and non-sustainable use of natural resources has developed alongside new global issues: the global water crisis, desertification, climate change and the loss of biodiversity. There is a growing awareness that wetland conservation has a vital role to play in addressing all of these mega-issues, and we can be confident that the new millennium will see wetlands rise even further on the global agenda.

A number of clear trends emerged during the Daka Wetlands Conference in November, 1998. Among governments, decision-makers and donors, there has been a rapid rise in awareness of wetland values - notably in the high level activity among the international conventions. Today, these conventions provide many of the guidelines and tools for wetland conservation. However, the reality is that inadequate institutional structures, lack of trained personnel and inadequate funds are greatly constraining the implementation of these tools in most countries.

Institutional and resource constraints on wetland conservation are more severe in Africa where there is graphic evidence of devastating



results of the degradation of wetlands, especially for those depending on them for livelihoods. The example of the Lake Chad Basin, involving Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, where water levels have dropped by 90% in the last 20 years, is a salutary lesson to all. But this is balanced by examples of how management of wetlands by local communities provides perhaps the greatest opportunity for sustainable development.

(Adapted from *Wetlands* - Newsletter of Wetlands International, January 1999, No. 6.)

**Introduced Threats to New Zealand's Biodiversity**

The Department of Conservation's "New Zealand's Biodiversity Strategy: Our Chance to Turn the Tide", released in January this year, identifies introduced species which have now become pests as the major threat to this country's declining biodiversity.

A report on the draft government plan (Dominion, January 20, 1999) noted that invasive introduced species pose a greater threat than loss of habitat through development, agriculture and logging.

The most damaging animal pests are identified as possums, goats, deer, rats, stoats and feral cats, along with some 200 invasive weed species harmful to native plants and trees.

The New Zealand record of lost plant and animal species is one of the world's worst, including loss of over 30% of indigenous land and freshwater birds, nearly 20% of sea birds, up to 50% of frog species and possibly 11 plant species. The report noted that around 1000 of New Zealand's known animal, plant and fungi species are considered to be threatened.

This record could easily be worsened by the unwanted arrival of species like Asian gypsy moth, mosquitoes, and harmful marine organisms.

Restoration of ecosystems and efforts to preserve a representative range of habitats are among approaches recommended to manage species and habitats.



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*Mute swan and cygnets, bred at Broadlands Wildfowl Trust. Photo: David Johnston..*

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