

Flight

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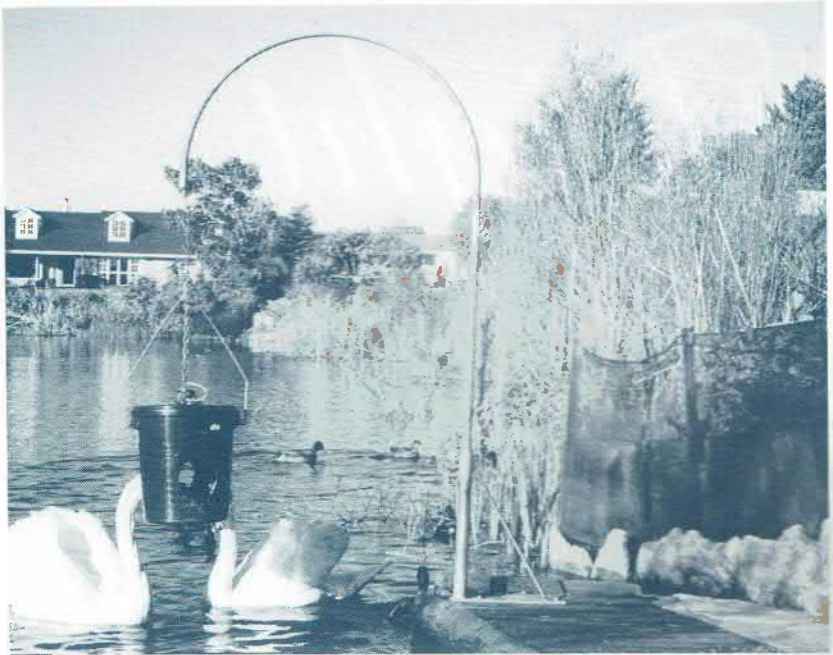
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SWAN FEEDER

Pictured is an example of a swan feeder being used in the care of mute swan at Edythe Kerr's Takaka property. The feeder (a plastic rubbish bin with holes in the sides, suspended with chain attached to a firmly anchored pipe stand) has the advantage of being low enough for the swan but too high for mallards. Edythe says that the swan readily eat from the feeder and return several times during the day to feed.

(Photo: Edythe Kerr.)



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By Di Pritt

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INSIGHT

Craig Worth
President

My father joined me up as a foundation member of Ducks Unlimited back on day one. He made me save my pocket money each year to renew my subscription, as well as work on the numerous working bees we had in the early days erecting grey teal nesting boxes all around the countryside. So, as you can see, dedication to "DU" was almost bred into me.

I also hold the strong belief that you should never criticise an organisation unless you are prepared to put in some time and effort to do the best you can to put things right. Realising that DU had gone through a very difficult patch, and not completely understanding why, when the opportunity came to join the Board in July '96 I welcomed my appointment. I was appointed Treasurer in '97 and then Vice-president in '98.

Being the Treasurer I have always had to be involved in many of the projects DU has undertaken in the past few years, even if it is only paying the bills. But I have a fairly good knowledge of what is happening around the country, i.e., which contractors we are using on what projects and when the projects have been completed. I have also learned that different parts of the country have different project requirements from others.

I am looking forward to continuing the good work of this organisation over the next two years in my new position as President. Two things of importance that come to mind are (and you as members could help) membership and fundraising. All voluntary organisations such as ours rely heavily on membership. Small things like handing on your Flight magazine to somebody else after you have read it, or dropping it off at your local doctor's waiting room, are good ways in which to widen our profile and attract new members, and publicise the often unsung work DU and its members do. In this latter respect, I extend our congratulations to member Kerry Oates on his receipt of a conservation award and draw your attention to two instances elsewhere in this issue where our participation in wider conservation efforts was unfortunately overshadowed.

Finally, this year's Annual Conference and AGM is to be held at the Lakeland Hotel, Taupo, where we have ample accommodation for all within the function centre. We have also organised a visit to Lochinver Station. The weekend promises to be as challenging and enjoyable as ever and I would encourage all to attend.



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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: Punakawa wetland, Takaka, Golden Bay, New Zealand.
Photo: B. Butts.*

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Gus Smith

A member of DU since 1974, this oldtimer was born in Marton and lives with his wife Anita in Palmerston North. They have two children, Lisa and Bradley.

Gus was educated at Rangitikei College and Manawatu Technical and graduated with a business diploma and worked on the family farm before joining an insurance company. In 1977 he took what he intended would be a temporary job as a traffic officer, and 21 years later retired to concentrate on the dairy farm he and Anita had bought in Wairarapa in 1990. On the farm is an oxbow which they have fenced and planted and into which they have diverted a small stream.

Gus has been involved with DU and the Wellington Acclimatisation Society in bringing Canada geese to the North Island.

Becoming bored without a fulltime job, he began working as an adviser in insurance and investment, having come full circle from his original job. Gus says he has accomplished his life's ambition: happily married, owning a farm with good duck habitat and being part of DU.



Bob and Joan Butts

The opportunity to meet people with similar interests, learn about pest control and access advice on wetlands and waterfowl were some of the reasons Bob and Joan Butts of Takaka, Golden Bay, joined DU two years ago.

In the past 24 years, Bob has worked as a polytechnic tutor, insurance assessor and managing director of a fishing company. Joan has had a career as a radiographer and worked for a fishing company. The couple have two grownup daughters and describe their interests and hobbies as amateur fishing, landscaping (especially with native trees), developing water gardens, travel, food and wine.

As the feature article on pages 8 - 9 illustrates, they have translated their love for natural environment and wetlands into a picturesque wetland complex on their Takaka property.

Blue Duck Conservation Work Recognised

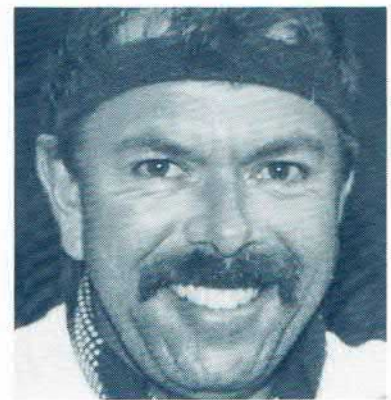
DU member Kerry Oates has received a Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Award for his outstanding conservation effort towards the conservation of the natural, historic and cultural resources of the Central North Island.

The award was presented to Kerry in December.

Presenting the award, Department of Conservation Biodiversity Officer Cam Speedy praised the passion and commitment, as well as thousands of hours Kerry had devoted over time to the study of blue duck. Cam Speedy was quoted in the *Ruapehu Bulletin* report of the presentation function as saying, "Kerry's work has increased our understanding of this shy rapid water bird and provided valuable data for the department's negotiations with Genesis Power over water consents for the Tongariro Power

Development Scheme. In addition, Kerry, through his wildlife management company, has facilitated a successful kiwi management and research programme."

Kerry featured in the January 2000 issue of *Flight* with an article on his work with endangered blue duck in the central North Island. He has been involved in many bird projects and predator eradication throughout New Zealand and overseas. Although on leaving school he pursued a career in art and design, Kerry joined the Ornithological Society in 1986 and was elected Chairman of the Wellington branch in 1988. He did voluntary work for DOC and visited many remote offshore islands. In 1986 he began his study of blue duck on the Manganui a te ao River. In 1996 he pursued his passion for blue duck research and secured private sponsorship (to which DU contributed) for a 12 month predator trapping programme and moved to Ohakune. In



1997 he formed his own environmental consultancy/contracting business, Whakamanu Wildlife Management, specialising in endangered species protection. He is currently working with kiwi in an exotic forest. He lives in Ohakune with partner Clarice Brown.



WHAT WALLOWES IN THE WAIRARAPA WETLANDS

To celebrate World Wetlands Day and the launch of the Lake Wairarapa Action Plan, DOC organised a field day on 12 February. Over 70 people gathered at the Kahutara Hall where there were displays by DOC, Fish & Game and local iwi. Then the participants were taken on guided walks around Boggy Pond and Matthews Lagoon before returning to the hall for a barbecue lunch of venison sausages, goose, duck, eel and flounder.

MARKING THE DAY IN PALMERSTON NORTH

Two visual displays were features of activities marking World Wetlands Day in Palmerston North. In the Square plaza was a joint Regional Council, DOC and Fish & Game display dealing with local wetlands, their flora and fauna and history. The Environmental Education section of the Palmerston North City Council mounted a display in the foyer of their Customer Services reception. This focused on the values and disappearance of wetland ecosystems and individual efforts to reverse the problem.

HAMILTON CHAPTER DINNER

The Glen View Hotel, Ohaupo, will be the venue for the Hamilton Chapter dinner and auction on 28 April from 6.30pm. Tickets for the dinner at 7pm are \$35 each. Auction items would be appreciated. To book, contact: Fiona (07)846 1975 or Michelle (07)89 3346.

MANAWATU CHAPTER

A display stand was provided by the Manawatu Chapter for the Woodville A&P Show on 8 January. The stand created public interest and helped to promote awareness of the work of DU.

Another day was held at the Rangitikei Racing Club meeting on 19 February at Awapuni. These successful promotions were due to the efforts of Neil and Julie Candy and Peter Dobson.

KEN COOK



Pictured above is Ken Cook (*right*) being presented with a miniature decoy by Manawatu Chapter Chair Neil Candy in recognition of his services as a director and member of the DU Wetlands Committee. The presentation acknowledged the commitment and expertise Ken has brought to Board meetings and the many hours spent travelling at his own expense to inspect and advise on wetland developments. Even though Ken has retired from his official positions with DU he is still giving valuable advice on request. (Photo: P. Budding)

BLUE DUCK REPORT

The Blue Duck Release on Mt Taranaki

I went with Tim Holmes and Dean Caskey from DOC to Hamilton Zoo to attach the transmitters to the zoo's four blue duck. This was to save time on

the day of the release. We also fitted transmitters to my five birds at the Esplanade aviary in Palmerston North and went down to Staglands to fit the two blue duck there.

On 26 January, the day of the release, John Simister from Staglands arrived at my place and then we loaded the seven blue duck and headed off for Stratford and Egmont National Park. We met Tim Holmes and Dean Caskey, who will be the main person responsible for monitoring the birds, at the Stratford DOC office where we waited for Peter Schmidt to arrive from Hamilton Zoo with his four birds.

When all the birds for release had been assembled, we waited for the helicopter in the car park. The helicopter was to fly us up to the release site on Mt Taranaki. At the release site, the local iwi blessed the birds and the release proceeded. After checking that all the transmitters were working, each lot of birds was released.

It was a great thrill to see the blue duck swimming in the fast current. Some got out of the water as soon as they hit it. I shot some video footage of the birds being released and their activity at the release site. We spent quite some time watching them before we started to walk out. All in all, a really great day.

Ducklings

What a great breeding season we have had this time around, with more breeders producing ducklings than ever before. It has been gratifying to see the figures, which are double last year's:

Esplanade Aviary	8
Hamilton Zoo	5
Staglands	2
C. Allison	1
Peacock Springs	1
R. Langdon	1
Total	<u>18</u>

Peter Russell

Blue Duck Captive Breeding Co-ordinator

WHERE WAS DU?

Some members will have seen the TV1 news item on 26 January, and subsequent media publicity covering the release of 11 blue duck on Mt Taranaki.

The local iwi was there to bless the birds and a DU crate came into shot during the television item. Much was made of the fact that they were captive bred birds, but no mention was made of the fact that they had come from the DU Captive Breeding scheme.

There has been some comment from members about this apparent omission of any mention of DU's role in what was a significant milestone in a long-standing conservation effort. During the 98-99 year, DU offered to contribute \$2,000 toward DOC's Blue Duck Research Programme, which did not eventuate, and subsidised a workshop run by Captive Breeding Co-ordinator Peter Russell with \$1,500. The result of that workshop and Peter's efforts have seen a doubling of the number of birds bred this season compared with a year ago, and an all-time high for the scheme with the 18 birds raised in one season.

As he reports above, Peter Russell played a role in the release. He was conscious of a cameraman videotaping the exercise and conducting interviews with some of those involved, including the DOC staff. It appears that the footage was sent to the television news room where the edited selection which screened was made. It was unfortunate that what went to air omitted the credit due to DU and the Captive Breeding Programme and, in the event, downplayed DU's role in the partnership in conservation with DOC and other agencies involved.

DROUGHT BESETS FIELD TRIP

A field trip organised by the Manawatu Chapter on 6 February saw 33 members travel by bus to Bud and Liz Jones's property north of Eketahuna. Jim Campbell and Alan Wilks joined the party at Eketahuna where Bud explained how, since 1983, he had changed the property from a sheep and cattle operation to a haven for wildfowl. Numerous wetlands have been created and thousands of trees planted.

The party walked for an hour in somewhat breezy conditions between wetlands, mostly through trees. Bud commented that it was like looking at a cathedral from the inside rather than the outside.

Over the years Flight has recorded what Bud has achieved, but the party was impressed by what they saw at first hand of this magnificent conservation effort.

The field trip moved next to Jim Campbell's Rameslie property north of Masterton where five more Wairarapa members joined the party. Transported by ute, the party drove out to Jim's back wetland and The Lodge to be welcomed by Raana Campbell. After an excellent barbecue provided by the Manawatu members, Jim led a walk around the wetland arriving back at The Lodge for coffee and in time to see Prada win the right to challenge New Zealand for the America's Cup.


The climate of opinion was that Manawatu Chapter Chair Neil Candy and his team had organised a successful event on a day on which nobody got wet, even though the previous two planned trips had been rained out.



Trees are a feature of the Jones' wetland development at Eketahuna. Photo: Alan Wilks.



A haven for wildfowl. Photo: Alan Wilks.



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Wetland Conservation Awards

As part of a World Wetlands Day celebration marking the international convention on wetlands conservation, signed at Ramsar, Iran, 29 years ago, Minister of Conservation Sandra Lee made awards to seven outstanding native wetland restoration projects on 2 February.

"Wetlands are seen as a bit of a poor cousin to our more charismatic native species like the kakapo and kiwi. However, New Zealand's wetlands are valuable ecosystems that support a multitude of life and are an essential part of our country's unique biodiversity," Sandra Lee said. "The projects highlighted through these awards give us a glimpse of the community commitment to restoring and managing our wetlands and the wildlife they contain. The people behind these projects are working hard to conserve wetlands, so that they are healthy natural areas that will be appreciated by generations to come."

Sandra Lee said that the variety of projects receiving awards showed the full range of efforts necessary for New Zealanders to help protect this important aspect of our biodiversity.

DU unsuccessfully nominated Jim Campbell for his long involvement with conservation and work on Mana Island.

From north to south, the awards were presented to:

- Waipa District Council for its restoration of the Lake Ngaroto wetland
- Keith Thompson of Hamilton for his lifetime contribution to wetland research, education and management
- Environment Waikato for its promotion to landowners of the value of wetland conservation
- Taranaki Regional Council for its extensive restoration programme for regionally significant wetlands and for the assistance that it provides for others to manage their wetlands
- Ray Bushell of Tauranga for his personal labours in managing the Kaituna Wildlife Management Reserve
- Tauranga District Council and the Matua Saltmarsh Committee for acquiring and managing the Matua salt marsh
- The Travis Wetland Trust for its work in establishing and managing the Travis Wetland Nature Heritage Park in Christchurch.

Pukepoto School's Efforts Rewarded

The January issue of Flight reported that the MacMaster Trophy and grant had been awarded to Pukepoto School near Kaitiaki. Unfortunately it was not possible for a DU representative to be present at the formal presentation of the trophy and grant in November last year. In the event, the presentation was made by Board of Trustees Chairperson Queenie (Elizabeth) Lazarus and accepted by three year six students on behalf of the school. The event was reported in the Northland Age in an article headlined "A Final Boost from Ducks Unlimited".

The article noted that over two years of effort on the part of the students has created an educational resource of enormous value at the school's doorstep. "Principal Bill Wilkin has always been enthusiastic about the project and the value of the scheme has now been recognised by Ducks Unlimited New Zealand..."

Of the grant, Bill Wilkin is quoted as saying, "It's just what we needed to finish the job off," and that the students were justifiably proud of the efforts and keen to learn what the wetland had to teach them.

DU has recently received a certificate of appreciation from the school and a letter from Principal Bill Wilkin acknowledging the award and an accompanying costing of the purchase of a variety of native shrubs, sedges and ground cover species to enhance the wetland. The school intends to erect some seating around the wetland so that, in Bill's words, "All and sundry can sit and meditate about 'once the wilderness'" and the school wishes to install a plaque on the main seat recognising DU and the MacMaster Award. Pukepoto School, with a roll of 140, has an area of pasture divided into four paddocks which is used by a farming committee to run beef cattle to be killed for fundraising. The school levies



Pukepoto School BOT Chair Queenie Lazarus and students with MacMaster Trophy. Photo courtesy Bill Wilkin.

no school fees and students do not pay for their basic stationery.

Because the Pukepoto students are involved in beautifying the grounds, they take a pride in their environment and the school experiences little or no vandalism. Some past students have had their wedding photos taken in the grounds and others

often ask how "their" trees are growing. Bill Wilkin's comments are heartening: "Government and ministers say a lot about our environment but do little, if anything, to really help. We are left to our own devices and without the assistance of organisations such as yours schools would be much poorer places."

PREDATOR FILE

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT FERRETS?



"While a great deal of research has not been undertaken in New Zealand on the impact of ferrets on conservation values, that which has been carried out demonstrates that they are a major predator and their impact is likely to have been underrated."

The New Zealand Conservation Authority* has made a strong call for the keeping of ferrets as pets to be banned in a submission to the DOC discussion document "What can we do about ferrets?" The Authority was concerned that the discussion document restricted the range of likely responses by structuring the options towards a management option, rather than offering the alternative of banning ferrets outright as a serious pest and a major factor in the rapid decline of bird species.

The Authority expressed strong opposition to the sale or keeping of ferrets for any purpose because of their impact as major predators of our native birds. Several local bodies are seeking to have ferrets declared as pests under their regional pest management strategies. The Authority called on DOC to show similar leadership.

Recorded predation of flightless birds has included kiwi at Waikaremoana and in Northland, weka in Coromandel, little blue penguins and royal albatross chicks in Otago, brown teal in Northland, and white flippered penguins on Banks Peninsula. Ferrets' impact on such species is national. Other affected species include sooty shearwater and other ground-nesting seabirds, shore-nesting birds, and ground-nesting land birds, including banded dotterel, banded rail and stilt. Besides taking mature and young birds, ferrets also take the eggs of nesting birds. A MacKenzie Basin study of nests of black-fronted terns, banded dotterels, and black stilts from 1994 to 1999 showed that ferrets are a major predator of eggs, second only to cats, and responsible for 22% of egg loss.

In December 1999, the first Operation Nest Egg kiwi to reach the stage of incubating an egg in the wild was predated by a ferret.

Ferrets are present in most of New Zealand and their range is expanding. The Authority's submission cited strong circumstantial evidence that ferrets are a major factor in the contraction of the kiwi range, especially in Northland. The escape or release of ferrets from fitch farms in

southern Northland in the 1980s saw a dramatic decline in kiwi and other birds in places in which there were ferret sightings. Adults as well as chicks were being predated.

Recent sightings of ferrets in the highest, wettest forests of Northland disprove traditional wisdom that ferrets do not occur in areas of high rainfall and little pasture.

The Authority has sought a review of the Wildlife Regulations and internal biosecurity procedures to, in part, create an opportunity to have ferrets declared a pest species.

[From submission of the New Zealand Conservation Authority, 15 December 1999, DOC Internet Website.]

*The New Zealand Conservation Authority, chaired by Sir Duncan McMullin, is a statutory body established under the Conservation Act. Its membership is broadly representative of the New Zealand community, including Maori and those with special interests in public conservation lands, including tourism, local government, conservation and recreational groups.

Restoring Wetland Habitat:

PUNAKAWA

Golden Bay is renowned for its estuaries but many of the region's wetlands have been drained. Bob and Joan Butts bought a 25 hectare dairy farm in Golden Bay in 1976. The property, Punakawa (Ceremonial Springs), is on the main road between Takaka and Pohara Beach on the road to Abel Tasman National Park and surrounds the Motupipi Estuary, a clean and beautiful estuary with what they describe as wonderful plant and bird life.

The Butts had been in the fishing industry since moving to Golden Bay. They bought the property as a lifestyle block. At the time there were no four hectare sections available (five years later they became a common feature of Golden Bay) so they had the luxury of not having to make the land produce income and didn't bring the land up to its full potential as a farmer would have. They actually realised the value of the estuary as a fish nursery. Most farmers saw ponds and swamps as lost productive land. Probably the only ones who were pleased they owned the farm were DOC.

Their house was built 22 years ago on a limestone rocky outcrop overlooking the southeast arm of the Motupipi Estuary. From there they can see beyond Pohara Beach out to Golden Bay and Farewell Spit. They've used a lot of local stone in and around the house and cut Takaka marble slabs for terraces and steps. The house is approached down a drive through an avenue of silver birches and passing the ponds so that they get to enjoy the ponds and bird life every day.

The Butts resisted damming and reclaiming the estuary. They fought hard for years to protect it from pollution from dairy farm effluent, dump leachates and soil erosion from subdivisions. Although they initially drained some of the swamps on the farm, the Butts are now slowly restoring them. These areas are not particularly viable for farming and have more future value as bird and fish habitat.

The first pond on the property was excavated 20 years ago. Bob intended it to be a duckshooting spot close to their home. Their daughters fed, tamed and named all the ducks. Then they threatened anyone with guns who went near the pond. Duckshooters were dispatched to the estuary where there are hundreds of paradise ducks.

As the original pond shape and bank tapers were unnatural, after much planning and investigation of levels it was extended into the existing low swamp areas that had been previously drained. It is now a large ornamental lake with Canada geese, black swan (courtesy of Wairarapa DU supporter Melvin Pike and released in January 1999), mallards, greys, white and grey heron and



Aerial view of the Butts' Punakawa wetland. Photo: B. Butts.

paradise duck (one pair has been resident for 17 years). The geese and swan have decoyed in many more Canada geese, a lone scaup and a passing Cape Barren goose. There are many varieties of shag which visit and too many resident pukeko. The weka population unaccountably died out suddenly seven years ago. Weka were once common all through Golden Bay, but are rare now.

The estuary supports a population of fern birds, bitterns, rails, and a family of hawks, and recently the Butts saw their first long-tailed cuckoo.

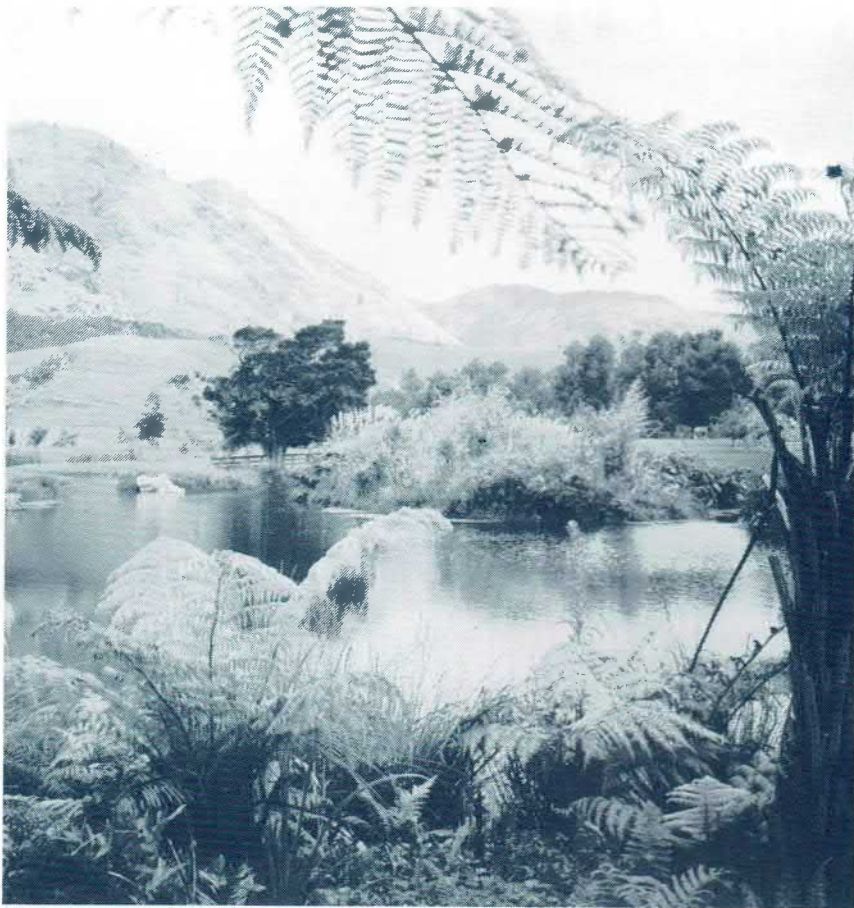
Shining cuckoo, tui, wood pigeon, kingfishers, fantails and so on are common.

Many other local property owners are planting to attract bird life.

There are many small springs on the property and the lake is fed by a large spring on the boundary. With a high annual rainfall there is no problem with water flow through the ponds. During excavation, islands were left for breeding sites. The Butts have caught whitebait and small fish in the nearby creeks and put them into the ponds to control insect larvae.



Excavation of wetland extensions. Photo: B. Butts.



Hundreds of punga and ferns were planted. Photo: B. Butts.

The lake has a large eel population which re-establishes even after the pond has been drained completely and allowed to dry. Because the eels prey on the ducklings, they are caught regularly using fyke nets. The netted eels are left in drums in the spring to clean out and are enjoyed by local Dutch neighbours and their friends as a delicacy. Stoats and ferrets are controlled using Fenn mark 6 traps and tunnels as well as a

shotgun, and Talon baits are put out for rats. There's probably a secondary kill with stoats eating poisoned rodents. A pet West Highland terrier is a good hunter.

The lake cost in the region of \$8,000 all up, plus plants. The Butts have planted 3000 flaxes and over 1500 natives. While they have tried everything, the most successful have been coprosma, all pittosporum, whitey wood, kowhai,

ngaio, ake ake, cordyline and flaxes especially cookianum and the large native flax on the dry ground. For the wet areas raupo, flax, carex sector, toe toe, aurum and canna lilies and all types of water iris have been planted. The Butts planted numerous water lilies but the swans upended them in the winter to eat the roots. Only the large hardy ones in water over a metre deep have survived.

As sheep are grazed around half of the lake, care has gone into choosing "sheep proof" plants including large numbers of oaks of all types for acorns to feed the ducks in the future. They've all been fenced and the swan and geese graze these areas. As well, numerous willows have been planted, including many ordinary green weeping, golden weeping, and basket willows for bright yellow trunks in winter, and a single tortured willow.

Using their own resources, three smaller ponds were excavated in 1999. Although they don't have much cover yet, already they are attracting the birds. These ponds cost \$3000 to dig, with another \$1000 per pond for the drainage system.

All of the ponds can be drained for maintenance purposes - mainly for edge plantings or construction of overflows. Usually the levels are lowered to half height to conserve fish life but complete drainage is possible. The water levels can be adjusted at will. There is no problem with seepage as excavation was done down to blue clay and potential leakage areas were plastered with blue clay by the digger.

The Butts' next project is to re-establish the wetlands at the back of their property as naturally as possible. A neighbour has established a new pond of approximately 3000 square metres and other farmers in the area have shown an interest as well.



Water lilies flourish in an extension to the Punakawa wetland. Photo: P. Hide.

GREYTOWN TO LITTLE ROCK

While deer stalking on Stewart Island a couple of years ago, Greytown DU member Roger Brooks met a young American visitor, David Kell. He and a friend, Steve Playle, took David under their wing and hosted him in Wairarapa, showing him the sights, including some duck hunting. Last year David suggested a four week trip to the States which would only cost them air fares to Arkansas with everything provided once they got there. Needless to say they jumped at the opportunity. This is the story of a return of hospitality.

Roger and Steve left New Zealand on 10 November. They were met by David at Little Rock airport and immediately set off to tour through Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico, covering some 2,000 kilometres in two days.

They visited the Grand Canyon, saw white-tailed and mule deer and elk in the wild and passed an Indian reservation in a scrubby arid area where the Indians had been pushed away from the good land by the settlers and were now living in squalor. In Kansas, a large cropping state, they saw vast irrigation systems still at work due to the very dry autumn. By the time they returned to Little Rock they had covered over 5,000 kilometres.

Accommodation at Little Rock was a cabin at Poplar Bluff on the Black River. They geared up for nearly three weeks of duck hunting. The licence fee was US\$102, including a US\$20 premium for nonresidents, so Roger is not complaining about the cost of a New Zealand licence.

After leaving the cabin at 5am on the first morning of shooting, they drove out to the David Donaldson Management Area, a 4,000 hectare man-made wetland of flooded trees, where they boarded a boat for a 20 minute upriver trip. As the water level was three metres lower than usual, they then walked from the river over to the Management Area where another boat took them up what is called a slew, twisting and turning through the flooded trees to their shooting area where they arrived at 6am. There was not a duck to be seen.

They repeated this every day for nearly three weeks, and for a start the number of birds was average. Then, when it snowed hundreds of kilometres away and covered the feeding grounds, the birds flocked in.

Allowed to shoot 6.30am to noon and to take only four mallards per day, the party had their limit by 9.30am. Once shooting stopped, the birds came in their hundreds, bumping into each other as they landed. One evening from their cabin they enjoyed the spectacle of seeing the sky black, whichever way they looked, with thousands of snow geese migrating south.

Roger and Steve were intrigued to see game wardens, fully armed with revolvers and batons,



Grand Canyon tour parties. Photo: Roger Brooks.

patrolling the wetland. A short distance from where they were shooting someone with a guide licence had leased an area for an unknown amount and, providing food and accommodation, was hosting between 15 and 18 shooters a day for the two-month season at US\$300 a head per day. Another example of commercialised hunting

was a thousand hectares of flooded harvested rice fields leased for the season for US\$10,000.

One of the highlights of the trip was attending the Ducks Unlimited Brookings Chapter dinner and auction on 27 November. Similar to a DUNZ dinner, only much larger. It was held in a vast marquee catering for some 400 guests.



Duck hunting party. Photo: Roger Brooks.

The auctions, both live and silent, were similar to ours but the prices were very different with shotguns selling or being raffled for up to US\$2000 each. Roger could not imagine how much money was raised. He was delighted to be awarded a DU hat for travelling the furthest to attend the dinner and at the end of the evening a committee member stripped off his Brookings Chapter T-shirt and gave it to him as a memento. Roger had taken half a dozen DUNZ beanie hats with him on the trip which he gave to people who had extended hospitality. The hats were greatly appreciated.

Roger returned to New Zealand on 18 December and now looks back on a wonderful experience filled with many cherished memories.

Roger Brooks (right) and Steve Playle standing where the borders of four states (Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico) meet.



Stoats: Ecoterrorists on Stewart Island ?

The discovery of stoat footprints on Stewart Island in December has helped to substantiate anecdotal reports of stoat sightings over several years. Stewart Island suffers from rats and wild cats but until now it has been thought to be free of stoats which are New Zealand's worst wildlife predator, a press release from Forest and Bird's Southern Conservation Officer, Sue Maturin, said.

Stoats could eventually spell disaster for Stewart Island kiwi and New Zealand dotterels.

Sue Maturin said that on mainland New Zealand about 95% of kiwi chicks are killed by stoats each year and the kiwi population is halving every decade.

"We've not had to worry about kiwis on Stewart Island as, in the absence of stoats,

their population has remained pretty stable. However, once stoat numbers build up they could decimate the kiwi population," she said. The presence of stoats on Stewart Island is a double tragedy because there are also many offshore islands which, because stoats can swim up to 1.5km, are within range of stoats from Stewart Island.

"Even Whenua Hou (Codfish Island) is potentially in danger. The Department of Conservation has put years of work and hundreds of thousands of dollars into ridding the island of all introduced predators to make it a potential refuge for some of our most endangered wildlife. All this will be to no avail if stoats get to Whenua Hou."

According to Sue Maturin it is highly likely that someone has deliberately introduced the stoats.

"There is a remote possibility that they could have rafted here on logs from the mainland, or arrived as stowaways on a boat. But stoats are very unlikely to voluntarily jump aboard a boat. A deliberate introduction would be ecological terrorism at its worst," she said.

Stoats are notoriously difficult to control. They can be reduced over relatively small areas by intensive trapping and poisoning, but there is no way of controlling them over large areas.

"With intensive trapping DOC may be able to protect the New Zealand dotterels and some, but not all, of the Stewart Island kiwi but this will impose an extra cost on the already cash strapped department," Sue Maturin said.

[From a press release from Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society Southern Office, 14.1.2000.]

A Covenant Secures the Vision of a Wetland Development

The 5.3 hectare wetland on Ann and David Johnston's Broadlands property near Reporoa was placed under a Queen Elizabeth II covenant last year. From a 2 hectare paddock and flax swamp 14 years ago, the Johnstons, with the assistance of Norman Marsh, have created the wetland pictured. Extensive plantings of native and exotic species have complemented a picturesque habitat which supports a large and varied waterfowl population, trout, and native birds. The wetland is the focus for a waterfowl breeding effort involving brown teal and blue duck.

"Having created the wetland, we wanted it to stay," David Johnston says. The covenant will ensure this vision will endure.

Photo courtesy Ann and David Johnston.



The Foreman Reserve

A Wairarapa wetland which has had input from DU was recently placed under a covenant ensuring that it will endure for generations to come.

The Foreman reserve is just north of Carterton next to State Highway 2. The series of ponds is fed from water welling up from underlying gravel and the wetland has defied attempts of previous landowners to drain it over the years.

Owner John Foreman decided to create a 5 hectare habitat for waterfowl and blocked off drains and deepened some areas. The wetland now provides suitable conditions for deep water species like scaup and black swan, shallows for stilt and shoveller, and islands for breeding birds. Grey teal nest boxes were erected.

The reserve hosts other species such as dabchick and Canada geese, pied shag and white-faced heron.

Planting with flaxes and native shrubs is ongoing and has improved the habitat. One end of the wetland is grazed to maintain the short grass cover preferred by stilts.

John Foreman's personal effort has been augmented by volunteer labour,



spearheaded by DU supporter Melvin Pike. He organised the digger time donated by Masterton contractor Bruce Buchanan Ltd., and also attracted input from the YMCA's Conservation Corps under Neil Richardson.

[Adapted from an article by John Kirby in Open Space, Newsletter of the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust, No.46, December 1999, page 15.] Photo: John Kirby.

Appeal for Rimutaka Reserve

Purchasing 2000 hectares of native forest for the new millennium is a goal the New Zealand Native Forests Restoration Trust has set itself. Recent bequests and grants have indicated that reaching this goal will be possible by the end of 2000.

The New Zealand Native Forests Restoration Trust is a leading organisation involved in restoring native forests. Since it was founded in 1980, the Trust has bought and protected 4000 hectares of regenerating native forests.

A 350 hectare block on the edge of the Rimutaka Conservation Park in Wairarapa

is the focus of a current fundraising effort by the Trust. The block is near the Trust's existing reserve and will strengthen the visual and ecological lowland link between the Rimutaka and Tararua ranges. The vegetation on the block the Trust proposes to buy is regenerating manuka and broadleaf shrub land with some gorse and a small area of grassland. There are small pockets of mature hard beech and podocarp forest which form a seed source. Birds and other fauna extend their habitat from the protected forests into the regenerating area.

The Trust has launched a public appeal to supplement support from granting organisations and

money from bequests. The reserve is one of the Trust's highest priorities and is worth every dollar to ensure it is protected forever. The appeal has received endorsement from Sir Edmund Hillary, Patron of the Trust: "The last millennium has seen the destruction of vast areas of forest cover. We have reached a turning point in the earth's survival. This coming millennium must begin the restoration process..."

For further information: New Zealand Native Forests Restoration Trust, P.O. Box 80-007, Green Bay, Auckland 1007.

National Wetland Centre

The launch of the National Wetland Trust, which will oversee the development of a National Wetland Centre, was celebrated on 2 February at a function at Hamilton Zoo. The official launch ceremony was followed by the Trust annual general meeting.

The National Wetland Trust of New Zealand was established in October 1999 with the main task of creating a wetland centre for public education and appreciation of the value of wetlands. The centre will be a repository of information on wetlands generally and the wetlands of Waikato/Hauraki in particular.

In addition, the Trust aims to promote research into the flora and fauna, processes and values of wetlands, and to establish wetland trails. It will advocate good management, restoration and creation of wetlands and liaise with iwi, the

community, local government agencies and business organisations to achieve a co-operative approach to solving the problem of wetland management. Membership of the Trust will be open to the public.

The site proposed for the National Wetland Centre is at Rangiriri, midway between Auckland and Hamilton, and close to three wetlands of international significance listed under the Ramsar Convention. These are Whangamarino, a freshwater wetland, Kopuatai, a large peat dome, and the Miranda/Thames estuarine wetland.

The Centre will have displays and information on local, national, and international wetlands. A walking trail to and around nearby Lake Kopuera will provide an ideal introduction to the bird, fish, plants and other unique species inhabiting a wetland. The walkway will also link with a

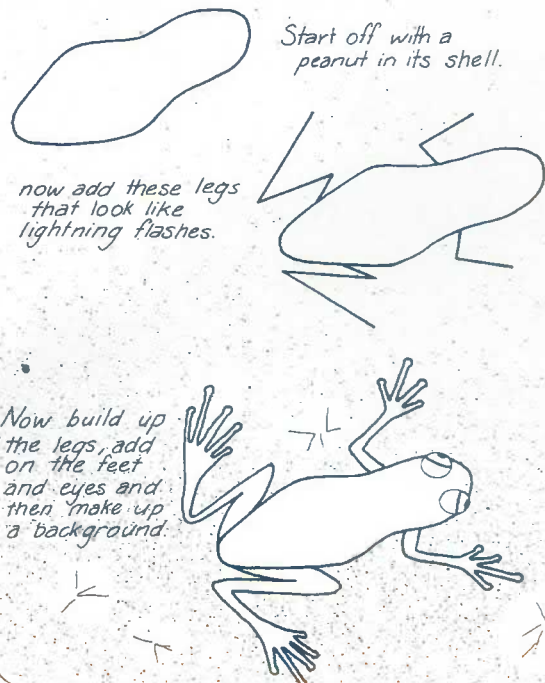
visitor information centre at Te Kauwhata.

More than 90% of New Zealand's wetlands have been drained, filled, converted to farmland or otherwise modified from their natural state. The Trust believes this trend can be reversed by increasing public awareness of and enthusiasm for wetlands. Long term, the National Wetland Trust aims to provide research-based practical information on how to manage, restore and create wetlands everywhere from mountain top to the coast.

The launch of the Trust was well attended and DU has extended wishes to the Trust for every success in its endeavours.

For further inquiries regarding the National Wetland Trust, contact: David Lawrie, Chairperson, National Wetland Trust, Mill Road, RD 2, Pukekohe.

Drawing: New Zealand Frogs



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

The four New Zealand native frogs (the fourth was only discovered recently) are rare, nocturnal, silent miniatures compared with the frogs we commonly see and have a body length of less than 50mm.

The native frogs have been here longer than mankind has existed on earth, yet were unknown to the European in this country before 1852. Even the Maori appear to have had no knowledge of them. They are rarely seen and hide in crevices and holes, and under boulders near streams as well as on high and moist misty tops. Like the tuatara, the frogs are of interest because they are life forms which have survived for millions of years.

They do not croak but produce a weak "creak". There are no webs on their fingers, toes are half-webbed and they feed on insects, spiders, worms and slugs.

Up to 11 eggs are laid in a cluster in damp places under stones or logs. The tadpoles hatch and develop entirely within their gelatinous capsules until they are froglets ready to live independently. These native frogs seem to be in retreat toward extinction.

Illustration republished courtesy of Alan Fielding.

Flight ECOFILE

Predator Pets

Our love for domestic pets conflicts with our concern for the environment and endangered species. Between 1990 and June 1995, dogs caused 70% of kiwi deaths reported in Northland.

A single stoat killed 73 diving petrels and two white-faced petrels on Rabbit Island in 1996.

Destruction by apparently "tame" animals could be happening near you. Cats are attracted to the same kinds of wildlife as mustelids. Dogs mainly affect kiwi, weka, rail and penguins. Possums are also predators of bird eggs and chicks.

Many New Zealand species, without natural predators, became flightless or ground-dwelling - no match for the mammals which were soon introduced by Polynesian and later European explorers and settlers. Mustelids were a poorly planned "biological control" for rabbits.

The combined effect was a stunning blow not only to individual species but to New Zealand's overall diversity - tragic when such species contributed to the distinctive character of New Zealand - and cannot be replaced. Bird life destruction is now so comprehensive that world-renowned ornithologist Professor Jared Diamond once declared New Zealand no longer has a bird fauna - just the wreckage of one. There is no doubt that hundreds of animals we now regard as pets played - and continue to play - a significant role.

Pet owners can assist in balancing the forces of nature and improving the chance of survival for native species:

Cats

Neuter or spay to reduce unwanted kittens
Feed well and provide moving toys for them to play with, so they are less inclined to hunt birds, etc.

Keep them indoors so nocturnal insects and lizards have free reign of your garden at night.

Give unwanted litters to the SPCA or have a vet euthanase them.

Dogs

Keep in a roomy kennel or pen and don't allow them to roam outside your property.

Avoid exercising dogs on beaches, estuaries or reserves.

Keep your dog on a lead and away from nesting areas of ground-nesting birds such as kiwi, dotterel and oyster catchers.

The Five Jems Subdivision Example

The Western Bay of Plenty District Council, in November 1996, banned cats and dogs from the Five Jems subdivision at Waihi Beach. The Department of Conservation and Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society sought the ban to protect sensitive bird populations in a neighbouring salt marsh reserve.

[Adapted from a pamphlet published on the DOC website: www.doc.govt.nz]

Why Ecosystems Can't Adapt...

Climate change is not a new influence on the biosphere, so why can't ecosystems just adapt without significant effects on their form or productivity? There are three basic reasons:

First, global climate change could be faster than at any time in the last 10,000 years. Second, humans have changed the structure of many of the world's ecosystems, making many less resilient to further changes. Third, pollution and indirect effects of the use of natural resources has also increased from the onset of the industrial revolution.

Many ecosystems may not be able to adapt to the added stress of climate change without losing species or the services they provide, such as clean water, food, suitable soils for crops, and wood for fuel or construction.

Over eons, species have been shifting in response to changing climate conditions. The next 100 years of global warming could see one-third of our forests changing in species composition. Many species may not move rapidly enough to prosper. These changes in vegetation and ecosystem structure may cause additional releases of carbon into the atmosphere and speed climate change.

Vegetation in areas most affected by climate change, e.g., forests in northern latitudes, may be replaced by faster growing species yielding less timber, and poorer food for animals. Animal and plant pest species may also increase.

Human use of large portions of the Earth's surface has created a mosaic of different land uses and ecosystems, with fewer remaining large and contiguous areas of a single type of habitat. Many of the world's ecosystems are essentially trapped on small islands, cut off from one another, only capable of travel over a limited and shrinking number of bridges. More species are likely to be stranded in intolerable environments.

Stress from other forms of resource use complicates the picture. Many species of trees are already weakened by air pollution. Increased atmospheric carbon dioxide will raise the photosynthetic capacity of many plants, but the effect on ecosystem productivity is unclear, particularly when combined with higher air temperatures or where soil nutrients are limiting.

Among the ecosystems most likely to experience the most severe effects from climate change are coastal ecosystems, particularly marshes, mangroves, coastal wetlands, coral reefs, and river deltas. Already under stress from human activities, many may be significantly altered or diminished in terms of their extent and productivity as a result of future climate change.

[Adapted from: *Common Questions about Climate Change*. United Nations Environment Programme World Meteorological Organization. On US Global Change Research Office (GCRO) home page at <http://www.gcro.org>]



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Punakawa wetland, Takaka, Golden Bay, New Zealand. Photo: P. Hide.

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