

Flight

JULY

2004

ISSUE 120



DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC.

For Wetlands and Waterfowl.



wetland care NEW ZEALAND

Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is to: 'Harness community, business and government resources to restore and develop lost wetland areas within New Zealand.'

Funding

Funding for projects comes mainly from the Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust, which was established in 1991 and has underwritten wetland development projects to a significant level. Extra resources have come through fundraising and corporate sponsorships like that from Banrock Station Wines. Wetland Care New Zealand actively seeks funding from private and public sources for its work.

Partnerships

Central to Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is forming partnerships with people and organisations with similar aims. Alliances are being established with conservation groups like DOC, NZ Fish and Game, Forest and Bird and regional councils.

For further information, please contact:
William Abel - Director, Wetland Care
New Zealand, Phone 04 478-4335.

From the Flight Desk

I apologise for Flight's late arrival at your terminal. As troubles, famously, come not in single spies but in battalions, this time they landed near me, with the final illness and death of a good friend at the end of May, and other events.

Grateful thanks to those who sent contributions to this special issue; it was a slim pile of high quality material. We hope you enjoy the historical items and photos, and the colour. In late May the Board decided Flight should be in full colour, but as it needs to be re-designed for this big step and the colour printing process is different as well as two weeks longer, we did not have enough time to do it totally for this issue.

Finally, happy birthday to DU, and to Donald Duck who was 70 last month! Greytown cartoonist Tony Simmonds had some graphic fun with him — as Donald's Disney history says, 'This is a duck with one short fuse and an amazing (if unintelligible) command of language, and when things don't go right he goes ballistic...but he always has good intentions. Well, almost always. Hot-headed Donald is a little man in a big world that's trying to keep him down.' (From AFP, in *Wairarapa Times Age* 10 June 2004, to preserve us from Disneyesque attention.)



Cartoon by Tony Simmonds, Greytown.

INSIGHT

Ross Cottle
President

Men of Vision

A little over 30 years ago, long before conservation became fashionable, a group of men came together to discuss the formation of a New Zealand branch of Ducks Unlimited. Jack Worth was the main driving force behind this group.

He had the foresight to see that the swamps, wetlands and landscape of New Zealand were being drained and were changing at an ever-accelerating rate. It was apparent to him at the time that the Acclimatisation Society was not doing nearly enough to stem the tide.

Together with like-minded men Ian and Paul Pirani, and Neil Hayes, he approached DU Canada for help and advice. This was freely given and the close association continues to this day.

There have of course been some ups and downs along the way but I am pleased to report as the incoming President, that the organisation is in strong financial heart.

However, we must never forget the men like Jack who saw the danger and had the conviction and courage to do something about it.

May we continue to follow in their footsteps with the same strength and wisdom.

The first DUNZ Board of Directors, 1974.

President: Ian Pirani

Vice President: Paul Pirani

Directors: Dudley Bell, Neil Hayes, Henry Lickers, Trevor Voss

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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.

Flight is published by:

Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc.

ISSN 1173-2776

P.O. Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland, New Zealand.

Flight Advertising Rates (excluding GST)

Full page \$224, half page \$112, quarter page \$56, eighth page \$28. Waterfowl adverts are free to members. Please contact the editor with any suggestions or to book a space.

Contributions from members and other readers, including photographs, are welcome.

Deadline for all copy and illustrations, Flight 121: 15 August 2004

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Cover photograph: Lake Waikare, Waikato, in the 1990s.



OUR People

Rodger Gillett

A long-time member, Rodger joined DUNZ shortly after its establishment.

He was born in Te Koparu, North Auckland, and his family moved to Lincoln in Canterbury when he was very young — as he grew up there he can claim to be a Mainlander.

He attended Canterbury University and graduated with a BSc in 1962. The Ministry of Agriculture paid his way through vet school and in 1967 he graduated at Queensland University with a BVSc, then worked for the Ministry for five years.

From 1969 to 96 Rodger lived at Tairoa on the North-Eastern edge of Lake Wairarapa where the Tauherenikau and Otokura rivers run through the property which has many lagoons.

In 1973 he joined the Wairarapa Veterinary Association and is now a partner of South Wairarapa Veterinary Services. He lives in Greytown.

He tells us that the practice is now virtually his whole life and he has to work long hours. What he didn't tell us is that he is highly-regarded for his work with horses and is employed by racing clubs to cover their meetings in Wellington and the Wairarapa.

Rodger no longer has an involvement with wetlands but enjoys looking at them.



Rodger Gillett



Gordon Pilone

Gordon and Anne Pilone

Gordon joined in 1996 and has been a bronze member for some years. He grew up in Cucamonga, 50 miles south-east of Los Angeles, California. He watched in dismay the beginnings of the environmental destruction of California, in a large part by the construction of the 'freeways' that brought hordes of people and eventual overpopulation to this beautiful state.

Anne was born in New Plymouth and grew up in Auckland. She is now seeing the same events happening there. Will we ever learn? Gordon has a PhD in Microbiology. Anne is a microbiology technician by training.



Anne Pilone

They married in Australia where Gordon was doing post-doctorate work at the Australian Wine Research Institute and where Anne was a technical officer.

After a career as a research microbiologist in the Californian wine industry, Gordon took a position as a senior lecturer in microbiology at Massey University, emigrating to New Zealand in 1987. Anne of course was delighted to live in New Zealand again. Gordon retired from Massey in 2001.

Gordon has a hobby/business, 'Pohangina Pasture Topping', and has a glorious time during the season driving his Ford 3910 pulling a Trimax topper on Pohangina river terraces and flats, and enjoying



the views of this beautiful valley. He makes good use of the tractor on the wetlands too. When not working in the wetlands or 'tractoring', Gordon can be found on any of the many local rivers of the Manawatu. On rainy days he is at the computer adding to his web site (www.pohangina.prg), that covers 'everything that is Pohangina'.

Anne loves to garden and is also a great cook, with Italian dishes a specialty. Unfortunately this shows on Gordon, he says. Anne is in charge of the wetland plantings and grows all the native plants used in the wetlands from locally collected seeds and seedlings in her very grand shade house.

Pohangina Wetlands Development

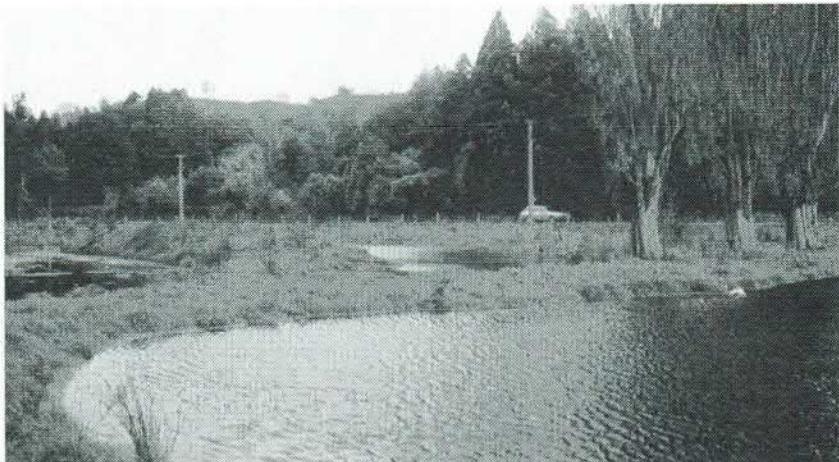
The Pilone's impressive project has four main goals: to re-establish native grasses, bushes and trees on marginal farmland; to create puddles, ponds and marshy areas of various sizes from the existing underground water supply; to encourage a variety of wildlife to visit and breed; and to educate, by encouraging public visits via walkways and viewing sites, and through the website.

The area was very boggy farmland pasture with grazing sheep and bulls when the Pilones bought the property: the 1ha home block in 1995 and two more blocks, the kahikatea and damsite blocks, each about 2.5ha, in 2001. The land was bought and is being developed through a Trust the Pilones established. Further funds are also being sought from other agencies.

Wetland creation began in September 2001 and is continuing, with major work likely to be complete in 2007. Valley Contracting is doing the digging with a 12 tonne digger and at times a small 'dozer and a front-end loader.

The water source is from springs and rain. No creek or large watershed enters the wetlands.

Currently there are six ponds altogether, with one or two more ponds to be created next dry season in the damsite block. There are numerous small 'puddles' and marshy areas. The land slopes towards the river and the ponds are shallow at the upper part and



Home Pond

up to 3-4m at the deepest part near the heads. There are islands on three of the ponds, one having several specimens of remnant kahikatea.

The area is stockproof. The boundary with the neighbouring farm has been fenced with 1.5m deer netting to discourage dogs, and maybe neighbouring children. The roadside boundary (Pohangina Valley West Road) batten-fence was replaced with a new 900mm netting fence. Other older fences will be replaced with netting in due course.

Eventually, the wetlands will be opened to the public. Being close to the Pohangina Village road makes it ideal for groups such as schools to visit easily and become aware of the importance of wetland habitat. They hope to create a camouflaged viewing site near the damsite ponds and to develop marked visitor pathways, possibly including boardwalks. Meanwhile you are welcome to visit them for a private tour - please ring Gordon or Anne, phone 06 329 4762. You can also visit the website. The site is ongoing and will follow the developing wetlands with photographs, maps and text descriptions. There are also useful links to other interesting ecological sites.

(Gordon's interesting and user-friendly website is well worth visiting. The Pilones have sent us so much interesting detail — on CD with a paper copy as well, much appreciated at the printface — that we can print only some of it here. There will be more anon, therefore —Ed.)



Pine Tree Pond

HAVE YOU REGISTERED YET?

DUNZ 30th AGM Palmerston North 23-25 July 2004
 ...phone Sandra Pipes, 09 419 1720 ...or send her an email, to info@ducks.co.nz
 ...or post your completed registration, with payment, to Sandra:
 PO Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland.

(See Flight 119 for details) **BE QUICK, SEE YOU THERE**

2004 Annual Reports

President's Report

The main focus at Board level this year has been trying to get the Strategic Plan under way, no easy task I can assure you. We finally had a weekend arranged, when nature intervened and drowned off any hope of succeeding. I have previously written in Insight how it would be fantastic if New Zealand had 20% of its original wetlands returned but the February 04 flood in the lower North Island was a little extreme.

During the year a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between BASC (British Association for Shooting & Conservation), the Wildfowlers Association of New Zealand (WANZ) and DUNZ. This agreement will facilitate the movement of information among the signatories with regard to any matter impacting on our organisations, be it conservation or hunting-related. I believe this agreement to be the forerunner of other partnerships with like-minded groups. These partnerships will be vital in future years to give DUNZ a higher profile and to associate our name and logo as being THE leaders in wetland conservation.

The Pateke Recovery group is really firing on all cylinders now and are having amazing results with the programme that has been put in place. The survival rate after liberation at all sites around the

country has vastly improved due to increasing knowledge of what they require. Also helping are the higher numbers of people actively eradicating potential predators. Ossie Latham has taken pateke to heart and is a very strong advocate on their behalf. Thank you, Ossie.

Whio continue to struggle due to their special habitat requirements and the continual pressure being placed on these areas. Pateke are on the road to recovery so maybe the next 30 years will belong to Whio.

The 2003 AGM at Rotorua was a great success with the highlight for me being able to present Life-Time Achievement Awards to Dave Johnston and Jim Campbell — I cannot think of more deserving and popular recipients.

I would like to thank all Board members for their continued support and dedication to DUNZ, Sandra Pipes for keeping us on our toes and to Juliet Oliver and Alan and Di Wilks for all their hard work in producing Flight.

Finally, the Board of Directors needs new members to bring us up to strength, so please give it some serious thought. There are only four meetings a year, usually one-day affairs — and we really are a pleasant bunch of conservationists.

— Neil Candy

Financial Report

DUNZ Income and Expenditure for year ending 31 March 2004

Income

Membership \$19,674

Donations and fundraising \$52,155 (includes AGM and Raffle)

Conservation donations \$17,225

Other income \$3171

Total Income \$92,225

Expenses

Administration \$17,313

Projects including Wetland Care \$28,049

Flight \$19,479

AGM Raffle and other fundraising expenses \$21,477

Total Expenses \$86,336

Surplus \$5889

Bank account at 31 March 2004 \$28,995

Term deposit \$51,378

Copies of the audited accounts will be available on request from the Treasurer, once the audit has been completed.

—Graham Gurr, Treasurer.

Project Reports

Wetland Care Report

We are constantly on the look-out for suitable wetland development opportunities, and will soon be reporting on an urban member who has teamed up with a farmer to create a worthy wetland and shooting area that both he and the farm have benefited greatly from. We are very keen to be involved in this type of urban-rural joint project if members have ideas for such opportunities.

We have provided advice to a number of people this year and several projects are still in their early stages.

— William Abel, Director.

Gretel

No report due to the ill-health of supervisor Jack Worth. We wish you a speedy recovery, Jack.

Pateke

A brief summary:

Pateke had a great year at Mimiwhangata, Northland, a steady year on Aotea/Great Barrier and a promising start at the Moehau release site at Port Charles on the Coromandel.

The Captive Breeding programme had a good output, culminating in a follow-up release of 43 birds at Port Charles in early May.

The new 2005 to 2010 Recovery Plan is almost finalised.

We have developed a Media Kit with assistance from the Auckland University of Technology's PR department, under their Outside the Square Programme which gives students hands-on experience. The plan will be implemented during 2004.

Recovery Group and Ducks Unlimited representatives participated in two field days on Aotea/Great Barrier, organised by the Great Barrier Island Trust.

— Ossie Latham and Shaun O'Connor

Continued on page 10...





DUCKS UNLIMITED (N.Z.) INCORPORATED

P.O. Box 74, Hamilton, New Zealand

In Association with Ducks Unlimited, Canada, U.S.A., Mexico

NEWSLETTER NO 1/74

(1)

AUGUST 1974

Here we are with our very first newsletter and, due to your generosity and support, Ducks Unlimited (N.Z.) Inc is now an established fact.

Sure, we have a long way to go before we can take a breather - but we are now "off the ground" and we have every confidence in the future. By now, you will all have received our initial brochure and we hope you are satisfied with its presentation - as a matter of interest, this particular brochure took over seven months and countless hours of hard work (on a part time basis) to produce, and we have already distributed 2,500 around the country. You have already demonstrated your support for our cause - but, if you can place any further brochures in the right hands, then do not hesitate to drop us a line and we will despatch you further copies promptly.

ON THE HOME FRONT

Director, Henry Lickers, has - under our partial sponsorship - been working at Lake Whangapae (a large lake in the Waikato) carrying out a Hunter Survey on the local Black Swan population and, at the same time, is taking a census of all waterfowl frequenting the Lake.

OPERATION GRETEL

Operation Gretel will be our first major project - DU officials are at present negotiating with Waikato landowners for the use of their property for the experimentation of Grey Teal nest boxes.

The Object

To raise the N.Z. population of Grey Teal from the present estimated 20,000 birds to 100,000 plus during the next ten years.

The Reason

Such an undertaking would ensure the safety of this creature for posterity - and the knowledge and experience gained would be put to good purpose with other species in the future.

The Know-How

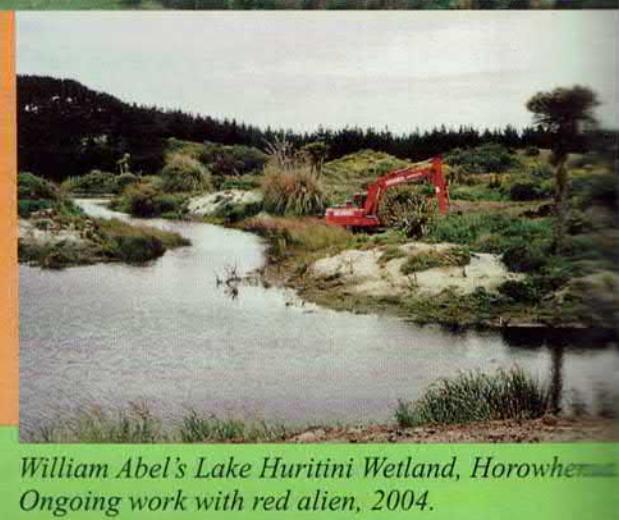
DU (NZ) believe that the prime reason for the static expansion rate of Grey Teal in this country is the shortage of nesting sites. In Australia, there is an abundance of old, dead hollow gum trees, and these are used extensively by the Teal after the rains have flooded an area. DU (NZ) plan to build several prototype nest boxes during the next three years and, after an evaluation period, we will proceed with the construction of several hundred more of the most suitable type.

Grey Teal are nervous creatures and, for this reason, DU have selected two sites in the Waikato and Wellington areas where they can have the solitude they require. After the evaluation period, other sites around the country will be chosen on their merit.

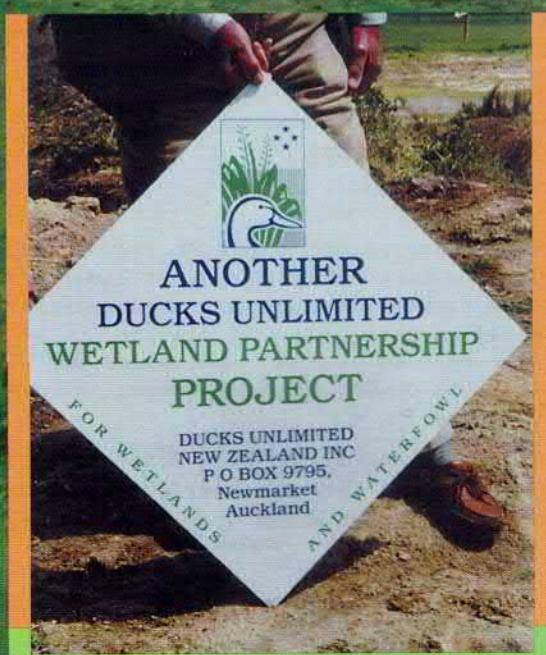




Ron Berry's Tiniroto Lake, Wairoa/Gisborne.



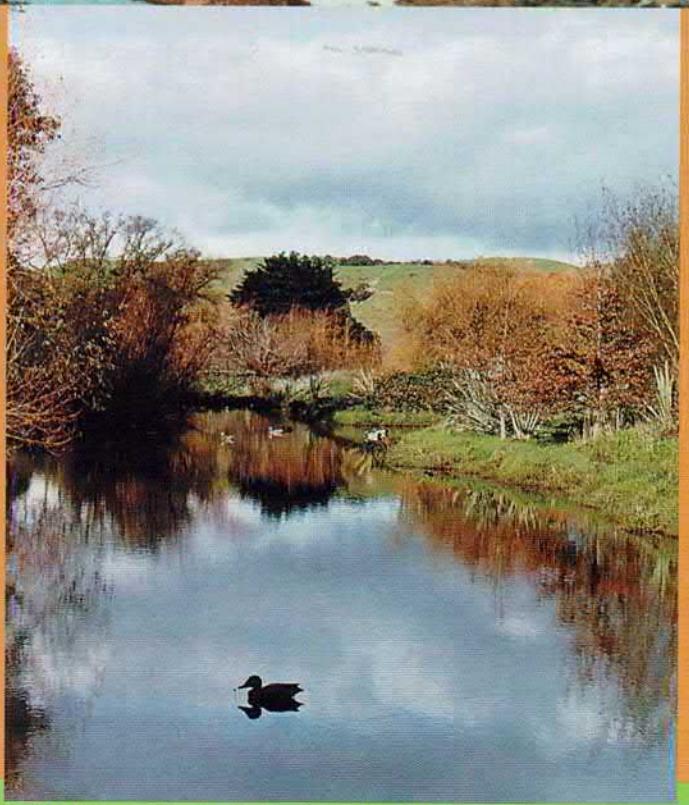
William Abel's Lake Huritini Wetland, Horowhe
Ongoing work with red alien, 2004.



(Background photo:) Jim Campbell's wetland
the early stages of development, Wairarapa.



Mystery photo: can you identify it?



Neil Hayes' Gretel Lagoons, 2004 Wairarapa.

Annual Reports, continued...

Whio

The last breeding season has been a good year with 19 ducklings reared for the year and three new wild birds added to the population (two males and one female). We will keep one female duckling so that we can make up two new pairs.

The captive population stands at 25 males and 15 females.

Egmont Release

On 8 March nine blue duck arrived from Peacock Springs and were released the following day on to Egmont. Nic Peet called on 13 March to tell me they were in trouble, losing a lot of weight through lack of food in the river after one of the biggest floods on the mountain for many years.

On the Sunday while I was helping at the Manawatu shoot a call came that they had caught five of the released birds and were bringing them back to my aviary at work. We were lucky that all the ducks had transmitters so they could find them all. It took a week before we caught all the remaining birds; one was found dead.

We hope to release 16 blue duck in August and thank Peacock Springs for holding them until then.

Board Business

At the end of May, directors spent a day revamping the Mission Statement and drawing up a Strategic Plan which will be presented at the AGM and published in the October issue of Flight.

The board wishes to stress that the Plan is not set in concrete and is a living document subject to change. It is the basis of a blueprint to guide DU into the future.

After the last Board meeting, held in Masterton, directors visited the Wairio Block on the Eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa (see Flight 119). They were impressed by the restoration potential of this large wetland and discussions will continue with DOC in an endeavour to bring the proposal to fruition.

Chapter reports

Auckland

A field trip is being organised for the combined Auckland and Waikato Chapters on Saturday 4 September, to visit Jim and Faye Nilsson's Coatesville property Twin Lakes. The property has impressive landscaped gardens and an extensive range of trees. The Nilssons also have a great collection of both caged and free-ranging birds including a number of pure species of pheasant — probably the most diverse range of water fowl species found anywhere together in New Zealand.

Contact Steve Rice, phone 09 969 7477

The Auckland Chapter will hold the annual Dinner and Auction on Saturday 2 October 2004 at the Papatoetoe Cosmopolitan Club. The bar will open at 7pm followed by a buffet dinner.

Contact Graham Gurr, phone 09 489 5337 for more information.

South Island Release

What a great project to see come to fruition on the Flora Stream, on the Eastern edge of the Kahurangi National Park in the north-west of the South Island. On 27 March I attended the release of 10 blue duck which came from two clutches of eggs, taken from the wild through Operation Nest Egg and hatched and reared at Peacock Springs.

I had the job of videoing Anne Richardson and the blue duck being welcomed and the release of the birds to the stream. What a great sight it was to see the six females and four males swimming around and starting to feed.

The Operation Nest Egg method helps us to put birds into an area very quickly, and I feel it is a good way to bring birds into captivity and allow the wild pairs to re-nest.

It was a great day and I would like to thank DU for the help they gave me to get there.

— Peter Russell

(Peter has sent an article about the Flora Stream release, which will appear in the next issue —Ed.)

Manawatu

As Manawatu is hosting the National Conference weekend in July the Chapter will not hold their dinner and auction this year.

Wairarapa

The Chapter will hold a fundraising dinner in September and members will be notified. For further information call Ross Cottle, phone 06 378 7408.

There are now vacancies on the Board and we have a Strategic Plan to lead us into the future, so I appeal to members to come forward, give a director a call or get another member to nominate you. I know you will enjoy the experience.

I would be very pleased to see a woman on the Board, and someone from the Mainland. DU is in your hands.

It's membership renewal time!

Thank you to members who have promptly paid their 2004/2005 subscription. If you're paying by electronic transfer, please remember to include your membership number as a reference. You may receive a reminder letter to say that your sub is outstanding - if you haven't already notified us we are unable to update our database until we receive the bank statement.

This is also a good time to update your contact information for us. If you have moved or have a new phone number or email address, you can use the form at the back of Flight or write to info@ducks.org.nz

Thanks

Sandra Pipes, Membership Secretary

DU welcomes these new members:

Waikato — Guy Ralph

Bay of Plenty — Allan Price

Poverty Bay — Kees Weytmans

Manawatu — Scott and Tracey Donald

Wairarapa — Donald Freeman



Obituary: B.R. 'Bunny' Paddy, 1930-2003

Bunny spent his whole life in Palmerston North, and was well-known as the 'Paddy' of Paddy Bros Butchery, a business his father and uncle started in the late 1920s. Bunny took over the business around 1968 and carried on until he was 'squeezed out by supermarkets.' He retired, to become 'Mr Fixit' for Farmers Trading Co., a position he held until health problems forced him to stop.

Always handy with tools, as a teenager he built a bach on the Seymour farm at Opiki, where he shot ducks every season for over 50 years. The records in the bach testify to his prowess with a shotgun. He was also a successful pheasant hunter, and had some very good dogs to assist him. His top dog, Pat, a German short-haired pointer, was a New Zealand Open All Breeds Retriever champion.

Bunny's interest in dogs led him, with Ossie Latham and a few mates, to form the Mana Orua Gun Dog Club where he enjoyed many a good day. His interest in hunting and fishing led to involvement with the Acclimatisation Society, and he served for 20 years on the Wellington council, being awarded a Life Membership.

Bunny was a keen member of the Rifle Rod and Gun club,

serving on the committee as trout fishing representative. He organised some memorable club trips to Lake Taupo where he had a bach. In the club's early days he contributed tremendously to fundraising through raffles at the Majestic Hotel, and was in the club's 'A' team for several years.

In the early 1980s Andy Tannock, Bunny Paddy, Ken Cooke and some friends formed the Manawatu Chapter of Ducks Unlimited. Bunny was very keen on DU and was involved in all our activities. He grew orchids as a hobby, and always insisted on providing an orchid spray each for the ladies who came to our dinners.

Bunny is survived by his wife Marlene who still takes an active part in our DU activities, and his son and two daughters.

— Ken Cooke

We are also sad to note the death last January of Barry Pearce of Ashley Park, Waitotara, near Wanganui. He was a DU member for more than 15 years. He enjoyed reading Flight over the years and was very keen on preserving areas for waterfowl. We extend sympathy to his wife Wendy and family.

DU basic timeline

- 1935 DU Inc founded in America
- 1937 DU Canada founded
- Late 1940s Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust founded, UK
- 1974 DU Mexico and DUNZ founded
- 1992 DU Australia (now Wetland Care Australia) and Euroduck founded

The President writes... in 1995...

'No, we're not in the business of breeding unlimited ducks to shoot, and the name of our conservation organisation, Ducks Unlimited, doesn't help to clarify what we're about. Although the majority of our supporters are farmers and shooters who are concerned about diminishing wetlands and endangered waterfowl, DU is not a shooting organisation and does not breed game birds for members to shoot.'

'Part of our mission is to encourage private landowners, who may consider a swampy section of their property as unproductive, to develop it into a wetland area that will become an asset to be enjoyed...you only have to be a conservationist.'

'Ducks Unlimited is the only New Zealand organisation totally committed to waterfowl and wetlands and over the years has raised \$1.3 million to this end. DOC has extensive responsibilities, Fish and Game is concerned with game birds and fish, and Forest and Bird is principally a lobby group with wide interests.'

— Alan Wilks

Strategic Objectives – 1995 version

Edited extracts from Grant Dumbell's Annual Report as DUNZ Executive Director...

'We have called our plan 'Wetland Conservation Action: The Third Decade'. There are nine key objectives in three categories: Wetland Conservation, Membership, and Financial Management.'

'Under Wetland Conservation we aim to complete 165 projects before April 2004. This requires us to complete three projects in year one and to increase that by three per year, giving six projects in year two and 30 in year 10.'

'We aim for a base of 7000 members, with 17 active chapters and an average membership per chapter of no more than 400 members.'

'We seek to keep annual fundraising above an average of \$100 per member, to increase our expenditure on conservation to over 70% of total expenses and to reduce expenditure on administration to below 30% of total expenses.'



The ultimate wetland control structure. Can anyone identify this photograph?

The Lamb Peters Print

This time a special Lamb Peters Print (an A3 colour copy of a print used in Flight) will be sent to Russell Primary School in the Bay of Islands. We thought that the photo of a pupil at the school about to release a brown teal female (see back cover) was worth re-printing. Perhaps she is still looking after wildlife somewhere.

What's in a name...

The name 'Ducks Unlimited' with its connotation of, literally, more ducks to shoot, has bugged me for a while. I believe it is holding back the growth in membership. I know that most organisations are having a hard time attracting members, and the Farm Forestry Association, another of my great interests, is no exception. This admitted, there is no reason to go out of our way to deter people from joining us by continuing with a name which does not reflect the work we do. To highlight my point I would like to tell you a little story. Diny and I have just had a week at our annual Farm Forestry Conference, this year held in Hanmer Springs. What a wonderful venue it proved, as the diversity of country within one and a half-hours' drive by bus, including 4WD buses, was amazing. A special trip was a visit to Tarndale, one of the Molesworth outstations. Country with wide, open river valleys, running up to barren slopes which even the rabbits need a cut lunch to cross, as we were told. Goats live on the tops in spite of the bare look of the country. Pairs of paradise shelduck, spur-winged plover (a newcomer to the area) and black shag were the main birds on view. Duck shooters are allowed access to shoot parries, and took about 400 on one day last year. We picked a glorious day, with not a jersey in sight. Four days later when we travelled back through the same general area, it was snowing! From there, through the fertile, irrigated plains to the south, we went to other field days at

venues ranging from high hill country to dry-land sheep and cattle farms. Yes, they were growing trees! (If any DU members like this sort of thing, give me a call. As I said, we are short of members, too.)

The point I would like to make about the name Ducks Unlimited came from a question I asked at one of these field days. I had spotted an amazing location for a dam on this gentleman's farm (it's funny how once you start building dams you are always on the lookout for sites...). I identified myself as a DU member, and asked him if he had considered a dam for the site. At these field days we have sound systems, so the question had to be repeated. 'There is an old duck shooter, from Ducks Unlimited, wants to know if we can build a dam here?' This highlighted for me the connotations of our name. What would the response have been if I had said I was from 'Wetland Care'? This better describes what is essentially a conservation organisation.

It certainly would not have given the farmer in question an opportunity to lampoon us. How our membership is so low, in a world where 'green' issues are to the forefront and conservation and sustainability are the buzzwords, is beyond me. That incident highlights the fact that we are not known as a conservation organisation, and a name that makes us sound like a bunch of 'old duck shooters' does not help. Let's get the correct message out there: that we are helping to restore wetlands, working to save endangered birds, and improving the landscape of this special little country we all live in. The Aussies call themselves Wetland Care - so why don't we?

Incidentally, the site, which looked so good you could build a hydro lake on it, was at the lower end of a very long gully and the owner thought the head would wash out. And I wasn't too impressed with his comment about my age.

— John Dermer (Manawatu).

Quoting...

'O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see ousels as others see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free
us,
And foolish notion.'

From 'To a Louse' by Robert Burns



Thoughts from a longtime member

As Ducks Unlimited prepares to celebrate 30 years I realise just how long I have been a member – almost two thirds of that time. In November 1985 I attended a Forest and Bird Council meeting at Tautuku, Southland. On our way back to Dunedin Airport we stopped beside Lake Waihola and the late Horrie Sinclair came and spoke to us about his wetland which was in the far distance. I was so impressed with what Ducks Unlimited was doing for wetlands that I joined virtually there and then.

Over the years I have seen many changes as at the Sinclair Wetlands and others in the Wairarapa. And, too, the emphasis on largely preserving wetlands for ducks and shooters has become more focused on preservation of habitat for all waterfowl, especially our native species. When I first joined DU, many of my Forest and Bird friends were against 'shooting ducks'. Frankly, though I am not a shooter I have never had a problem with shooting mallards. They are a very precocious duck that will breed with other species and rapidly, so that it is definitely necessary to cull them. The Canada goose has multiplied and spread tremendously since it was first introduced to New Zealand, and also needs to be kept to manageable levels. Even our native species such as pukeko can cause problems for both waterfowl and aquatic species and should be 'managed'.

I have missed very few AGMs, one being because along with 11 other members I attended the Canadian DU Convention in Edmonton. At that meeting it was evident that like the early days here, there were two factions – the shooters and the environmentalists. There, as here, there were some very fiery outbursts against 'wasting time and money on preserving wetlands for other species'. Even quite recently not everyone was in favour of trying to get improvements to Lake Waikare in the Waikato. Because DU has lobbied and fought for wetland preservation I have remained a loyal member. As a conservation group you are the only one until recently with an interest in wetlands. Maybe to start with it was for more selfish reasons – habitat for ducks to create good bags in the shooting season – but that has led many more people, within and outside DU, to take an interest in wetlands.

Keep up the work of creating, re-creating and protecting wetlands. They are an interesting and necessary part of our environment. Congratulations on achieving your first 30 years. Best wishes for the next 30 years.

In conclusion I would like to say how much I have appreciated the friendship of members, visiting different areas of the country and learning about protecting and enjoying our waterfowl and the environment they live in.

— Nancy Payne (Auckland).



The nature of Nature

You really have to marvel at Mother Nature! One moment she can throw all her fury at you as we witnessed in February — massive amounts of rain (a dairy farmer between Dannevirke and the Tararua ranges recording 350ml or 14 inches over an 18-hour period) and the problems this caused further downstream as we saw on television. Following the rain were the gale-force winds which caused havoc, whole shelter belts were totally flattened and huge specimen trees almost 100 years old were blown over.

Then we had a time of peace and quiet to reflect and get on with the clean-up.

Two months later the water has all gone and most of the flooded farms have been repaired. Lush new grass has taken over where a sea of dirty brown water sat for two weeks, and the area is almost as it was before. What hasn't really been covered is the amount of soil erosion in the hill country, the massive scale of lost production which will occur in years to come, and the cost of getting these farms to some sort of normalcy.

One good thing to come from this event has been the generosity of people from all over New Zealand, not only in donating money, clothes etc, but helping with the clean-up work on farms. They are still doing it. A group of Canterbury farmers arrived in the Manawatu in late May to help with re-fencing for a week.

The Met service is predicting more of these extreme weather patterns in the future. I hope they are wrong but as the old saying goes, 'you can't beat Mother Nature.'

--Neil Candy

Flight Ecofile

Unearthing our grasslands history

Close your eyes and imagine a giant forest heaving with life — a tangle of trees, ferns and vines plugged into a fertile network of swamps and wetlands. Then imagine the same forest all but gone, chopped down to make way for open grasslands clipped neat and short by the nibbling of millions of sheep.

You are picturing New Zealand — where the transformation of landscape has been one of the most complete and rapid anywhere in the world.

'We've drained 85% of wetlands which is far more than anyone else has done, even the Dutch, who have only drained two thirds,' says Associate Professor Tom Brooking of Otago University's History department.

But how was it done, and why? Was it a giant imperial programme being pushed out of London, was it the banks or was it the farmers themselves? Perhaps, more importantly, what are the long-term consequences likely to be?

A quick visit to the UK

At Easter this year I was fortunate to be briefly in the UK, where my first port of call was the London Wetland Centre at Barnes, established by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust. It is only a few kilometres from Buckingham Palace and is one of the best examples of a created wetland. It was originally a defunct reservoir.

Sir Peter Scott's long held ambition was to create a WWT centre in London and he was the driving force behind the project. Sadly he did not live long enough to see the centre opened, but he did all the spadework with the reservoir owners Thames Water — so much so that the sale of a few acres at one end of the reserve generated over £17m towards the Centre. Without doubt the Wetland Centre is the 'jewel in the crown' for WWT, and its attendance figures have far exceeded predictions.

We headed straight for the NZ enclosure, to be greeted by a pair of brown teal, a pair of blue duck and three pairs of NZ scaup, all in absolutely pristine condition. The brown teal put on a great display and their behaviour in the large enclosure, which has two waterfalls, lots of rocks and a very large pond, was quite different from their almost totally nocturnal behaviour in small aviaries and in the wild. The Wetland Centre comprises around 35ha of managed waterways, ranging from large lagoons to small, shallow, reed-covered ponds. Water control structures abound in the reserve. There's also a large cafeteria, gift shop, an elevated observatory and a mass of viewing hides, including one of three storeys.

When we left the Wetland Centre four hours later the car park was full.

The following day we headed for WWT's headquarters at Slimbridge in Gloucestershire. Over the past four years Slimbridge has undergone a massive re-building and financial re-structuring programme, and now has a new and very impressive visitors' centre. We arrived at 12.30pm on a Tuesday to find the normal and very large car park full; we had to park in the overflow area, a large paddock.

The New Zealand enclosure at Slimbridge is also impressive, with scaup, shoveler, grey duck and shelduck.

During the re-building phase a very impressive new tower was built, which gives complete views of the grounds and the Severn Estuary.

A few years ago WWT went through a very bad patch, with falling membership, reduced donations and around 30 staff redundancies. Since 2000, however, and with some astute marketing, WWT's management has turned the whole thing around, with a massive increase in membership (now over 130,000) and record numbers turning up at WWT centres.

On our arrival in Italy, Sylvia phoned to say my best pair of brown teal had produced EIGHT offspring.

— Neil Hayes

[In a 15 June press item, Neil reported that all the six-week-old ducklings were healthy and feathering up well. Neil believes that this number in one brood could be a world record —Ed.]

Birds wanted

We would like to buy a pair each of swinhoe and silver pheasants and a pair of mandarin ducks. If you can help, please contact Gail Simons at Stoney Oaks Wildlife park, phone 06 756 7624.

Brooking is keen to find out and will use a Marsden grant over the next three years to try and establish these and other points, under the title 'Empires of Grass: The reconstruction of the New Zealand grasslands, 1850s-1950s'. The multidisciplinary team — Canterbury University geographer Professor Eric Pawson, post-doctoral student Dr Vaughan Wood, Lincoln University economic historian Jim McAloon, bio-geographer Professor Peter Holland and post-doctoral environmental historian Dr Paul Star — will be scouring small town museums and city research libraries, devouring agricultural journals and consulting grassland experts to try to build the big picture.

'We're going to have a hard look at something which is pretty serious and the answer will be very complicated,' Professor Brooking says.

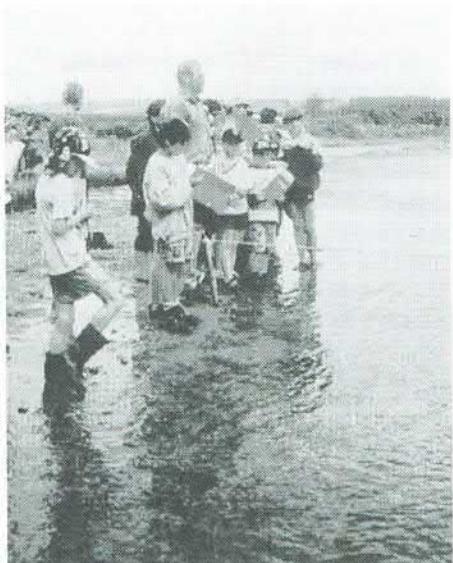
From the University of Otago magazine, Issue 7 February 2004



Winners of the McMaster Trophy in the first two years



Masterton Intermediate wetland 1994 — a welcoming committee.



Galatea School, Bay of Plenty 1995 — pupils work on the Horomonga River project.

If at first you don't succeed....try fishing.

In late April last year a girl came up to me at a meeting and asked, will you take me duck shooting? As I got over my surprise I ran a few things through my mind. I knew she had a firearms licence and had been deerstalking with her father. She had shot a deer and had done a deerstalkers' HUNTS course so she was a bit clued-up on the outdoors. I also knew she had not shot a deer at one stage because it looked 'cute' — so could she shoot 'cute ducks'?

Then I thought, where the heck can I take a 16-year-old girl to have a reasonable chance to shoot a duck or two.

I said yes but not in the first week. I had the first week of the season fully organised and could fit no more in, besides I wanted to stock up the freezer as we had run out of ducks months ago.

As the weather would be fine and the tide reasonable, one weekend I rang to tell Rachael I could take her shooting. I had decided to go to Kawhia harbour even though the hunting there was useless. If there were still no ducks we would try for some fish, so I packed a net.

Rachael's mother brought her around after school and we arrived at the camp area half an hour before dark with time for a look down the stream nearby. I had taken an old pump-action shotgun for her to use, mainly because it was light to handle.

We went downstream and waited until dark. No ducks anywhere. As we unloaded to walk back, a parrie went over 10 feet up. I knew then that Murphy was not on our side this trip. We got back and cleaned up and I gave Rachael the choice of camping in the van with me or with the rats in the hut. She chose the rats. We got up early next morning, went to a handy possie in the harbour, put out the decoys then waited. I gave Rachael a quacker to call with and some instruction, she gave it a try half a dozen times when we saw some ducks just in vision, but she soon gave up and I thought hmm, she's not much help. The tide started to go out at 9am; Rachael was sick of practising her swing and lead on terns and seagulls, so we went and set the net for flounder. We went back to the possie and to help pass the time I showed her how to tie a knot. She practised that for 20 minutes and gave up so we had our third morning tea. I had known since 7am that we would not get any ducks, so we would have to find where some were resting.

We packed up, checked the net and found three flounder, then went up the next river round the harbour. On the first corner there were 40 or so ducks on the mud. They were very wild and flew

when we were a long way off. I stopped and tried to work out how to outsmart them in future but there was no way, they were too far from cover. We went round a bit further and found a spot where there were plenty of duck footmarks in the mud. There were rushes close by and I could hide the boat 50m away and walk back. We gathered up some old tea-tree for a hide from a spot I'd used the year before and put it where we would shoot from, but the tide was getting low by then and we needed to get back pronto. On the way we emptied the net and set it as a gill net for the night. We just got back before the stream went dry, found 14 flounder and tidied up. We had a snack then put more tea-tree branches in the boat.

Next morning was another early start. We were to go through the net and re-set it for flounder, but we were too top heavy with tea-tree so carried on and unloaded our gear. I hid the boat and while walking back saw Rachael standing in the hide with ducks hovering over her head. The more I hurried the further I sank into the mud.

We quickly pushed in the new tea-tree and got ready. I was annoyed, we were 15 minutes too late and the main flight had finished. There were steady chances all morning and Rachael had about 12 shots. Never ruffled a feather. I was getting frustrated and she was getting used to missing when a parrie flew down towards the mud 15 metres away. Once again I told her to put the bead on its head and shoot, which she did. It flew away, the shot was way high. When I spoke to brother Murray about it a few days later he said she couldn't have had her cheek on the stock. Of course. I should have checked. After all that, however, Rachael had unloaded some ammo and terrified some ducks and I'd managed to pick off 10 that thought they were home free, more than in all the first week.

We packed up then and went to pick up the net, getting a feed of pacific oysters as the water was low by then. After a late lunch we cleaned the fish and finished dressing out the ducks, and gathered a big bowl of field mushrooms from where we'd been on the Friday night.

For her first try at duck shooting Rachael went home with ducks, flounders, kahawai, mullet, pacific oysters and a pile of mushrooms. I also had some ducks smoked and cooked for her. I do not know what she thought of the weekend but it must have been pretty exhausting; her father said she went straight to bed when she got home.

— Malcolm Dench (Waikato)



In Flight

Shopping

NOSLOC FEEDERS

The Nosloc feeding system has been developed in New Zealand by Dennis Colson of Te Kuiti. The feeders are suitable for duck feeding and free range feeding. Of most interest to DU members will be the duck and pheasant feeders. The newly designed nozzles feed both wheat and barley, or you can feed whole maize by using the special end cap provided. Other sizes of nozzle are available for feeding pellets to ostrich and emu. The nozzles are made of galvanised steel and will not rust or break from use. Each feeder requires a waratah and bucket (20 litre) which you supply. Larger drums can be used for the system but require additional brackets and waratahs. The nozzle, either parallel for maize or spiral for wheat and barley, and a waratah mounting bracket are supplied. Nozzles are \$26.25 each (please advise spiral or parallel) and brackets \$26.95 each.

FENN TRAP MK 6

Deadly to ferrets, stoats, weasels and rats, these all-metal traps are easy to set and are the ultimate quick-kill tunnel trap. \$35.00 each.

THE THUMPER

A lightweight tunnel trap designed to kill rats and stoats. The tunnel incorporates the spring mechanism on the same principle as the Timms trap. Available as single with a closed end or double, which is a run-through with two traps. The traps are set from the outside by pulling a cord. Easy and safe to use.

Single \$35, double \$49.

The Mitredale Duck Club Cookbook

By Di Pritt, published by Halcyon Press. \$19.95 including GST, postage and packing.

In Flight

PREDATORS

This country leads the world in eradicating pests and enabling endangered species to be brought back from the brink of extinction, says Conservation International president Russ Mittermeier.

He made the comment in March following an overnight stay on Matiu/Somes Island in Wellington Harbour, where he viewed the reintroduced population of Gunther's tuatara and the ecological restoration of the island. The visit was part of a week-long tour to look at restoration projects and pest control initiatives in New Zealand. He also met Conservation Minister Chris Carter to discuss opportunities for collaborative actions in the Pacific, and visited the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary.

Recognising New Zealand as a world leader in invasive species control, Washington-based Conservation International is keen to apply techniques used here to projects it is undertaking in Polynesia and Micronesia. It is working closely with experts from DOC and IUCN, the International Conservation Union.

Conservation International works with community groups around the world on restoration projects, and Dr Mittermeier said he was impressed by the 'amazing' examples of community involvement in ecological restoration here. 'To have tuatara, one of the world's greatest flagship species, on an island in the middle of a city is fabulous. The community is totally committed to this island,' he said.

Accompanied by DOC staff he also viewed species recovery and pest control projects in the South Island. 'I'm extremely impressed with the fact that you have a moral and ethical as well as an economic commitment to this work. In most other parts of the world you have to justify what you do on economic grounds,' Dr Mittermeier said.

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'Travel safely little bird.' A pupil from Russell Primary School, about to release a pateke female on Urupukapuka Island, in Conservation Week, 1994. This beautiful photograph was on the cover of Flight, January, 1995.

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