

Flight



ISSUE 128 - JULY 2006

Inside:

**Whio Report
Pateke Release
AGM and 2005 Reports
Canada Geese issues
...and much more**

Takahe Release



wetland care
NEW ZEALAND

Our business is to harness community, business and government resources to restore and develop lost wetland areas within New Zealand.

Wetland Care members recognise that wetlands are vital to the wellbeing of the environment, acting as huge ecological sponges by soaking up pollutants and filtering water before it reaches streams, rivers, lakes, aquifers and the sea.

Our initiatives focus on matters as far-reaching as groundwater replenishment, flood control, nutrient and contaminant management and climate change – all critical factors for the conservation of freshwater and saltwater wetlands and marshes.

We want to preserve and conserve the flora and fauna of our most endangered ecosystem so that vibrant wetlands are our legacy to future generations.

Funding for projects comes from the Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust which was established by Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc in 1991, as well as membership, donations and corporate memberships such as that from Banrock Station Wines.

Central to Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is forming partnerships with people and organisations with similar aims. An example is Banrock Station Wines who place the Wetland Care New Zealand logo on their wine bottles distributed in New Zealand. In return, Banrock contribute a fee, which is based on each bottle sold, to Wetland Care New Zealand.

Money from this partnership has been given to wetland conservation projects done by:

Ducks Unlimited Operation Pateke
Port Charles release 2005 at Coromandel
Henley Trust, Masterton
Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, Wellington
Kitchener Park, Feilding
Manawatu Estuary Trust, Foxton
Mangaone Wetland, Raetihi
Masterton Intermediate School, Masterton
Steyning Trust, Hawkes Bay
Travis Wetland Trust, Christchurch
Wairio Wetland, South Wairarapa
Wetland Trust New Zealand, Rangiriri
Waitakere Branch of Forest and Bird, West Auckland
Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, Dunedin

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

Ducks Unlimited New Zealand, Inc

2006 Annual General Meeting

28-30 July 2006

Venue and Accommodation

Copthorne Resort Solway Park
Masterton
Wairarapa

You should all have received an invitation to this our 32nd AGM and Conference. You may find the form on the webpage which is www.ducks.org.nz, or email your details to info@ducks.org.nz. But HURRY!

Programme

Friday 28 July

7pm Registration and pre-dinner drinks followed by dinner

Saturday 29 July

9am AGM

10am Morning Tea

10.30am Bus trip visiting Wairio Wetland followed by drinks and lunch at the Lake Ferry Hotel, then a visit to Stonehenge Aotearoa in Carterton

7pm Drinks, and Silent Auction opens

7.30pm Award presentations

8.00pm Dinner followed by Main Auction

Sunday 30 July

10am Morning Tea and Social Get-together



Insight

by Ross Cottle, President

In the last 15 years or so, attitudes to land use have slowly but surely been changing. Not only is the development and draining of wet boggy areas of land slowing down, the reverse is happening and ponds and wetlands are being re-created for waterfowl habitat (not a moment too soon). For although this has been occurring for some time if the reports of the 'hunting fraternity' are to be believed, then the number of waterfowl out there are in serious decline throughout the North Island, if not the whole country.

It would seem there are other factors involved. I know for a fact that the acreage of grain in the Manawatu and Wairarapa has dropped dramatically in the last ten years, which had been a great source of food for the young birds.

Also there are large areas of land that have been cut up into lifestyle blocks, spreading the population and perhaps disturbing the nesting birds.

Whatever the cause we will have to be vigilant in our efforts to reverse the trend.

I would be interested to hear from members by email, and would ask you to give me your thoughts on this bird population question, describing the trends you have noticed over the years, the reasons for it and possible solutions. My email address is rosscottle@xtra.co.nz.

Ross Cottle
President

Our Mission

To deliver effective wetland restoration, development, research, education and advocacy;

While supporting the preservation of threatened waterfowl and the ethical and sustainable use of wetlands

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

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CONTENTS

AGM Programme	2
Insight	3
President's Report	4
Wetland Care Report	4
Financial Report	4
New Members	4
2005 AGM Minutes	5
Clean Streams Accord	6
Treasurer John Bishop	6
Pukaha Mt Bruce receives Award	6
Brown Teal Report (in part)	7
DOC takahe Release	7
Wairio photos	8
Whio photo	8
Mangaone from above	9
Pateke release at Moehau photos	9
Whio report	10-11
DU website	12
Wetland revegetation	12
Black stilt drama	12
Canada goose as overstayer	13
Tuhua pateke report	13
Canadian view of Canada geese	14
Australasian shoveller	14
Ducks' laugh last	14
Brown Teal report (in part cont'd)	15
Thanks to our sponsors/Whio photo	16

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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John Dermer Feilding (06) 328 9740

Rachael Mitchell Rotorua (07) 333 2151

Front cover photo of takahe shortly after their release by DOC staff on Maungatautari in June 2006. See story page 7.

Photo was taken by Phil Brown.

Back cover photo of whio released in the Point Burn in June, courtesy of Amy Whitehead (DOC copyright).



PRESIDENT'S 2006 Report

The past 12 months have been very exciting from a DU point of view. The Board was a little concerned at the beginning about our membership because we had increased the subscription charges and were waiting to see if there were a significant number of resignations, but fortunately our fears proved unfounded as we have stayed about the same.

The Joint Venture we have with DOC for restoring the Wairio Wetland on the Eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa has progressed well with recent excavations to provide permanent water and approximately 1200 native trees being planted in a fenced-off area along the southern end. The whole project has attracted a lot of interest locally and raised the profile of DU enormously.

The Strategic Plan was given its annual review at the May board meeting, to ensure that everything was still relevant and we were moving forward in the right direction of becoming the "premier wetland conservation organisation in New Zealand".

One of the prime tasks we had set ourselves was to be involved in one major restoration every two years. This has been achieved with the Wairio project. On top of that we are in negotiations with DOC on the restoration of another large wetland in the Waikato.

The Strategic Plan also called for the construction of 10 smaller projects per year which was also achieved.

Raising the profile of DU using press releases to both radio and the newspapers has been effective, as well as enhancing our own magazine to improve contact with the membership. Financially, DU is in very good heart and from that perspective is going well having spent over \$50,000 on wetlands construction in the past year.

What is of greater concern is the lack of personnel coming forward to fill positions at both chapter and board level. I know there are a lot of you willing and able to give a hand, so please get involved and you will find it's kind of fun and very rewarding.

Finally, I would like to thank the Board for all their work over the last 12 months and look forward to another exciting year ahead.

Ross Cottle
President

FINANCIAL REPORT

Income

AGM	\$24,666
Chapter donations	\$15,439
Membership	\$26,425
Projects	\$39,700
Other	\$29,012
Total	\$127,242

Expenditure

Administration	\$13,365
AGM	\$28,361
Flight	\$23,963
Projects	\$51,448
Other	\$ 4,247
Total	\$121,348

Assets

Cash on hand	\$67,315
Gst refund due	\$ 274
Debtors	\$10,000
Total	\$77,589

Liabilities

Pateke	\$21,000
Wairio	\$10,000
Wetland Care	\$5,000
Unpaid accounts	\$7,247
Total	\$43,247

Please note: a full set of accounts will be available to members on request once the audit has been completed, approximately mid-August.

Graham Gurr
Treasurer



Wetland Care Report

The year to date has been very busy with us spending \$14,500.00 on wetland creation. This is not counting any funding through the Banrock sponsorship. We have assisted on six members' properties.

These are Robert Cuff, Mike Candy and Haden Hazlett of the Manawatu, Louise Jackson and Tim Byrne of Masterton and David Severinson of Hawkes Bay.

The projects have been quite diverse - Mike's requiring a low dam wall, Tim's a digout enlarging an already created wetland and David's also a digout. Being only 200m from the sea and close to the Porongahau river estuary, David's wetland is home, and on the flight path of a large number of species that are not seen on the more inland wetlands we are used to.

William Abel
Director, Wetland Care

New Members Welcome to:

Nicola Morris,
Taratahi Agricultural
Training Centre,
Masterton

Peter Warren,
Featherston

Thank you to all those people who have paid their subs for 2006/2007 so promptly. It is much appreciated. Thanks also to those who took the opportunity to amend their contact details. We like to keep in touch but this is only possible if your details are correct.

To those who paid by direct credit, this is fantastic and I also appreciate those who emailed payment details to info@ducks.org. To those who received a reminder letter, please disregard the letter if you have paid by direct credit, as we don't receive the bank statement until midway through the month and the reminders have been mailed.

With regards to the AGM and Conference, the registrations are rolling in, but please register sooner rather than later as it makes organising the weekend exceedingly difficult for the hotel and everyone if we are still getting names close to the weekend. If you're thinking of going, register now, you won't be disappointed as it's always a great weekend.

Sandra Pipes
Membership Secretary

Ducks Unlimited New Zealand, Inc

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 30 July 2005

Airport Centra Hotel, corner of
Kirkbride and Ascot Roads, Mangere,
Auckland

Welcome:

Ross Cottle welcomed the members to the 31st Annual General Meeting, with a special welcome to Dr Bruce Batt, from Memphis, Tennessee.

Apologies:

Jim and Raana Campbell, Ron and Janet Denny, Dudley Galbraith, Graeme and Gil Garchow, Faye and Howard Haycock, Ray and Maxine Hayward, Alison and Ross Hood, Dr Michael Hucks, Lady Diana Isaac, Diane Liang, Ian and Elizabeth Lyver, Andy Lowe, Stephen Muir, Mark and Diana Newcomb, Ann Nooyen, Di and Audrey Pritt, David Rice, A.E. Rieger, Tony and Bets Simpson, Timothy Warren, Alan and Di Wilks, David Wilks, Craig Worth, Jack and Clare Worth, Phillip Gravett, Jack Harpert, Bunny and John Mortimer, John Bishop and Ruth Rhodes, Andrew Mitchell, Ken Barnes, Dave and Ann West, Anthony Griffin, Peter and Ann Russell.

Motion: The apologies tendered are accepted.

Move: M. Tapp Seconded: I.Jensen, carried.

Minutes of the last AGM: circulated in the 31st AGM and Conference pack.

Motion: That the minutes of the last AGM be corrected in that the year referred to in the Waterfowl & Wetlands report be changed from 2005 to 2004, then be accepted as a true and complete record.

Moved : N. Payne Seconded: D. Smith, carried.

Matters arising from the 2004 minutes: Nil

Financial Report:

Motion: That the 2005 financial report be accepted.

Moved: G. Gurr Seconded: N.Candy, carried.

Matters Arising from the Financial Report: Nil.

Appointment of Auditors:

Motion: That Beattie Rickman be appointed as Auditors for 2005/06.

Moved: G. Gurr Seconded: M Tapp, carried.

Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust Report:

David Smith reported that the balance as per the May Directors' meeting report was \$316,924.21 in the Spicers Portfolio No 224771 and a further \$50,000.00 on term deposit for a total of \$367,897.30.

Election of Officers:

Board Election:

The President read out the following Statement:

The Constitution states that the Board should consist of not less than 6, of which half, but not more than two-thirds shall be permanently appointed directors. As of right, the permanent appointments are the chairman, president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. Other permanent appointments are D. Smith & W. Abel. Retiring directors are Rachael Mitchell, John Dermer, Jim Law.

Standing for re-election to the Board: Rachael Mitchell, John Dermer, Jim Law.

Nominations for the Board:

Motion: That R. Mitchell, J. Dermer and J. Law be confirmed as Board members
Moved: K. Cook, Seconded: D. Johnston. Carried.

General Business:

Membership and Subscriptions:

The President explained the need to raise subscriptions and the positive result to date.

Wetland Care: Mr Abel reported that \$30,000.00 was allocated for wetland development projects.

Strategic Plan: The President reported that the Strategic Plan was reviewed at the May Board Meeting.

Publicity and Promotion: The President stated that we needed to promote DU, especially to the rural community, as a wetland habitat conservation group.

Magazine Upgrade: The President commented that Flight is the only contact with many of our members. The upgrade is now in place.

Website: Mr Law reported that the Website was reactivated with hits on it increasing.

Education DVD: Chris Thomas's video is now on DVD. Funds have been allocated to purchase the DVDs and circulate to schools

Corporate Sponsors: Banrock relationship is progressing well.

Threatened Species Programme:

Pateke well on track.

Whio just completed audit

Wairio Report:

Jim Law presented a report. The key message is that the project is on track. Wairio is approximately 500 acres on the eastern side of Lake Wairarapa. In the past attempts were made to farm the site, unsuccessfully. The Wairio project fits our key strategy to develop a significant wetland near a major population. The Wairio site is owned by the Crown and administered by DOC. DOC have entered an agreement with Ducks Unlimited to manage and develop the project. A steering committee has been formed of local interest groups and people. Mr Cottle is the chair and Jim Law is the secretary of the committee.

The key issue for restoration of the site was the reinstatement of a wall to trap water within the area. This has been completed with 200 acres of water in place. Local DU member and Environment Wellington award recipient, Howard Egan, donated and planted flax and kahikatea.

Future plans include establishing fences to create a balance of protected areas (cluster plantings) and control grazed areas.

Next year we intend to do more earthworks to create islands. Establish another wall higher up which will establish a greater expanse of water and improve public access.

Local publicity has been generated.

Special Business:

Whangamarino Swamp. It was reported to the meeting that DOC have suggested that we may wish to be involved in the Whangamarino.

Mr Jensen addressed the meeting about his development of over three ha of wetland in the Horowhenua.

Closure: The President thanked his Board for their work through the year.

Mr Pirani congratulated the President and the Board on a good year and well-run meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.49am.

O.J.Latham
Secretary

Other Activities over the 31st AGM weekend

Wetland Tour: Auckland City Council wetland park 'Waiatarua' and DU member Bev McConnell's garden and wetland, 'Ayrilies'.

Saturday Dinner:

Lifetime Achievement Award to Mr Ken Cook .

Bill Barrett Trophy to Mr Jim Law.

Sunday:

Predator-control presentations by Scott Theobald, DOC National Predator Dog handler and Darren Peters, DOC National Predator Officer.



FISH AND GAME NEW ZEALAND CRITICAL OF DAIRYING AND CLEAN STREAMS ACCORD

Fish and Game New Zealand have challenged the results of a progress report released in June outlining the results from the second year of the voluntary Dairying and Clean Streams Accord.

The report praises progress made towards targets set in 2003, but does not demonstrate significant progress in actual on-farm practices. 'To suggest that a 1% increase from 2003/04 to 2004/05 in bridging stock crossing points is "significant progress" is stretching the reality. Again, a 2% increase in use of nutrient budgets from a low 17% in 2003/04 is hardly "significant progress",' claims Bryce Johnson, Director, Fish and Game New Zealand.

He said that the report pinpoints three elements which Fish and Game have been advocating for some time. First, he said that many farmers are to be acknowledged for taking measures to protect and enhance the nation's freshwater resource. This core group has been working with, or towards, sustainable practices since before the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord was initiated, and Bryce Johnson states that they deserve acknowledgment for this. Mr Johnson's second point is that the targets set in the 2003 Accord are far too soft. Many of these standards would have already been met by that core of environmentally-responsible farmers. Achieving soft targets, and reporting on existing performance in excess of 'targets' does not demonstrate significant progress, he emphasised.

The third point is the real rate of progress in changing the approach of the balance of farmers whose practices continue to degrade New Zealand's finite waterways. This approach is, in the opinion of Fish and Game New Zealand, very disappointing. Mr Johnson said that independently of targets and already-established healthy practices, there is very little increase in the number of farms using nutrient budgets, farms which exclude stock from streams, protect stock crossing points or manage their dairy effluent.

'The report gives false comfort to those unwilling to take responsibility for adverse environmental effects; the good news is not "news" at all, but is the result of a core group of farmers having long established sustainable practices. The report enables the environmentally-careless to ride on the backs of those who put in the effort to pass on a healthy environment to the next generation', concluded Bryce Johnson.

The Resource Management Act includes mandatory requirements 'to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the environment' (Section 17) and 'prohibits contaminants entering natural waterways' (Section 15). The Dairying and Clean Streams Accord is voluntary, but everyone is subject to the RMA. Why, then, are the obligations under the RMA 'voluntary' for farmers, and obligatory for the rest of New Zealand?

Another point which could be pondered upon is that if Accord-type waterways are, in the words of the Accord 'wider than a stride and deeper than a Redband', then what about the tiny streams which flow into larger waterways? Are they not included?

For further information contact

Ric Cullinane, Communications and Marketing Manager, Fish & Game New Zealand

Phone: 04 499 4767 Mobile: 021 994768

Email: rcullinane@fishandgame.org.nz

Pukaha Mount Bruce wins Australasian award

Strong community support and dedication from Department of Conservation staff are behind the conservation achievements that have won Australasian recognition for Pukaha Mount Bruce.

Pukaha Mount Bruce is sharing with Auckland Zoo the 2006 international Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria (ARAZPA) award for In Situ Conservation awarded recently for exceptional effort towards habitat preservation, species restoration, and support of biodiversity in the wild. For more information contact:

*Sally Thomas, Programme Manager,
Community Relations, Masterton NZ
mailto:stthomas@doc.govt.nz*

New Product - Singing Cards!

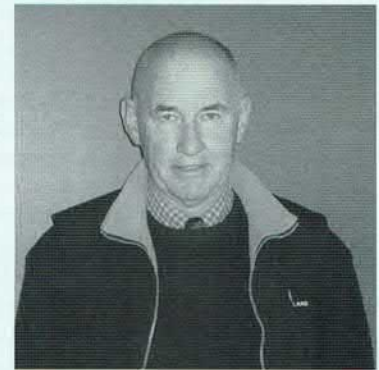
Pukaha Mt Bruce is selling a new range of greeting cards guaranteed to delight birdlovers! When opened, the beautifully-designed cards play the song of a tui, kiwi, kokako, saddleback or bellbird. The card shows glossy images of the bird on the cover and inside. The cards retail for \$15.50 and can be purchased from reception or by phoning the shop at Pukaha Mt Bruce on (06) 375 8004 or emailing info@mtbruce.org.nz.

Pukaha Songs of the Forest

One way to support the restoration of the Pukaha Mount Bruce forest is to purchase the audio CD 'Pukaha Songs of the Forest'. This CD takes the listener on a melodic voyage of birdsong, from one dawn to another. It captures a forest lost in time, and another whose promise is yet to be realised. Featuring native birdsong and waiata composed and performed by Rangitaane o Wairarapa, all proceeds go towards funding the restoration. The CD can be purchased online from www.mtbruce.org.nz/cd.

OUR People

DU's new Treasurer John Bishop



John joined Ducks Unlimited when he returned to New Zealand to take up the position of General Manager for Dow AgroSciences in 1990. Around 1992 he joined the Board of DU. In both roles he was the catalyst for Dow AgroSciences supporting DU through donations to the Whio project over three years.

In 1996 John again left New Zealand for Pakistan as CEO and Managing Director of DE United, a joint venture between Dow Chemical and a local company.

Returning to New Zealand, John reacquainted himself with DUNZ and this year was invited back on the Board. He has taken on the role of Treasurer from this financial year.

Always a keen duck hunter, John enjoys putting something back into the conservation and hunting of ducks. Living on 50 acres just outside Cambridge his other passion is the breeding and racing of thoroughbreds, and although he has enjoyed some success, he sees himself as a 'victim' for which he should regularly seek counselling!

Other interests include farming, farm forestry, property development and new venture companies. He is also on the Cambridge Community Board.

Brown Teal Roundup

Emma Neill who for the past six years has been working in the field as the Brown Teal Project Manager at Mimiwhangata is to leave to work with kakapo and kiwi. Emma's arrival in Northland coincided with the Brown Teal audit back in 2000, a critical period both in the recovery programme and management of Brown Teal at Mimiwhangata. The years since the audit have been challenging for the species and the staff, but the end results have been rewarding and well worth the effort. Many good DOC staff come and go in projects, and Emma has not only been one of the good ones, but her passion and drive have seen the project through to completion over the past six solid years.

Mimiwhangata, Northland from Emma Neill

Emma reports that 'Rosalie Stamp is being mentored into the role of recovery group leader and doing a fine job. We may need to start looking for another advisory scientist as Ray Pearce may be off to another exciting adventure in the Pacific but will keep you updated on this'.

Pateke Recovery Group

Another successful Pateke Recovery Group Meeting was held over two days in Whangarei at the end of May and was well supported by members and local DOC area staff and managers.

With lots of discussion and planning for the next 12 months, our main wild sites (Mimiwhangata and Great Barrier Island) need a bit of tweaking but apart from that nothing major, and as always effective predator control is the key component. Our first major release site Moehau looks like it has had enough birds released, with 210 birds being released there so far, and they will now look at monitoring the survival rate of progeny produced from our released birds. This is an exciting step forward for captive releases. Now the next big thing is to look at where our next major release sites will be for the next couple of years and the Tutakaka site looks to be one of them. We have narrowed down a list of potential sites which will be assessed by group members in the coming months for a second site. (*More on page 15*)

The full Brown Teal Roundup will be produced at the AGM and anyone wanting to see it complete in print may contact Ossie Latham, or by email at swansmead@xtra.co.nz.

There is more on page 15 but the editor apologises for those Pateke Roundup contributors for whom there was no room this time as the material arrived right on deadline.

First mainland breeding population of takahe to be established in the North Island

A pair of the critically-endangered takahe was flown from two offshore islands in June to a protected area on Maungatautari Reserve as part of the Department of Conservation's continuing recovery plan for the species. Fossil remains in the area around Maungatautari show that a North Island takahe species once existed on the mountain. As they are now extinct, the Trust has decided, after much consultation with species recovery groups, to introduce the closely-related South Island takahe.

Dr Kerri-Anne Edge, Takahe Recovery Group Leader with the Department of Conservation said that 'of the 300 birds left in the world, 96 live on predator-free islands around New Zealand. Each year we move some of these between the islands to prevent closely related birds from mating. This is the first time we have transferred birds from the islands onto the mainland'.

The eighteen-month-old birds have never met but the hope is that they will breed on Maungatautari to establish a population in the North Island.

A helicopter collected the young bachelor Kina from Maud Island and flew to Mana Island to collect his future life partner, Kelly. Representatives from Ngai Tahu and Ngati Koroki Kahukura met the birds in Wellington and flew with them to Hamilton, where, after a thorough health check, they were escorted to a secluded area on the mountain.

In accordance with Maori protocol their names were changed to acknowledge the gifting tribe and current events.

Kelly's new name is Matariki to acknowledge the Maori New Year which is celebrated from 16 June. Kina has been given the name Hauhunga which means the falling of the snow. The Ngai Tahu land in the South Island was at the time, in late June, covered with a blanket of snow. Following a brief prayer the birds were released to gasps of delight from the small group gathered.

Matariki and Hauhunga spent a few moments with each other before wandering off in different directions to explore their new home.

While the birds are considered too young to breed this year they will bond ready to produce chicks next year. Earlier this year volunteers swamped the Trust with offers of help to ensure the protected area would be completed in time.

The Maungatautari Trust intends to hold a special open day of the protected enclosure later this year to let the public catch a glimpse of the takahe after they have settled into their surroundings.

Takahe Facts

- The current natural population is restricted to the Murchison Mountains in Fiordland National Park (around 53,000ha), and there are also some small translocated 'managed' populations on a few offshore islands where they now face overcrowding. Maungatautari will be another translocated managed population - its geographical distance offering security against disease wiping out the species.

- The South Island takahe was thought to be extinct until a few birds were spotted in the Murchison Mountains, Fiordland, in 1948. Human predation and a range of introduced predators would have been the main agent of decline for both North Island and South Island takahe, from the glory days when they occurred throughout their respective islands.

- Adult birds can grow to 50cm high and weigh about 3kg. The nest is a raised bowl of grasses and normally three eggs are laid.

See photo on front cover.

For further information please contact:

Julie Milne at the Maungatautari Trust, phone 07 823 2469; mobile: 027 292 3668; email: julie@mediaprofile.co.nz or contact:

Dr Kerri-Anne Edge at the Department of Conservation, phone 03 249 792; mobile: 027 2545119; email: kedge@doc.govt.nz

The appearance of a newly-hatched Campbell Island teal duckling in one of the breeding pens at Pukaha Mt Bruce on 3 April was a nice (if somewhat unexpected) surprise, says Sally Thomas of DOC. 'This is the latest that a CI teal duckling has hatched in captivity at the National Wildlife Centre as far as we can determine', she reports.



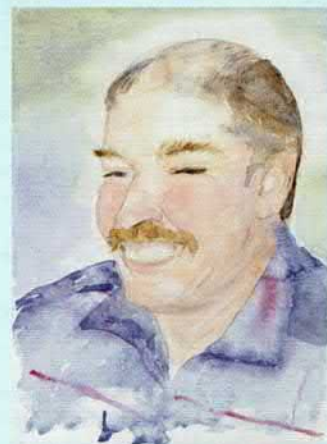
Who Release at Point Burn



*This photo taken by Amy Whitehead shows the Point Burn where the final three whoie ducklings for this season were released in March. Pictured are Caroline Carter (DOC) and Rae Wilson (Real Journeys). (DOC Copyright)
See Whoie Report pp 10-11 and photo back cover*



The two photos on right and one below show work on the second stage of developing the Wairio project on Lake Wairarapa. Extensive digging has taken place. Courtesy Ross Cottle



Ross Cottle, photographer.

PATEKE RELEASE AT MOEHAU



Photos above, from the 2006 pateke release at Moehau. It was a glorious Coromandel May day, and a group of locals and others attended the low-key release, which was split between two sites within Port Charles.

Rebekah Caldwell from DOC and local landowner Paul Barlow oversaw the release of over 70 pateke.

For more information: Jason Roxburgh, Programme Manager-Biodiversity (Assets), Hauraki Area Office, Department of Conservation Cnr Pahau & Kirkwood Streets, PO Box 343, Thames.

MANGAONE

During the Ducks Unlimited board meeting in May, which took place at Ohakune and incorporated the annual Strategic Review, President Ross Cottle took these photos of Graeme and Jane Berry's wetland development, in the throes of Stage Two, at Mangaone. Lovely misty photography, Ross!



WHIO UPDATE 2006

from Peter Russell

A great year for whio with 21 captive ducklings reared by four of our breeders and all of them were released on to Egmont. A great thank you to you all for the work you have put into it. Thanks too to Peacock Springs for finishing them off and getting them ready for release - a great job you do there, Ann!

Of the first release all birds are still alive and doing well with Dean Caskey keeping a close eye on them. The last nine arrived at the end of March in Palmerston North to have their transmitters put on and were then immediately taken to Egmont.

We received two wild males from the Manganui-a-te-ao for the breeding programme and really need some females to go with them. Hopefully next season will get many more to replace our inbred birds in the breeding programme.

Good to see the portable incubator being used in the South Island.

Photos are produced on page 8 and back cover.

Central North Island Project

Report from Jim Campbell

The nesting season has now finished, with all broods on the water or fledged. Work over December and January has focussed on banding juveniles prior to fledging. Pair numbers have remained stable on the Whakapapa/Whanganui/Mangatepopo. There have been a total of 19 nests producing 26 chicks of which 15 are still alive. Freshes at the end of September claimed a number of nests but the season has still been a successful one in terms of chick production on the Whakapapa/Whanganui/Mangatepopo. The end-of-season report is due at the end of February, and will provide comparisons between this season and last season in terms of population density and breeding success.

Manganui-a-te-ao

The breeding pairs on the Manganui-a-te-ao River have remained stable at 13 over the December/January period. Teams carried out four banding weeks with assistance from volunteers at different times.

The Manganui-a-te-ao resident pairs recorded 16 nesting attempts with 35 offspring produced. 26 individuals survived to fledging stage. 18 of these juveniles were netted and banded - 8 males and 9 females. 11 adults were also caught and nine of these were banded. Two birds were already banded and these were checked and released.

The freshes (river height) and the Christmas break hampered our banding attempts at various times. A small number (six) of juveniles fledged and dispersed over the break.

Three or more juveniles were banded as well as any un-banded resident individuals. We sourced five juveniles from the upper Ruatiti River and three of these were translocated to Mt Taranaki. The remaining two were banded and released. The three stoat lines were run on three separate occasions and produced the following results: 94 rats, 14 stoats, 15 hedgehogs, two cats, six rabbits and two weasels.

Whakapapa

Two pairs now remain on the Whakapapa after a female was predated by a stoat in December. One of the remaining pairs on the river successfully hatched six chicks, four of these chicks having survived to fledging (one lost during flow releases, one lost to unknown reasons). The other remaining pair has had one failed nesting attempt (reasons unknown). So, given the low number of pairs on the Whakapapa, four chicks surviving to fledging is a very good result. Two pairs are also resident on a tributary stream (Otamawairua) but have shown no indication of breeding this season.

Mangatepopo

There were eight pairs resident on the Mangatepopo throughout the breeding season. These were very productive, having a total of nine nests. Five of these nests failed (one to ferret predation, three due to freshes and one for unknown reasons). The other four nests produced a total of 15 chicks, of which seven still survive. The eight chick losses are mostly to unknown reasons, but at least three were lost during a fresh.

The number of pairs on the Mangatepopo has recently increased from eight to nine pairs. This new pairing is between an older male (at least 10 years old), and a juvenile from last season.

Whanganui

Pair numbers have remained stable on the Whanganui throughout December and January, with a total of 12 pairs being monitored. Eight of these pairs made nesting attempts this season. Of these nests, six failed (three during freshes and three for unknown reasons). The two successful nests hatched a total of five chicks, of which four survived to fledging (one lost to unknown reasons). Thus, productivity was low on the Whanganui this season with only 25% of pairs (two out of eight) successfully getting chicks onto the water.

Catching and Banding on Mangatepopo/Whanganui/Whakapapa

During December/January, 43 birds on the Mangatepopo/Whanganui/Whakapapa Rivers have been caught, with still another week or so of banding left to complete. So far 15 juveniles have been banded (six females and nine males) and 28 adult birds have been

caught. Work on finishing catching and banding will continue over the next couple of weeks.

Report below from Andrew "Max" Smart, DOC Te Anau area Ranger

We have reared 12 ONE ducklings from eggs collected from outside stoat-controlled areas. The first ducklings were released on 19 January in the Point Burn within the stoat-controlled area of the Murchison Mountains. Four out of the five released birds were located a few hundred metres below the release site, one week after release. Two unbanded wild adult males were seen only a few hundred metres above the ONE birds at this time. These birds will be followed up next week and then again at the end of February. The second group of ONE birds (four ducklings) are due to be released on 15 February and the last lot (three ducklings) on 13 March. All these releases will be into the Murchison Mountains stoat control area. On the wild side of things, we managed to fledge 26 ducklings within the study area (Clinton/Arthur and Cleddau). Another 11 were believed to have fledged within the extended stoat-controlled areas (Joe's and Worsley). These birds weren't monitored as extensively as the study area birds. We had a total of 12 nests that we know of within the study area, of these five had their eggs predated. No adults were predated on the nest. New areas of stoat control were started within the Worsley (Wapiti Foundation initiative) and Joe's Catchments. This increased the number of pairs within the stoat control areas from 17 to 24. In the next few years we should have a significant increase in the number of pairs within our stoat-controlled areas due to the large number of juveniles produced over the last few years. Our plan is to run the ONE programme for between five and seven years before re-evaluation. The initial year's releases will be into the Murchison Mountains. After this, the releases will most likely be into the Worsley, Clinton, Arthur and Cleddau catchments. Once we are satisfied that we have reached our target of 50+ pairs within our study area, we will re-evaluate the ONE programme and look to see where any further juveniles would be most useful. Juvenile dispersal has shown birds dispersing up to at least 35 km from their natal territory. We are due to fly around a larger area of Fiordland in the next couple of weeks to find a few transmitterised birds that have possibly flown well outside the study area.

Max wrote to Flight subsequent to this report: ...it was stated that we would release the ONE Whio into the Clinton/Arthur area. In the end we obviously released them into the Murchison Mountains. This release location was decided upon due to there still being one

year to run on our productivity/juvenile dispersal study in the Clinton and Arthur Valleys. The area in the Murchison Mountains that the ONE ducklings were released into is stoat controlled and has held good numbers of Whio in the past. One of the originally five released (a female) has already paired up with a wild male.

From Julie

Here is a brief update for our Oparara who protection project. This breeding season we are monitoring the survival and productivity of eight whio pairs, which is an increase from the two to three pairs monitored in previous years. Sugar, one of the new pairs is the first banded Oparara offspring to establish a territory in her natal catchment. So far this breeding season, 21 ducklings have been produced. We have recaptured two pairs and their offspring and inserted transponders into 12 whio. 423 stoat tunnels are routinely checked and cleared along 40 kilometres of river, tracks and access roads. 288 stoats have been caught since August 2002. This season stoat numbers have been relatively lower with 17 caught between August and December.

Nic and Pete - Two key projects underway - Styx (part of Styx Arahura Taipo) and Oparara (part of Oparara Kohaihai Ugly). Updates on these to follow. Landsborough Ark Site for Mohua is incidentally protecting 20km of river bed that contains whio from stoats. Moeraki Ark site for whio is on hold and will not be pursued until the existing programmes are fully established. Was a very mild winter and spring with few if any flood events October through to December. Consequently has been a relatively good breeding year with many broods being reported from the public throughout westland. Several large rainfall events early in January may have disrupted late broods.

Tim

Pearse River

2003

Population: Four. (one pair - AB, two single males).

Trapping: Commenced Aug 2003. Total kill = 0 stoats, 0 rats.

Productivity: Pair AB produced six ONE (Operation Nest Egg) chicks which were released in Flora Stream 27 March 2004. Total = six.

2004

Population: Five. (One pair - AB, three single males).

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill = six stoats, five rats.

Productivity: Pair AB produced six wild hatch chicks which were left in situ. Total = six.

2005

Population = Seven. (three pairs - AB, AE + AF, one single male).

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill = 24 stoats, 31 rats.

Productivity: Pair AB produced 6 ONE chicks (to be released into Rolling River 4 March 2006) + five wild hatch chicks for translocation into Flora in March.

2006* Total = 11.

*NB: Four of the five chicks were lost due to flooding - only one will be translocated to the Flora Stream.

Rolling River

2003

Population: Three. (One pair - AA, one single male).

Trapping: Commenced August 2003. Total kill = 0 stoats, nine rats.

Productivity: Pair AA produced four ONE chicks which were released in Flora Stream 27 March 2004 + four wild hatch chicks which were left in situ. Total six.

2004

Population: 11 (Two pairs - AA, AD, seven single males).

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill 15 stoats, 28 rats.

Productivity: Nil

Releases: Nil

2005

Population: 14 (Four pairs - AA, AD, AG, AH, six single males).

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill = 36 stoats, 160 rats.

Productivity: Pair AA lost a nest to predation + then produced 5 ONE chicks to be released into Rolling on 4 March 2006.

Pair AD lost a nest to flooding

Pair AG didn't nest

Pair AH produced three chicks (one chick was lost during a flood). N.B. This female is a ONE female

Total productivity = Seven.

Releases: Four ONE survivors from Flora Stream re-released in Rolling on 29 January 2005.

2006 to present

Population: 17 (Four pairs: AA, AD, AG, AH, seven single males, one juvenile female, one juvenile male).

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill 36 stoats, 14 rats.

Productivity: N/A

Releases: Proposed release of 11 ONE juveniles on 4 March 2006 (five originate from Rolling, six originate from Pearse River).

Flora

2004

Population: Two (two single males)

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill = 151 stoats, 290 rats.

Releases: Released 10 ONE juveniles on 27 March 2006 (four originate from Rolling, six originate from Pearse River). Six subsequently died - the four survivors were taken back into captivity and re-released into Rolling Jan 2005.

2005

Population: Two. (Two single males)

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill = 129 stoats, 412 rats.

Releases: Nil

2006 to present

Population: Two (two single males)

Trapping: Continuation of trapping. Total kill = 47 stoats, 77 rats.

Releases: Proposed translocation of one wild juvenile from Pearse River to Flora in March 2006

Gavin

Opotiki Area Whio Monitoring Update 2005/06

Takaputahi River Whio Monitoring and Protection Programme

The Takaputahi whio-monitoring programme was initially set up to provide long-term population trend-monitoring and short-term fluctuations, to assist with guiding management of whio populations. This site has now completed its 14th consecutive year of monitoring. The overall trend of the Takaputahi population has demonstrated a decline. Banding data gathered over the past eight years has indicated a high turnover of territory-holding adults and minimal recruitment of fledged juveniles. However, sponsorship through Environmental Enhance funding, from the Environment Bay of Plenty Regional Council provided the implementation of single-stoat traplines and cat control adjacent to the river margins in April 2002. Pest control has resulted in an increase of this population. However, sponsorship is due to finish after next season's monitoring.

During this season eight pairs and 12 juveniles were encountered in the 26km of river, (figure 1). A flood event during the 2003/04 breeding season impaired productivity and adult presence due to an early moult. Further monitoring is required to determine whether the fluctuation is a natural event or a result of the pest control. Pair density is three pairs per km or 3.25 km per pair with 1.5 juveniles per pair.



Te Waiiti River Whio Monitoring, Te Urewera Ecosystem Restoration Programme

Baseline whio data was gathered in January 1999 by a 'walk through survey' of 18km of the Te Waiiti stream. Subsequent to this, banding and intensive monitoring began in 2000, to determine the population dynamics, productivity and juvenile survival in the presence of the Te Urewera Ecosystem Restoration management regime. Stoat trapping in this river system was implemented in August 2001 through the support of Forest and Bird, and again through Environmental Enhance funding, from the Environment Bay of Plenty Regional Council. This season a total of 18 territorial pairs were encountered producing 12 fledged juveniles. Pair densities have increased 2.5 fold and fledged 95% of the known juvenile produced in some years. There is one pair for every km of the Te Waiiti stream. The mean number of juveniles produced is 22 with a mean of 1.8 juveniles per pair. However the past three seasons have produced large numbers of juveniles (50, 51) that have been unable to reach fledgling status due to flood events that have wiped out broods during these three breeding seasons. Banding data has indicated that there is a 40% turnover of adult pairs during the past six years with minimal recruitment of natal juveniles, which maybe due to limited territories in the Te Waiiti. Juveniles have been encountered as far as 20.5km away from their origin and have been found to be occupying past vacant territories of neighbouring reaches.

Tauranga River non-treatment Whio Monitoring

The Tauranga River has been monitored in the earlier stages as part of unrelated work and one-off 'walk through surveys' from Andrew 'Max' Smart, DOC Te Anau area ranger, of 9km of river, to obtain a snapshot of the status of whio in other rivers in the Opotiki area. Comparative non-treatment surveys with the same effort as the Te Waiiti began in 2002/03 season, to measure pair density, productivity and survival of juveniles. This season a total of seven pairs were encountered, with seven fledged juveniles produced. There have been minor fluctuations in the number of adult territorial pairs, increasing slightly over the past four years. Juvenile productivity and their survivorship has been as high as 95% in the 2002/03 season. However this is considered to be a seasonal anomaly, with the mean juveniles produced per pair only 1.25 over this period. Mean pair density has been 1.6 pairs per km or .6 km per pair Whirinaki (Bay of Plenty Conservancy).

Murupara staff have implemented whio-monitoring and stoat control in the Whirinaki along the lower reach of the Whirinaki valley and have commenced banding for monitoring adult and juvenile survival. They are using the upper reach of the Whirinaki as a non-treatment for comparison.

Andrew Glaser



DU WEBSITE: www.ducks.org.nz

Considerable work has been done by webmaster Anthony Griffin, son of Jim and Marilyn Law, and it is now looking just absolutely fabulous! Not only is it attractive, it is also useful, so feel free to log in on a regular basis for news and more, on www.ducks.org.nz.

Well done, Anthony!

DU Patron assists snowbound kaki/black stilt

Two of the world's rarest wading birds are dead and one still missing after mid-June's heavy snows collapsed an aviary at the kaki/black stilt breeding centre near Twizel.

'This aviary collapse is a huge set-back for Kaki Recovery Programme and it's going to cost a lot to replace it,' said Dean Nelson, DOC Biodiversity Programme Manager. 'Our two remaining aviaries still have some snow cover and the last thing we need at the moment is another snowfall'.

Three large aviaries house captive-breeding kaki/black stilt and young birds until they are old enough to be released into the wild. Kaki aviculturist Emily Sancha reports that it had started snowing steadily in Twizel at midnight Sunday 11 June and one of the DOC staff housed near the aviaries thought he heard a loud bang at around 4am Monday morning.

'When I arrived here early Monday I couldn't believe the shambles and expected the worst', said Ms Sancha.

'There were 24 kaki trapped inside the collapsed aviary under a pile of twisted steel, netting and fresh snow. Remarkably most of the kaki actually survived the collapse. We were amazed when we found three juveniles alive after being buried under snow-laden netting for over six hours,' she said.

Only two birds were found dead and one bird has so far been unaccounted for. Another breeding pair of adult birds escaped but were caught two days later by aviary staff and are now reunited with their three juvenile offspring.

The young birds were due to be released in September, but are now being held in temporary accommodation until they can be relocated to Peacock Springs in Christchurch.

Mr Nelson said that Lady Isaac, [patron of Ducks Unlimited], was a lifesaver, and has looked after kaki in the past, which has been a huge boost to the recovery programme.

'We are extremely fortunate that Lady Isaac has generously offered to help with accommodation for the birds,' said Mr Nelson. 'In the meantime, all we can do is hope that this fresh forecast of snow doesn't cause more damage and that we can keep the birds safe until they are taken north.'

WANTED

MALE CANADA GEESE

Barry Wyllie of Taupo has three pinioned female Canada geese.
He needs three or four males
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Taste for grass roots endangers President Roosevelt's gift - Goose in the gun is overstayer

Canada geese were introduced to New Zealand as a gift from US President Theodore Roosevelt. They eventually became classified as a gamebird. They are still the most familiar geese in Alaska and across North America, classified into over 15 subspecies varying in size and shading. Here in New Zealand there are so many of them they are considered a pest to farmers by eating grass down to and including roots and then fouling grazing paddocks. During the summer they vary their diet with small animals found in their favourite wetlands such as snails, tadpoles and small fish. They mate for life (although those that lose mates will re-pair) and they first breed when they are about two to three years of age. Pairs generally establish a nesting territory and their nests are usually in a swampy area. Occasionally they nest in a tree, nests being made of dry grass, reeds, twigs and lined with lots of down. They produce four to five eggs per nest, raising their young as a family unit. Later, families often combine to form 'creches' guarded by several parents.

Canada geese are resident in New Zealand, and not migratory as they are in the northern hemisphere. This special peculiarity is often not understood. It is the reason Canada geese have been such a raw issue between conservationists and agribusiness.

They travel huge distances when they seasonally migrate, flying with great speed and regularity. Before rising they will usually run a few feet with outspread wings, but if surprised can fly straight up suddenly. However, they are also well-adapted for walking on land as they feed mostly by grazing on vegetation and, as with most other waterfowl, geese are flightless for about a month in mid-summer, while new wing feathers grow.

The Canada geese issue has become central to the question: why does Fish and Game New Zealand control bird populations?

Most duck species – mallards, grey, shoveler, black swan and pukeko – have a restricted hunting season, generally from May to July.

Fish and Game New Zealand manages waterfowl and upland gamebirds on behalf of recreational hunters. If this method does not make enough impact on the population of the Canada geese, Fish and Game can organise hunting parties at no cost to the farmers who request the culling. Management of these birds includes setting rules for how many birds can be taken by hunters and at what time of the year. Gamebird species include Canada geese, ducks, swans, pheasants and quail.

Gamebirds are hunted and harvested at a rate that is sustainable and in most cases at levels that are appropriate to all people including farmers on whose crop birds occasionally feed. Sustainable gamebird hunting ensures the birds are not over-hunted. However some bird populations are unable to be managed through traditional hunting. Reasons for this include the intelligence of the bird, the rugged terrain they inhabit and the almost endless source of good quality food. Paradise shelduck and Canada geese are in this group. In some cases, population explosions result in the birds' health suffering. In most cases, culling is achieved through organised hunts using a number of sporting hunters but occasionally the geese are shot from helicopters. The other method takes place in January when the birds are moulting and unable to fly, when staff move the birds into holding pens where they are stunned and beheaded. The official view is that this method may seem crude, but it is the most humane method available. It is approved by both the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

In 1987 the New Zealand population of Canada geese was about 400 and by 1997 had exploded to 3000. In 2002 the population was recorded as 4000 but this year 2006, it is about 2000.

The bottom line is, should Canada geese be officially declared a pest, as many farmers are demanding, the Regional Councils would get into the act and this could be costly in monetary terms. Rather, the Ministry of Conservation asked Fish and Game New Zealand to prepare a Canada goose management plan, which was implemented in 1995 and sets regional population levels for Canada geese.

Flight invites readers to submit short letters to the editor on this issue.

Tuhua pateke update - March 2006

All 21 working tx pateke are fine and I saw four of the five non-txed birds so the assumption is all 28 have survived the first month in fine form. The best count was when we obtained a minimum of 25, very likely 27 birds. I watched some sitting on a fallen log across the lake and they just looked like they belonged there. Also, we watched four fly around the perimeter of Black Lake - one dropped out after three laps, two dropped out after four laps and the last one made it around five times before it too crash-landed! They appear to be good fliers but landings need a bit of practice. Generally speaking they certainly don't exhibit 'stranger danger' like other waterfowl. No wonder they are endangered and become diminished by predators.

Several of them made forays around the lakes area, across to Green Lake and up wetland arms. Significantly, they all came back to the general release area after a day or two.

They didn't take to maize until pellets were almost removed from the feeders - tough love ended up the only way as they were very attached to their pellets. We obtained some good feed info which graphed nicely over the 31 days. Five feeders were left filled up with whole maize and will be checked and filled as part of ongoing monitoring over the winter. We conducted lots of observations of pateke feeding naturally and dabbling around water edges and within raupo/carex.

Monitoring will now reduce to about every four to six weeks as able until spring. Now we are through the critical transfer and first month settling in period, only other major unknown is whether there will be enough food for them to maintain/hit breeding condition over winter and for the ducklings in spring. Watch this space.

Report from John Heaphy
Conservation Officer (Protected Species and Islands)
Department of Conservation
Tauranga Area Office

Canada geese -

A story from the Canadian point of view

In the whole country of Canada, it is a federal offence to interfere with, endanger or kill migratory Canada Geese. This protected status leads to stories such as the following from our Canadian correspondent, Rosemary Carlisle:

A Canada goose's determination to protect his mate and nest tugged at the heartstrings of Ontario's University of Waterloo campus, gripped by exam fever recently.

The geese (dubbed Ethel and Bert) moved into the campus grounds and busy students, staff and professors tried to walk and work around them. Their nest was close the parking gate at University Ave and Seagram Drive - of liquor fame. Bert flew at the cars coming and going, planted himself in front of the cars, stared them down and hissed louder than the cars honked (though Bert honking would have produced hisses too). Getting bold, Bert tried to block two lanes at once but his feet were too big, one got squished.

The Humane Society was called to the rescue but Bert had disappeared, only to come back the next day to continue the hissing and staring, on one good foot, the other one tucked under his wing.

U of W was relieved to see him back, but braced themselves for long waits later when the goslings will hatch and amble around, blocking traffic and eventually fly over to the golf courses and swanky neighbourhoods and make a nuisance of themselves. All one can do is be patient with them, because after all, they are a symbol of Canada and protected by law. Are they tasty with a plum sauce?...we will never know. (By coincidence, Waterloo is the home of Research in Motion and its Blackberry handheld computer...this goose is still waiting to regain some motion to nibble on blackberries).

From Jack Worth - another in his series 'Waterfowl of the World'

Australasian shoveller

One of the four species of worldwide shoveler duck, with a population of over 110,000 in New Zealand and 40,000 in Australia, this species is one of the most secretive of all waterfowl. It is the bane of duck hunters, who find it difficult to bag, if almost impossible. In both countries the shoveler duck represents only 3% of the total bag, and because of their rather pungent odour, they are a second-choice table bird. They typically lay 9 to 11 eggs in long grass adjoining farm drains and the male stands guard as the female spends 25-26 days incubating her clutch. This species is difficult to breed in captivity as they need some 60 square metres of water supplemented with a diet of high-protein food.



The ducks get the last laugh (or, the burning bush)

Thanks to William Abel for this cautionary tale.



Steve Phillips, Auckland DU member, seen in the raupo and toitoi maimai - before inflagrination!

For years now we have prepared our maimais with a screen of vegetation and camo sheets wired on to the wall frames to about shoulder height. At this point we cut and poke toitoi heads into the screen, as they are a wonderful toppo which is always available at this point in the year, enabling us to keep our heads up and well covered without damaging visibility over the lake.

This has been a tried-and-true remedy suitable for hiding even the largest hunters to inhabit the hides. This opening day was very quiet, fine weather, few birds and the associated boredom of standing in the maimai waiting for some action encourages the type of hunters who use autos to be quickly repetitive with their trigger-fingers.

It was late on the Saturday evening; the two hunters in the hide both had autos, and it was almost dark when they unleashed a volley of shots at some birds unfortunate enough to have strayed within range, looking their way to see the reason for the barrage when one of the toitoi heads burst into flame, no smouldering struggling fire here, we had an immediate bushfire which quickly spread to the ring of toitoi surrounding the now panicking shooters. They looked like the decorations in the middle of a birthday cake with all the candles burning. Birds forgotten, self preservation took over and they were throwing the flaming heads out of the maimai as best they could. Fortunately the barrage emptied their guns but the maimai contained enough live ammo to have created another lake, had it exploded. We from afar developed concerns when we saw the flaming heads landing in the dry raupo rather than reaching the water (those guys were meant to be cooking the dinner that night).

All was well though, the fire burned out, the raupo didn't catch and we had a good laugh at their expense. Shooting was definitely finished for the night though!

On a serious note, although this had never happened before and we put it down to the increased pressures and hotter exhaust gases associated with the steel shot, be aware as although this event worked out ok, it could easily have turned into a disaster. Hot Barrels indeed!

Brown Teal Roundup (continued from page 7)

Captive Update from Kevin Evans

Once again it has been an extremely busy time of the year with over 100 birds produced this year for release. It has taken a large amount of organising to ensure all birds were disease-screened and moved to Peacock Springs for pre-release conditioning on time. A teleconference was held to review the disease-screening protocol and it has now been refined to allow for 'pooled sampling' as we now have enough historical test results to give us the confidence we need to lessen the extent of our testing. This new protocol will not only give us the assurance we need that each bird released into the wild has the required 'fitness' for best chance of survival but will also reduce our costs significantly.

Another major change is in the transport boxes we use for flying birds around the country to release sites or other captive holders. The boxes were trialed at the last release and worked well. We have changed from the old plywood boxes which held four birds individually and weighed 13kg empty, to a plastic air cargo bin which still hold four birds together but only weigh in at 3kg empty.

With such large numbers of birds being produced we will now be doing two releases every year, so with breeding facilities at maximum production, holding space is at a premium. We will now be looking at a release between Dec - Feb and our normal release time will be second week of May. This will mean breeders will have to disease-screen two groups of juveniles each year, but will also mean they do not have to hold them as long. Once again I would like to thank the efforts of the captive-breeders involved with the programme, as without your hard work and support this project would not be the success it is today.

Other Captive News

Early or late ducklings I am not quite sure, but yet again there have been reports again of ducklings hatching in May from three facilities, Hamilton Zoo, Mrs Chris Turner and Ron and Gaye Munro. This is a great start for our next release with already 12 ducklings on the ground.

Brown Teal Conservation Trust from Neil Hayes

The Trust recently gained some very positive publicity for the brown teal recovery programme, with a full half-page spread in the Wairarapa Times Age. The article reviewed the excellent progress being made towards

saving brown teal and highlighted the magnificent brown teal painting presented to the Trust by Janet Marshall - to raise funds for the Trust and the recovery programme. On the breeding front one of the Trust's pairs produced a very late brood and has reared two from it. Another pair are currently in production mode. In April Neil and Sylvia Hayes visited Slimbridge and the London Wetland Centre. At the Wetland Centre's NZ Enclosure they were greeted by an impressive looking pair of patekel - and by a pair of NZ blue duck.

TiriTiri Matangi from Barbara Walter

Wharf Road Dam.

Jemima is nesting again. We did not manage to band the juvenile that survived from the clutch 19 November, as it was too crafty and then they chased it away.

Lighthouse Valley Dam.

Since Britannia was found dead in the eel net, Finn has stayed with his new mate Blue Bonnet. He is in breeding plumage but no sign of nesting yet. The water in the dam was very low until the rains of last month.

Bunkhouse Dam.

Two females mostly seen and an occasional third female which they chased off. Very occasionally a shy male on his own is seen.

North East Bay Dams (new wetlands area).

Connie and Ralph: Connie is nesting again and the eggs are due to hatch soon. We didn't band the two remaining juveniles of the four from last hatching. All six disappeared when the dam levels were low and only Connie and Ralph returned Anzac Day after heavy rain increased the levels. No sign of the juveniles.

Fisherman's Bay Dams - Daisy and Ruan.

On 8 February only Ruan, both of them always seen previously to this, then on 11 February they appeared with five ducklings! Unfortunately there was very little water in the dam and their home Fisherman's Bay Dam one had completely dried up and had three dead eels in it. On 20 February only Daisy and three ducklings. On 22 February, extra water pumped into the dam - Daisy and only one duckling. Next day no one. Daisy and Ruan returned to Fisherman's Bay Dam. 28 April after heavy rain filled up the dam.

Bush 21 Dam - No sign of Rose - no longer with us at twelve years old. This is our last newsletter as we are retiring.

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