

Flight



ISSUE 146 - February 2011



**Inside: wetlands,
waterfowl and people**



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.

Central to Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is forming partnerships with people and organisations with similar aims. Money from our partnership with Banrock Station Wines has been given to wetland conservation projects done by, among others:

- Tutukaka Landcare Coalition
- Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc.
- 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
- Cape Kidnappers pateke release, 2008 and 2009
- Fiordland pateke release, 2009

For further information, please contact:
William Abel - Director, Wetland Care
New Zealand, phone 06-362 6675
PO Box 281 Levin.

Conference 2011 Easter this year

Mark your diaries for the next DUNZ Conference and AGM to take place in Masterton, Wairarapa, at the Gateway Motor Inn over the Easter weekend this year, 23-24 April 2011.

Registration information will be sent out as soon as possible.

Note that this date is quite different from the usual mid-winter date!

Zealandia's Baby Kiwi



Baby Kiwi at Zealandia. Photo Andrew Digby.

The first issue of Quack Club as a separate insert in Flight

The new Quack Club for Ducks Unlimited New Zealand arose as part of the strategic plan by the directors to involve more young people in our conservation movement, and Michelle Cooper our webmaster made a presentation to the 2010 Taupo conference, as members will recall. It is hoped that the many extra copies being printed each Flight issue will be given out to schools, for a school only need to contact info@ducks.org.nz to have more of the pamphlets sent out to them, at no cost. So if you have a nearby school, or young persons' group, even if you don't have school-age children, it would be nice to spread the word and get these pamphlets out among the children and their parents. Invitations would have to include the parents to such events as plantings, outings, of course. Thus the environmentalists of tomorrow will gain encouragement from our efforts, it is hoped. So please spread the word, make sure your copy of Quack Club is not wasted but rather is given out to a young person of your acquaintance, and this will all help.

www.ducks.org.nz

Our new website has been ameliorated, improved, zapped up, given new life by our wonderful Michelle Cooper of Artemis Creative Studios. Have a look at www.ducks.org.nz and enjoy!

NEW MEMBERS

- Pam Newson of Urenui
- Alan Wilde of Greytown
- Bryan Burkitt of Kaeo, Northland

President's Letter

One of the concerns I have had for some time is the disconnect between city dwellers and the countryside. Increasingly I meet folk who have simply no idea, for example, about the effect of the seasons, how stressful drought can be, how hard it is to farm with boggy ground and in particular no appreciation that death is part of life. I feel privileged to have been able to raise my children on a farm, albeit only 164 acres, while carrying on a profession in the city. Unfortunately the realities apply to me as much as anyone and one had to go. Economics determined that decision, not my heart.

The events of the last six months may give some pause to consider the might of nature. The feeling of total inadequacy during an earthquake is not an enjoyable one. The enormous power of water in flood is now firmly etched on most people's minds. Even supposedly inert mountains can have their way despite all our technological superiority. Just perhaps folk might start to think how do we work with this planet as opposed to coercing it to our way of thinking.

One of the problems for DU which comes out of the disconnect is the difficulty in sustaining chapters in the city centres. It is the most difficult in Auckland and Wellington but this is not unique to New Zealand. They have the same difficulties in Toronto and other large cities in North America.

How do we change this? Well, it will not be easy otherwise we would have done it. But the Board believes education is the way to start and further, we need to get our future New Zealanders on board. In this issue we launch the "Quack Club". It is aimed at the primary school children. We would like to draw them in to DU, to create an interest which can be taken forward. This is being supported on our website which is more likely to attract the younger members of society. Take a look. Quack Club may do nothing for you but give Flight to your children, grandchildren, or others in your wider family. Encourage an interest. That it can be fun is evidenced by the working bees at the Wairio block – you will have seen the photos in previous issues.

Let's ensure the viability of our membership and the continuation of our contribution to the environment. Involve a child today.

David Smith

President



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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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Front cover photo: Cygnets, courtesy of William Abel of Haritini

Canada Goose and Snow Goose - what's the difference?

William Abel reports that he had a conversation with Len Everett, the DU Canada director who visited New Zealand two years ago.

Len had been out shooting in the first week of November and shot a snow goose that had a leg band on it.

When they investigated the number it was found that it had been banded in Russia on 7 August 2010. It met its untimely end at Black Creek, Vancouver Island on 5 November 2010.

Snow geese are known for their white plumage, but many of them are actually darker, gray-brown birds known as blue geese. These birds were once thought to be two separate species, but they have recently been found to be merely two different color morphs of the same bird. A single gene controls the colour difference.

Snow geese are harbingers of the changing seasons. They fly south for the winter in huge, honking flocks that may appear as a "U" formation or simply as a large "snowstorm" of white birds. They spend the colder seasons in southern coastal marshes, bays, wet grasslands, and fields. Their diet is entirely vegetarian, consisting of grasses and grains, grazed from damp soils or even shallow water.

At winter's end, snow geese fly north to their breeding grounds on the Arctic tundra. Pairs mate for life, and produce two to six eggs each year in a shallow ground nest. Chicks can swim and eat on their own within 24 hours, but families remain together through the young's first winter. Families can be identified as groups during both the southern and northern migrations.

In 1916, snow geese had become so rare in the eastern United States that hunting of the species was banned. Since that time, the birds have made a remarkable comeback. Today, though hunting has been reinstated, populations are thriving. In fact, the birds have become so numerous in places that they threaten to destroy their own habitat.

Canada Goose:

Of all the North American geese, the Canada goose, *Branta canadensis*, is one of the more common and recognisable species. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's 'All About Birds' website states that the Canada goose can be found all over North America with few exceptions. Year round, they live within the northern half of the United States, with the geese moving south for winter, or north into Canada for summer breeding.

Canada geese have black necks and heads, with brown backs, tan breasts and white cheeks and chinstraps. They can be found in and around any kind of water source. Canada geese are known for their loud, frequent honking sounds. Their wingspan can reach about 5.5 feet and they can weigh up to 20 pounds.

Snow Goose:

Anser caerulescens, or snow goose, lives within a wide range of North America. The University of Michigan Museum of Zoology Animal Diversity Web states they can be found around the St. Lawrence River, but migrate to New England states in spring. These birds are nearly as common a sight as Canada geese. Snow geese are smaller than Canada geese, weighing in at about 8 pounds, with a wingspan of 1.5 feet. Snow geese have two phases--snow and blue. Adults in the snow phase have white bodies with black tips, red legs and feet, a pink bill and black around the bill. Blue phase adults differ in that their bodies are blue-gray with a white head and neck.



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Sid Bronger, sadly missed

Left out of last issue, although it was announced at the DUNZ Conference by president David Smith, is this advice that Sid Bronger died early March 2010. He was a founding member and director, very involved in breeding ducks with his wife June. He also bred grey teal, scaup, brown teal, blue duck and mute swan. He put in considerable work and this parting is with sorrow.

Good news for who in Egmont National Park

Who populations are building in the Egmont National Park with five of the little ducks released in March and another six in April.

The who, or blue duck, is one of New Zealand's most endangered birds with about 2500 left in New Zealand. These birds had all but disappeared from the Park by 1948 but DoC has been working alongside the Central North Island Blue Duck Charitable Trust to rebuild the park population. The East Taranaki Environment Trust supports this work by maintaining trap lines to protect the little birds outside the boundary.

About 50 who live in the National Park now and most are offspring from captive pairs held around New Zealand. Four of the March ducklings came from captive birds held at Peacock Springs in Christchurch while the fifth was from a pair at Nga Manu Nature Reserve in Waikanae.

The six April ducklings are from eggs lifted from the nests of the park's who. They were raised at the Pukaha Mount Bruce Wildlife Centre complete with their own little brooder room and a safe swimming area and they returned to the park aged four months.

Now, thanks to a successful 1080 drop, their survival chances are high. March trapping figures show just one stoat was caught per 1200 boxes. At least 20 of the arch-enemy usually feature in March.

Who news from Peacock Springs

Great news was reported by Peter Russell, blue duck (who) captive coordinator, in November. A pair of flock-mated who have had five ducklings hatch in early November at Peacock Springs in the South Island.

The female would have been only 10 months and nine days when she laid her first egg with the male being 10 months and 26 days. She laid six eggs which were all fertile but one died.

This is the youngest recorded pair ever to produce in captivity.

Ann, Peter's wife, went to disease-screen them prior to going to Orana Wildlife Park and found the female sitting on eggs.

Peter says that this should be the start of a great breeding pair.

Noxious weed or handy habitat - a word from Neil and Julie Candy of Manawatu

A few years ago I was given a small gunnera plant to place beside the pond. It had struggled in my friend's garden, and neither of us knew it was a noxious weed at the time. It has taken several years to look like a survivor, and now when I want to exterminate it I can hardly upset our resident dabchicks. They have nested before amongst the rushes and sometimes after a couple of tries managed to hatch their eggs before being flooded out by the occasional deluge.

For the last two years the dabchicks have decided that the gunnera is ideal for them. They can nest a little higher, and still be protected as they come and go from pond to nest. The umbrella leaves protect them not only from the worst of the weather, but also from the beady eyes of the harriers. The only thing they are not protected from are the camera lens and the binoculars from anxious eyes on the jetty.

This photo was taken from our jetty with me perched on a ladder to get above the enormous gunnera leaf stem! You can just see the little dabchick by the slanted stem...



Manawatu Chapter Dinner another great success

The Manawatu Dinner was held on 16 October 2010 at the Awapuni Racecourse in Palmerston North.

A very successful night, it was once again organised by Neil and Julie Candy.

This dinner proved to be extremely difficult to get together. The numbers are normally around 100 to 120 persons but this year of recession, finished at 81. We are not sure whether the economy had any bearing on this but the final numbers were not able to be confirmed until the Wednesday prior. For the organisers and caterers this is unduly stressful so please in the future it is important that people confirm as early as possible.

The catering was delicious, the venue great and everyone appeared to have a great evening.

We once again want to thank Bob and Lynne Wood for the generous donation of the auctioneering skills, and the convenient date of Lynne's birthday.

This meant Bob Wood had to buy her present at our auction!

The amount of money that Bob has raised for DU through his exceptional auctioneering skills, and great humour over the years is incalculable. His humour and wit are infectious and few people can resist his skilful and enthusiastic methods of opening their wallets.

As far as the auction is concerned the main one went very well but the silent was a little slow and didn't bring in the normal amount of money we generally get. We put this down to the lack of numbers, altering the competitive spirit that increases the bids.

Thanks to everyone who donated goods to the auctions, you know who you are.

Thanks to Constellation NZ for the kind donation of the Banrock wines enjoyed by all.

Without the support and enthusiasm of all the people who make these events work with attendance, donations and purchases, the wetlands of New Zealand would be much worse off.

The profit from this year's function will be around the \$5000 mark.

A special thanks to Neil and Julie for their unwavering enthusiasm, and thanks to their daughters Theresa and Chanelle for ably assisting on the desk through the evening.



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First known kiwi chicks of the year - at Zealandia!

2011 has got off to a great start for the mainland's only little spotted kiwi (LSK) population, with researchers at ZEALANDIA this month finding the first two kiwi chicks of the new decade.

Both birds hatched on or around New Year's Eve and are already fending for themselves in the predator-free sanctuary, which is home to mainland New Zealand's only wild population of 'little spots'. In May last year, a survey showed the current population in the sanctuary to be around 100 birds, more than double the number originally released in 2000/2001.

The chicks were found by Victoria University researchers Dr Kristina Ramstad and Andrew Digby, who are studying the species.



Baby Kiwi: Photo courtesy of Andrew Digby

"We've been tracking nine pairs during the breeding season as part of a study into little spotted kiwi reproductive behaviour and nesting success," said Digby.

"We tracked males at least once or twice a week to look for signs of nesting, such as repeated use of the same burrow, and camouflaging of the burrow entrance, then used a 'burrowscope' to look inside the nest once the adults had left at night to see whether they were incubating eggs. We've also been using sound recorders and a video camera to monitor when the males are exiting and entering the nest, since these timings can help confirm incubation and can provide some indication of when hatching is due (the males usually stay on the egg longer closer to hatch)."

Tawharanui Open Sanctuary can use your assistance

The TOSSI nursery produces 20,000 plants each year to help revegetate the Sanctuary and provide habitat for the growing numbers of birds at Tawharanui. That's a big job! Would you like to come and lend a hand - especially during summer?

TOSSI - Tawharanui Open Sanctuary Society Inc, would also like to hear from community or business groups that want to have a special work session. If you are interested in finding out what is involved please get in touch with Paul Williams on 09 425 9877, or email Paul at pgrwilliams@xtra.co.nz.

Cape Sanctuary reports for summer

Exciting work continues at the seabird site with the process of re-establishing seabirds now well underway; the second cohort of grey-faced petrel chicks fledged well and the first transfer ever of Cook's petrel chicks took place with all 50 fledglings.

Mice have not been detected within this ring-fenced seabird area for over a month. This is a huge achievement which will allow us now to transfer mouse-vulnerable species like giant weta into the enclosure.

Along the coastline Little Blue penguins are making use of their new accommodation with many currently sitting on eggs and chicks. Gannet decoys and a speaker system broadcasting gannet calls is in place to entice a new colony to establish high on the Ocean Beach cliff tops.

Throughout the wider sanctuary, consistently low pest numbers have been seen geckos and skinks making a comeback; recently the first green gecko was sighted since pest control began in 2006. Forest geckos have taken up residence in the rifleman nest boxes, and we are almost tripping over speckled skink at Ocean Beach. (see article page 15 this issue, on lizards and skinks). Kiwi are well established and pateke are now found on almost every dam within the sanctuary. This season the duckling count is already over 50. The habitat around the dams has improved through a huge effort of growing, planting and ongoing maintenance.

Volunteer support has increased with people assisting with almost every aspect of the project.

They have been involved with the checking and filling of bait stations

Graham Gurr does the Wairarapa

I guess you would have to be a little mad to drive all the way from Auckland to the Wairarapa, just to attend a sporting clay shoot and then drive all the way back again, so you could be in the office at 9am the next day.

Sometimes though it is worth the effort and the annual Wairarapa chapter's sporting clay shoot on James Martin's property, Waitawa, just out of Martinborough, is well worth the effort. Well, I think so and judging by the local and not so local folk that turned out for the day, they obviously thought so too. The weather forecast was for rain and gale force winds and that probably helped to keep the numbers down, but for those who did turn up the weather, as it has for the past few years, was beautiful, clear sky and a little breeze - shirtsleeves weather.

The course was more challenging than last years, and many had a frustrating first round.

Ross Cottle and Jim Campbell had spent the previous day setting the course and took the good-natured abuse heaped on them at lunch in the

and pateke feeders, newsletter drops, delivering kiwi eggs and collecting their chicks. Volunteers have also attended to monitoring weta, surveying for orchids, weed control in the dunes, growing and planting trees, climbing the hills to run tracking tunnels and shooting rabbits.

Tamsin Ward-Smith Manager of Cape Kidnappers Cape Sanctuary reports that 2011 is gearing up to be another busy year with a number of ne Dune restoration at Ocean Beach will be well underway with weed removal and the propagation and planting of coastal species. Planning is also beginning for the transfers of saddleback and red-crowned parakeet to the sanctuary's forested areas.

Mouse eradication at the seabird site

Mouse eradication within the 1.5 ha ring-fenced, mouse-proof, seabird site began in mid September. Mice were the last pest to go, after rats and rabbits were successfully removed last year. The eradication plan has progressed extremely well thanks to volunteer Bob Carter who has worked tirelessly with sanctuary staff refilling bait stations and running monitoring tracking cards.

Before poison was laid mouse footprints were detected in 51 of the 56 monitoring tunnels (91%). Weekly monitoring since the end of October has not tracked any mice so far. It looks like the area is now pest-free and plans can progress for reintroductions of mouse-vulnerable species like lizards and large invertebrates such as giant weta.

spirit it was given. Most shooters were able to improve their scores for the second round, knowing where to look for some of the targets helped. In all the day was a wonderful success, top gun with a score of 94 (most shooters were happy with 50-60) was Jamie Peryer with score of 94. He was also registered as a junior shooter so won that prize as well. Di Pritt as usual took out the top woman's prize; it may have helped that she was the only woman shooting! The rest of the prizes were awarded by random drawing so even the lowest score had an equal chance of leaving with one of the many prizes donated by Wairarapa Hunting and Fishing and other local businesses. Roll on next year, when hopefully some of the targets will be a little easier!

By Graham Gurr

The opinions expressed in the above item are his own and in no way should be taken to be or reflect the official position of the board of Ducks Unlimited New Zealand. His current level of sanity is yet to be determined. (Graham's words, not those of the editor).

BCTC and the best predator traps

Neil Hayes of the Brown Teal Conservation Trust has produced a document concerning efficient predator control traps for protecting pateke, other waterfowl and many endemic birds. The predators listed are ferrets, stoats, weasels, rats, cats, harrier hawk, hedgehogs and pukeko.

In addition the BTCT recommended that mallard, shelduck and shag need to be diligently controlled at pateke sites - this after a good friend of Neil's shot a black shag and found six scaup ducklings in its crop. He reminds that cats, mustelids, rats and hedgehogs are totally alien to the New Zealand landscape, and that both the harrier hawk and pukeko are Australian species.

Neil says "It is pleasing to report that in key pateke areas most of the predators we listed are now being seriously targeted. From what we have experienced, and from information received from professional predator controllers, the most efficient predator elimination traps are still - the Timms Trap and the Fenn Trap.

At around \$25 each the Fenn is by far the least expensive trap to purchase, according to Neil, and the MK6, with its relatively new brass trigger, when set cross-wise in a tunnel has a devastating effect on ferrets, stoats, weasels and hedgehogs. One trapper has reported that in 400 mustelid captures, using a Fenn MK6, only one predator briefly survived!

The Timms has been the country's most widely-used possum and cat trap since it was invented, he reports, adding that it is also very successful on ferrets: absolutely nothing survives when caught in a Timms!

On the world predator control scene the Fenn continues to be the most successful and most widely-used trap and has the added advantage of being relatively very inexpensive. The Timms is also world-renowned and is excellent for cats, ferrets, rats, possums, hedgehogs - and the occasional harrier!

Regarding the Australasian harrier hawk, Neil reports that the BTCT wrote at length in their manual about this predatory bird - and the reasons why millions were exterminated by acclimatisation societies. He says that it must be acknowledged that this bird is a major predator of pateke, which is by far the world's most vulnerable species of waterfowl to the predation of all the wildlife shown in our 'need to control' list.

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Gordon and Anne Pilone extend the Pohangina Wetlands

Pohangina Wetlands recently has been extended by 1.5 ha. Besides providing a 'buffer' protecting the original two blocks acquired in 2000, the extension will add a new habitat to the wetlands. In total, with the home block, the wetlands is now 7.2 ha (18 acres). The wetlands was first featured in DUNZ 'Flight' Issue 120, July 2004, and again in Issue 127 April 2006 after the wetlands was opened to the public. The extension forms a triangle from the original L-shaped property (see aerial photo taken 23 October 2010).



Two shallow ponds were created by Tim Luttrell in June 2010. Surface water flows over a large part of the extension and is sourced from the old farm drain and two artificial artesian springs created from a drain pipe bisecting the block (see photo artificial artesian spring).

In time, the surface water will create a swampy paddock. In the aerial photo, the upper pond was dry at the time of the photo, as a leak developed after creating the head. This was repaired in November 2010 (see photo pond repair).

As the water table lowers during summer and autumn, the two ponds will dry out as the water flowing into them will cease flowing at their sources. This is actually a good thing as vegetation in the pond will regrow and become a source of habitat/feed when the water returns during the wet season. The rushes in this new extension are growing nicely and will become a different and important habitat for the wetlands. Pied stilt, spur-winged plover, heron, were already visiting soon after the shallow ponds were created.

Pohangina Wetlands has developed well over the 10 years as seen in comparison with the 2000 aerial photo before work began (see photo above of pre-Pohangina Wetlands 2000).



In the year 2000, farmland was purchased which had remnant kahikatea and other native trees struggling for survival in a very wet block along Pohangina Road near the village. A second adjacent block to the south with a bountiful spring was also acquired. Later, in 2010, a third block was purchased which completed the triangle formed by the earlier purchases. This block is being developed into a swamp from water sourced from an old farm drain and two artificial artesian springs created from a drain pipe bisecting the block.

Historically, this very wet land continuously challenged owners attempting to drain it for pasture development. The idea to reverse this process was initiated when the title to the land was placed in a charitable trust. **Pohangina Wetlands Development** was established from this trust to form a wetland habitat by creating ponds and restoring native grasses, bush, and trees. Hopefully, this will be part of the community for generations to come.

A generous grant from Horizons' He Tini Awa Trust was helpful in developing the large pond in 2006, and a large donation from Finnis Farming Company Ltd, Pohangina, aided the 2010 extension.

The foundation trustees include Gordon Pilone, Anne Pilone, Chris Pullar (all of Pohangina) and Ian Mackrell of Palmerston North. Recently, a fifth trustee has been appointed, Liz Grant of Pohangina.

GPS:
40°10'32.59"S 175°47'31.95"E

Directions:

The main entry gate is on Pohangina Road, 12 km north of Ashhurst township in the Pohangina Valley. A sign is visible from this direction, and there is room to park on the roadside.



Visiting times and Rules

Visitors are always welcome. The best times to visit are early in the morning and at twilight - the times when birds are most active and singing. Winter is the best season for visual impact when the ponds are overflowing and the landscape free of tall pasture grass. Best to bring gumboots to keep feet dry, and please leave dogs at home to keep the birds safe. Walk slowly and quietly, and visitors are asked to stay on the pathways. The home block is private.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For more information about the Pohangina Wetlands and the Pohangina area visit: www.pohangina.org

SOME STATISTICS:

- Open to public 22 December 2005
- Total area: 7.2 ha (18 acres)
- Ponds: 26 on 16 levels
- Pond sizes: 12m² to 0.54 ha (1.3 acres)
- Pond depths: 0.3m to 3.5m
- Islands: 5



Above photo shows Jim Law and Brian Burge at Wairio Wetland

Nikau Foundation grant to Wairio Wetland

In late December Brian Burge, Manager of the Nikau Foundation and Adrienne Bushell, who is Marketing Manager of the Nikau Foundation and life member of Ducks Unlimited New Zealand, paid a visit to Wairio Wetland to see some of the progress made possible by a grant from the Richard and Doreen Evans Trust, administered by the Nikau Foundation.

Jim Law, local DU Board Member hosted the visit and explained the different planting approaches used this year, one of which included using a bulldozer to scrape off the top six inches of topsoil in an attempt to prevent the rapid re-growth of tall fescue. This had been very effective apart from releasing dormant lupin seeds which were recently pulled by a team of young local farm lads.

Don Bell, the Greater Wellington Regional Council member on the Wairio Restoration Committee happened to be onsite with a gang of workers release spraying last winter's plantings, including on the mounds made from the surplus top-soil in the scraped areas. Both Don and Jim said they were very happy with this year's plant survival which should be enhanced by the release spraying.

At the end of the visit Brian commented "We are very impressed with what you are doing and really did not appreciate the scope of the project until this visit". Adrienne also expanded on the work of the Nikau Foundation, saying it was "a community organisation for the Wellington region set up to allow bequests from people for projects close to their hearts. All capital is invested and only income derived from it is distributed."

Readers will recall that Flight No. 143, April 2010, page 8 contains an article referring to the grant kindly donated by the Nikau Foundation.



The photo shows Stephen Hartley, Bridget Read, Jim Law and Tony Silbury at Wairio Wetland

Victoria University & DOC Visit Wairio Wetland

Stephen Hartley, Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Conservation at the School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University and 2011 Masters student Bridget Read joined Tony Silbery from DoC Masterton and Jim Law, local DUNZ Board member at the Wairio Wetland in late November. Bridget, a Summer Study recipient, was being introduced to the site, tall fescue and all! Bridget will be recording rare native grass species, recently discovered at the wetland, while the rest of us are at the beach. Then, in 2011, Bridget will be undertaking research for her Masters degree in Biological Sciences. While the research programme is still being defined it is expected to assist in the management and ecological restoration of the Wairio Wetland.

Tony Silbury states, "We have been surprised with what the restoration work has turned up so far and Bridget will assist with analysis of different species at various intervals along transects adjacent to the permanent water at Stage 1. It's a great summer research job for Bridget!"

Regarding the planned 2011 Masters research work Jim Law said "We are looking forward to having a bit more scientific rigour behind the methods we use to combat the problems we face at the Wairio Wetland. We are also looking for more options in a whole range of areas; controlling tall fescue, limiting the invasion of elders, willows, blackberry, etc to assist with plant survival and would expect that Bridget's work will assist other restoration projects," he added.

Jim and Marilyn Law have privately contributed funds towards Bridget's Victoria Foundation Research Scholarship and advises that if any other DU folks would like to do the same they should contact Sandra at info@ducks.org.nz

Wellington's rare kakariki fledglings

Conservationists at Wellington's world-renowned wildlife sanctuary, ZEALANDIA, formerly called Karori Wildlife Sanctuary, are celebrating the first successful fledging of a wild red-crowned parakeet (kakariki) chick in the city in at least 100 years.

The first flight was captured on a remote camera. The chick can be seen being coaxed out of the nest hole by the dad, before bravely taking the plunge as his younger siblings watch on. The video can be viewed on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9YWdgcDJoU>.

HD footage is available on request.

The two-month-old chick is one of three kakariki to hatch in the nest (a natural hole in an old tree fuchsia). It is almost certainly the first kakariki chick to fledge in the wild in Wellington City for 100 years. Fifty-five kakariki were transferred to ZEALANDIA from Kapiti Island in an attempt to re-establish a wild population in Wellington City. Small populations exist in Porirua and on Mātū/Somes Island but this is the first in the City in 100 years.

A member of the parrot family, the red-crowned parakeet was once common on mainland New Zealand, but it is now mainly confined to predator-free islands. Notable for its colourful bright green and red plumage, it nests in holes in branches and trunks of trees, crevices in cliffs, and in burrows in the ground. Wellington once supported a huge population of parakeets, but hunting, habitat loss and predation ensured the species was practically extinct by the late 1800s. A population established on Mātū/Somes Island in 2003 is now flourishing, but birds are rarely seen on the mainland and breeding off the island has not been recorded.



Photo shows six-week old kakariki chicks on the nest (photo: Chris Gee)

Eco-tourism attraction wins award

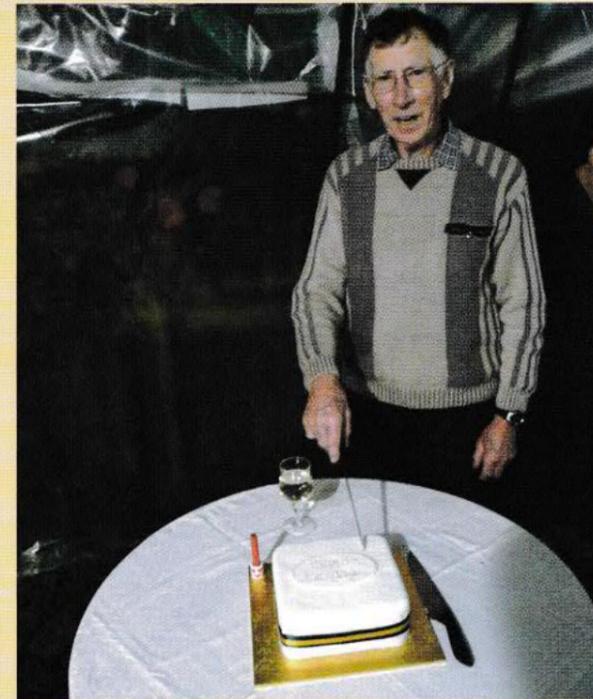
The Karori Sanctuary Experience at ZEALANDIA in Wellington has fought off stiff competition from over 1500 visitor attractions and accommodation providers around the world to win a coveted Responsible Tourism award in the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards in November 2010. The groundbreaking conservation attraction, which is located just 2km from Wellington CBD, won the 'Conservation of Wildlife and Habitats' category for its extraordinary 500-year vision to restore a corner of mainland New Zealand as closely as possible to the way it was the day before humans arrived and for the way it "immediately stood out as an ambitious conservation initiative which engages with tourism to secure local support".

Entrants were judged on their contribution to the economic benefit of tourism to the local community; the conservation of local culture and biodiversity; and the steps they have taken to reduce negative environmental, social and cultural impacts of tourism. ZEALANDIA joins a growing list of New Zealand winners including last year's supreme winner, WhaleWatch Kaikoura, and accommodation category winner Wellington YHA.

"We're absolutely thrilled to have won," said ZEALANDIA CEO Nancy McIntosh-Ward.

"This is a great recognition of ZEALANDIA's international reputation as a model eco-tourism attraction, and the groundbreaking work we have done with the assistance of many dedicated local volunteers to bring many of New Zealand's rarest species back to the mainland. As a not-for-profit attraction, every single visitor makes a real, tangible contribution to New Zealand's natural heritage and takes away with them a deeper appreciation of our impact on the natural environment."

Ken Cook longtime stalwart of DUNZ celebrates his 80th birthday



Well-known to many DU members, Ken Cook has turned 80.

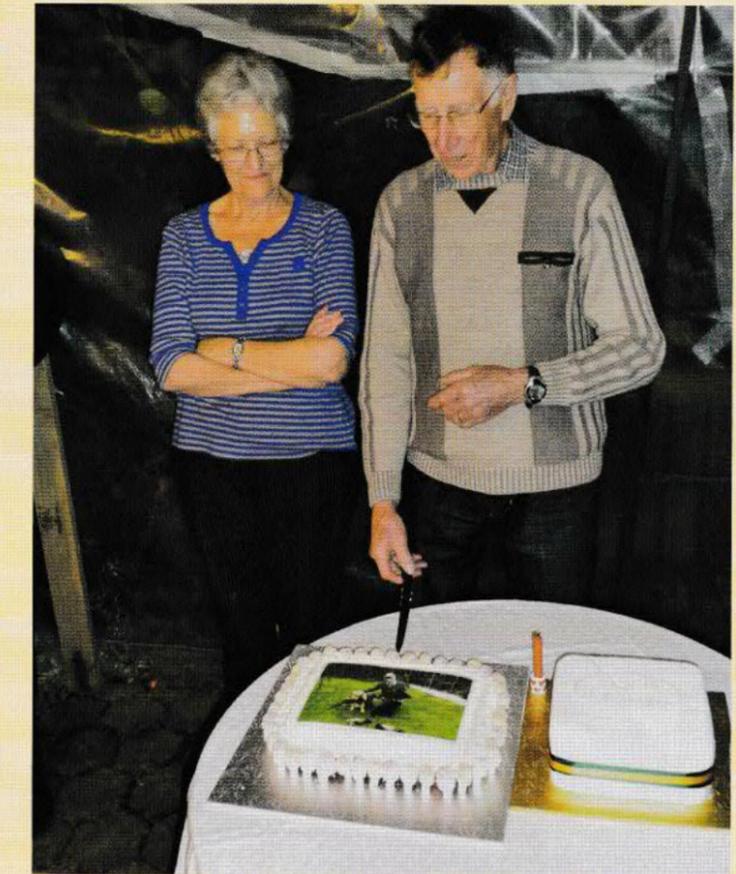
He has been an active Manawatu chapter member for a considerable time, spent many years on the board of DU and is responsible for the creation of numerous wetlands around the country. His conservation activities also led to him building the whio and pateke aviaries in the Palmerston North gardens when he retired from the building trade. These aviaries have been an important part of the recovery programs for these endangered waterfowl. Ken is a devoted family man and his DU activities have always involved his lovely wife Jan, and members of his extended family over the years.

A lifetime of gamebird hunting, competitive shooting and fishing has meant that Ken is well known throughout the country with that fraternity.

He has always held DU and Wetland Care up as an example of the successful compromise that can be achieved between the two activities of hunting and conservation.

Congratulations Ken, and thanks to you and Jan for all the work and encouragement you add to wetland conservation in NZ.

William Abel



WETLAND CARE'S QUACK CLUB

Quack Club is created by Wetland Care NZ especially for conservation minded kids... So if you want to learn more about NZ Wetlands & the animals that live there & have lots of fun become a DU Quack Club member today!

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f "QUACK CLUB" is on facebook fun activities available!

Now you can drive right through New Zealand's largest farm!

Opportunity opened up on 28 December 2010 to drive through the spectacular high country landscape of Molesworth Station, New Zealand's largest farm.

And the Acheron Road through the vast historic South Marlborough station is due to be open to the public until 7 pm on Sunday 3 April, fire risk and road conditions permitting.

Last year around 9000 people made the road trip during the 14-week open period.

Anyone planning to travel on the road should first check the road is open as it can close at short notice due to weather-related conditions. Calls can be made to the DoC South Marlborough Area Office, phone +64 3 572 9100 or people can ask at visitor centres in the region.

The 180,787-ha station is a recreation reserve administered by the Department of Conservation with its working cattle station run by Landcorp Farming Limited.

DoC South Marlborough Area Manager Dave Hayes said the road trip through Molesworth Station provided a special experience of a working high country station that is steeped in history.

"Molesworth is a fascinating place to visit, for its dramatic landscape of towering mountains and river valleys and its rich history related to farming and as an historic travel route

through the top of the South Island. That history can be sensed in looking around two historic cob buildings, the Acheron Accommodation House and the Molesworth Cob Cottage.

"The area is also ecologically important with over 70 threatened native plant species found there, including plants distinctive to the South Marlborough drylands.

"As it is a working farm, public access is restricted to roads and areas open to the public, including five short tracks for exploring on foot.

"The journey through the station can be made as a day trip, taking around six hours between Blenheim and Hanmer, or people can camp overnight near the Molesworth Cob Cottage and Acheron Accommodation House."

"Visitors to Molesworth Station are asked to comply with a Molesworth Care Code to protect the farm and the area's significant plant life. Care is particularly needed in dry summer conditions to prevent fires. Open fires are not allowed and portable cookers should be used for cooking."

The narrow and unsealed Acheron Road requires careful driving and is suitable for two-wheel drive cars and mountain bikes but not for caravans or vehicles over seven metres long. The Acheron Road is open between 7am and 7pm daily during its open period. There is no fee to travel the road.

Kakapo, Rescued from the Brink of Extinction - a new book for enthusiasts

The book has already generated the Christmas spirit as the Kakapo Recovery partnership donated more than 600 copies to schools throughout New Zealand and for every copy of the book sold through Paperplus before 31 December 2010, Craig Potton Publishing donated \$1 to Kakapo Recovery.

This book is the most comprehensive update of the kakapo story since David Butler's *Quest for kakapo* (1989). Rio Tinto Alcan New Zealand/New Zealand Aluminium Smelters Ltd General Manager Ryan Cavanagh said it is a valuable resource for students, teachers and the general public as it details the uniqueness of this iconic species and shares one of New Zealand's most successful conservation stories.

"This book would make an excellent gift. Not only is it raising funds to assist the recovery programme, but it is also raising awareness of a truly special conservation programme - one which we have been delighted to be involved with for the last twenty years," he said.

Kakapo, Rescued from the brink of extinction, is the latest release from acclaimed author Alison Ballance, who has captured the story of this remarkable bird's journey.

Covering the stories behind the Kakapo Recovery programme, from science to conservation and the team of dedicated people working to ensure this species' survival, this book is illustrated by 120 colour photographs.

2010 DUNZ Raffle Results

1st winner: Neil Candy
Helicopter tour of the Hawkes Bay Cape Sanctuary for four people incorporating a 'kiwi walk' experience.
Prize worth \$3000

2nd winner: G Van Der Loos
Panasonic 32 LCD TV- \$788

3rd winner: Martin Askes
Samsung 26 LCD TV- \$699

4th winner: Peter Billington
Westcoaster jacket and pants
Courtesy Ridgeline of NZ-\$599

5th winner: PBC and CL Pirani
Two nights' accommodation Kaikoura B&B- \$450

6th winner: Guy Sandall
Hunting fishing voucher - \$350

7th winner: Mark Newcomb
9ct gold pendant - \$250

8th winner: Brian Woodley
Clock radio - \$50

Many thanks to Kevin Campbell who organised this year's successful raffle.

Farewell from your editor Gail and welcome to Liz Brook

It has been my pleasure to be the editor of Flight since July 2005, having taken over from Juliet Oliver, and this is the 23rd issue I've put together. And the last. It has been a pleasant and worthwhile activity during which time I became acquainted with a good number of you, and what a pleasure that has been. What interesting, dynamic, passionate, dedicated and imaginative people I've got to know either by email, phone or in person. Being involved with DUNZ has opened my eyes to an element of this country I've not encountered before and taught me a great deal about the dedication and devotion to wetland conservation and development in New Zealand by people who give money, time and energy for no other reason than love of the birdlife whose habitats they create and offer. Financial gain is the last thing on their minds - rather refreshing!

I am passing on the editorship, with the DUNZ directors' blessing, to my friend Liz Brook, journalist of note and farmer, DU member living and working near Feilding. People in the lower North Island will know Liz's work with the Central Districts Farmer.

I have been stunned by the artistry and engineering of the many beautiful wetlands and lakes lovingly carved out of unforgiving landscapes, the joy those who created them and the decisions made by people to make this the one project they will work on to the end of their days. Many DU members have achieved great ages yet retaining a childlike enthusiasm and sense of wonder and passion for their birds and their habitats. The waterfowl on these wetlands is so varied, so healthy, so exciting. And, in the main, so safe and protected.

Frankly, it appears to me that most DU members own guns. Those

who develop and own wetlands need predator control to encourage the endangered birds living there. It seems to me that hunters hunt in the season with a healthy respect and deep knowledge of the rules and sense of fair play. Do we not have mouse and rat traps? Timms traps for possums? Is there anything cuter than a little possum face and little possum paws?

As a non-hunter myself, I have often been questioned by friends and relatives, usually urban-based, as to the merits of the duck-shooting season. They use the terms "needless slaughter" "unkind to ducks", "trigger-happy". Terrified of guns myself and with no knowledge of the subject of hunting and shooting, nevertheless my constant reprise has been that DUNZ, and DU organisations overseas, being primarily wetland care and endangered-species conservation bodies, have to constantly battle the problem of predatory, introduced wildfowl and manage pests in order to maintain the balance between the fragile native bird population and the introduced species threatening the way of life of indigenous and native birdlife. Not to mention the Canada goose problems faced by farmers with sheep and cattle competing for the same blade of grass. I could go on in this vein but you've heard it all before, it's called culling.

I will now publish this article from Fish & Game New Zealand along with information from DoC, and hope it explains the issue better than I can. It's been such fun, such an education and I salute you, DUNZ members, for your selfless work and passion. Long may it continue. Thank you, all the best, and carry on your good work.

Gail Isaac

Why does Fish & Game New Zealand control bird populations?

Fish & Game New Zealand manages waterfowl and upland gamebirds on behalf of recreational hunters. 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 whose crops birds occasionally feed on. Sustainable gamebird hunting ensures the birds are not over-hunted.

The role of hunting

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 and pressure from farmers to control the increasing population. As the statutory manager Fish & Game New Zealand has the responsibility to effectively manage these population increases.

The aim is to achieve desired population levels through recreational hunting. If this is not sufficient, then Fish and Game New Zealand sometimes undertakes population control operations. In most cases this is achieved through organised hunts using a number of recreational hunters but occasionally Canada geese are shot from helicopters.

The Canada goose problem

In the early 1990s the Canada goose population in the South Island began to rise quickly. This was partly due to the improvement of high country farm pasture and the abundant food supply for both stock and geese.

Rather than have the bird be classed as a pest the Minister of Conservation asked Fish & Game New Zealand to prepare a Canada goose Management Plan. This plan was implemented in 1995 and sets regional population levels for Canada geese. The most common population control method

besides recreational hunting takes place in January when the birds are moulting and unable to fly. Staff move the birds into holding pens where they are stunned and beheaded. This method may seem crude but it is the most humane method available.

Gamebird Management

As part of Fish & Game New Zealand's ongoing gamebird management field staff undertake aerial counts of all gamebird waterfowl species. From these results the Canada goose population can be estimated and population targets for the coming year set. These targets are also governed by the Canada Goose Management Plan. Fish & Game New Zealand actively encourages hunters to target Canada geese through organised shoots, competitions and improving access to farmers' land. When hunting increases there is less need to undertake population control.

For more information, contact your local Fish & Game office or the New Zealand Council on (04) 499 4767 or fax (04) 499 4768.

And this from the DoC website:

Waterfowl, including paradise shelduck, mallard, grey and shoveler duck, black swan and Canada goose can be hunted in DoC-managed areas. Upland game such as pheasant and quail can also be hunted. As well as a DoC hunting permit, you will need a licence from Fish & Game NZ.

Most gamebird seasons start in May, although season dates vary depending on the species of bird, and the Fish & Game region you are hunting in.

Fish & Game's Gamebird Hunting Guide is provided free with every game bird hunting licence.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/hunting/what-to-hunt/gamebirds>

Debbie Armstrong's PhD research into pateke habitat starts this year, report by Neil Hayes

If everything goes to plan, early in 2011 Debbie Armstrong will commence a PhD research programme into pateke habitat preferences and usage; focusing on Northland pateke and on Great Barrier Island pateke. Thus reports Neil Hayes of the Brown Teal Conservation Trust - BTCT.

Pateke habitat use between the two sites will be considered, including usage by both adults and juveniles and the programme will start with the identification and subsequent movements of adults and juveniles.

This will likely include – key feeding areas, loafing areas, nocturnal activity and the importance of flock sites.

Neil says, "Considering that Grant Dumbell's PhD pateke study is apparently the only major 'on the ground' pateke research ever carried out, the forthcoming programme is a very important one and the Brown Teal Conservation Trust will be assisting in whatever way it can."

The BTCT newsletter states that July 2010 pateke trend counts in Northland, Great Barrier Island and the Coromandel show that the total pateke population in the country is now close to 3000 and increasing in a very positive way.

In round figures the Great Barrier Island population has risen from c450 in 1999 to c1000, the Northland population from c200 in 1999 to c600 and the Coromandel population from c20 in 1999 to c1,000, so that when off-shore island populations are added the total pateke population is rapidly rising; so much so that with an increasing emphasis in these three areas the BTCT is confident that within a few years the nation-wide population will be at least 5000.

Banrock Station continues its assistance to DU

Ducks Unlimited (NZ) has recently announced that with the help of Ossie Latham (the DU representative on the Pateke Recovery Group) Banrock Station of Adelaide, Australia are continuing contributing funding towards pateke habitat. Over the past five years or so Banrock Station Wines have contributed many thousands of dollars towards wetland projects in New Zealand – and throughout the world. The Banrock vineyard is adjacent to a 2000ha wetland and the whole area is part of Banrock Station, which is around 200 km north-east of Adelaide, encompassing a visitors' centre, restaurant, wine-tasting and tours of the wetland.

Wetlands for newbies

From our excellent www.ducks.org.nz website:

What is a Wetland?

A wetland is an area of land whose soil is saturated with moisture either permanently or seasonally. Such areas may also be covered partially or completely by shallow pools of water. They come in many different guises, including bogs, streams, swamps, lakes, lagoons, estuaries, mudflats and flood plains. The water found in wetlands can be saltwater, freshwater, or brackish.

The Wetland Ecosystem

Wetlands are considered the most biologically diverse of all ecosystems. Plant life found in wetlands includes mangrove, water lilies, cattails, sedges, tamarack, black spruce, cypress, and many others.

Wetland plants include 47 species of rush and 72 species of native sedge. Many of these plants have very specific environmental needs and are extremely vulnerable to change. A number of New Zealand's endangered plant species depend totally on wetlands.

Wetlands support the greatest concentrations of bird life of any habitat in New Zealand. Animal life includes many different amphibians, reptiles, birds, & mammals. In the past 150 years New Zealand has lost about 90% of its wetlands due to draining for farming. Many remaining wetlands are also degraded due to pollution, grazing, drainage and presence of invasive plants. It is no wonder that New Zealand is therefore home to two of the most endangered waterfowl in the world. The whio (aka blue duck) and the pateke (aka brown teal) are only found in New Zealand and face serious threat.

The benefit of Wetland Ecosystems

Wetlands are crucial for a healthy environment, and their benefits touch us all. They:

- produce clean water for people and animals
- reduce the impacts of floods and droughts
- help keep rivers flowing and recharge underground water
- provide recreation for thousands of people
- are home to 60 species of birds (not to mention fish,
- insects, reptiles & amphibians)

Make homes for lizards - DoC tell us how

* New Zealand has geckos with baggy, velvety skin and broad heads and skinks with sleek, smooth-skin. They look like small snakes with legs.

* Lizards help scatter the seeds of some of our native plants and may also pollinate their flowers.

* Lizards will love your backyard if they have food and shelter.

1. Prepare your garden before making homes for lizards. Untidy gardens are great for lizards. They need places to hide and cover when hunting, feeding and resting, they also need shelter when it's really hot or really cold. Lizards like to squeeze into body sized holes no more than 5-19 mm wide. They like plenty of holes because many lizards are territorial so they need their own space. They like their homes to stay in one place too. If it's disturbed, they'll move out and they might not have anywhere else to go. Lizards need escape sites and they don't really mind what they're made of. Any old non-toxic building like old roofing iron can become a good home for lizards. Plants can grow around or over them so they can look quite tidy. Look around your backyard and find a warm, dry, sunny place. The most important thing for lizards is cover. You can use rock or wood piles to create some cover.

2. Use rock piles to create cover for lizards. Use old concrete, bricks and stones and stack them loosely so there are plenty of cracks and holes. Spiders, slaters and beetles will head inside, especially when it's cold. That's good news for the lizards that feed on them. Smear yoghurt on some stones and lichens might grow. If your rock pile turns into a rockery, plant bulbs like crocuses between the rocks. Your insects will have an early nectar and pollen supply.

3. Use wood piles to create cover for lizards. A good pile of dead wood is an adventure playground for lizards. Pile up a few logs and bits of wood and leave them to slowly rot, undisturbed. Let the fungi grow! It takes hold and helps recycle rotting wood by breaking it down. It makes good food for slugs and snails which in turn attracts birds.

4. Grow plants in your backyard that will attract lizards. Plant thickly is the rule. Lizards need safe habitats to run to when cats are on the prowl. That means thick ground-cover, vines and dense plant growth on banks. Berry or nectar producing plant species are good, especially native divaricating shrubs, and if you have a range of plants the lizards will have plenty to eat, all year round. Coprosma species and kawakawa provide fruit and flax, while manuka and rata give nectar. Ferns, tussock grasses and rengarenga provide thick ground cover and attract insects for the lizards to eat. Plants like speargrass and the shrubby tororaro offer protection from predators. Vines such as New Zealand clematis and climbing rata connect habitats, and cabbage trees form in clumps for good cover. A local nursery should have a range of plants native to your area and if you grow organically or limit the sprays you use, your lizards will do very well indeed.

5. Wait patiently. Make a lizard-friendly backyard and wait patiently. If your lizards have already gone, it may be a little while before they return.



Spotted Skink. Taken by Stan Smith of Carterton on Mitiu/Somes Island, in the Wellington harbour.

Queensland - a disaster we can all relate to

Abridged from Lindsay Murdock and Megan Neil - Sydney Morning Herald article on 16 January 2001

While Queenslanders will bear a massive burden for years to come, there will hardly be a single Australian whose life will not be affected by this disaster, whether emotionally or economically. Meteorologists can call on science for an explanation - the Queensland floods were caused by a lot of rain falling in a short time.

That rain came from a "super cell" which in turn has a relationship with La Nina, the phenomenon caused by raised temperature on the surface of the oceans around Australia. As true and correct as they may be, such explanations do nothing to help anyone.

What Queensland needs is for the rain to stay away, for the assistance of the rest of the country and for governments to be as fair dinkum as they say they will. What is needed throughout Australia if such disasters are to be managed better in the future is genuine and co-ordinated planning.

Dr Rob Roggema, a climate researcher at Melbourne's RMIT University, says a fundamental consideration should be building design. "Recent planning practice has contributed to the magnitude of the flooding disaster in Queensland," Dr Roggema said.

Covering the ground with concrete may not create floods but, according to Dr Roggema, it makes them far worse by causing higher run-off into drains and subsequently into rivers and streams.

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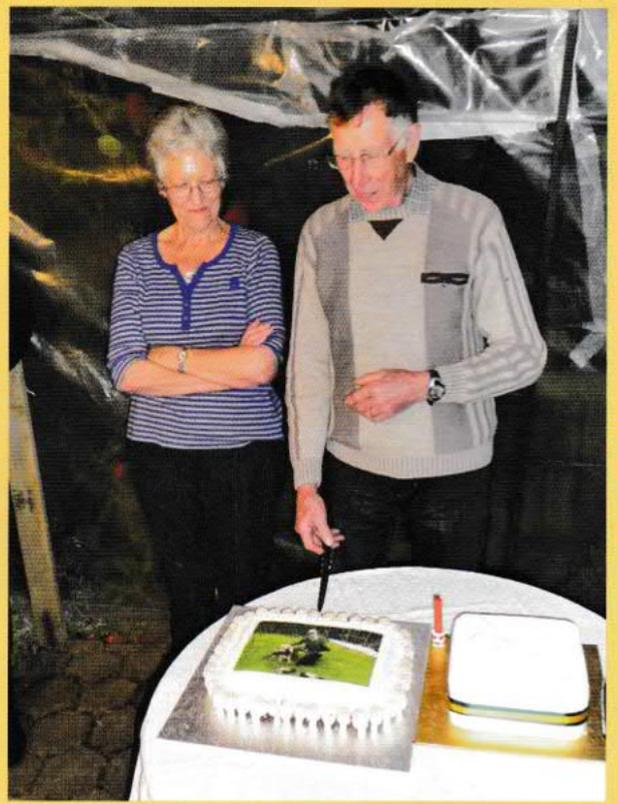
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William Abel's Huritini babies



Ken Cook's 80th



Stan's Spotted Skink



The Pilonos' Pohangina Wetlands