

# Flight



ISSUE 154 - January 2013

**INSIDE:**

Lady Isaac tribute

Mallard numbers decline

Whio - young champions



## From the President

How quickly the year went by; it's 2013 already. Looking back over the last 12 months I am very pleased with the progress we have made in many areas.

One that comes to mind was having Tony Roxbrough at the AGM in Ohakune to help facilitate the building of bridges between DU and the National Wetland Trust.

I had another meeting with Tony and John Bishop in April having a look at Lake Serpentine and Lake Nga Roto, which, for those of you that don't know, are situated 20 minutes south of Cambridge.

The August Board meeting was held in Cambridge so further discussions could take place on how we could assist one another in future.

The other major project is, of course, Wairio.

A lot of work has been done on stage one this year, which has resulted in the open water being expanded.

One of our Board members, John Cheynne, has been contracted by Greater Wellington to undertake bird counts on the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa, including Wairio, and I am happy to report a significant number of species are using the area we have created.

Also with the offer of a dollar-for-dollar subsidy from the Greater Wellington Regional Council, as well as \$9000 from the Game Bird Habitat Trust, \$2700 from the Nikau Foundation and \$2000 from the South Wairarapa Rotary Club, this project is really going to take off.

On behalf of the Board, I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and will have a prosperous New Year. Hope to see you in Hawke's Bay for the AGM in July.

Ross Cottle



## New members

A warm welcome to DUNZ Inc  
Wairakei Pastoral Ltd of Taupo  
Cheltenham School of Cheltenham, Manawatu.

## Members passed away

With sadness we note the following deaths.  
Our sincere condolences go to their families.  
Vyndie Smith of Waterfowl Rescue Centre Whangarei  
Mark Timms of Wanganui.

Flight published by: Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc.  
P O Box 281, Levin 5540, New Zealand.  
ISSN 1173-2776                      www.ducks.org.nz

### Advertising in flight per issue (ex GST).

Full colour back cover \$400, Full colour inside 350.  
Full colour half page inside \$200, Black and white full page \$300.  
Black and white half page \$180, black and white ¼ page \$90.  
All to be camera ready. Discounts for long-term adverts.

Waterfowl adverts free to members.

Contact the Editor to book space or check discounts.

Contributions to Flight from members or other readers are welcome.

### Deadline for copy for Flight 155 March 8, 2013.

Editing and Production:  
Liz Brook, Brightnook Farm, RD9, Feilding 4779.  
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Tel: 06 328 9836.

Printing: Lamb-Peters Print,  
106A Main Street,  
Greytown.

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## Board of Directors

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Cover photo: Mallards safe in a council park, but out in the wild they face an uncertain future.  
Story pages 4 – 5.

Photo: Liz Brook



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  
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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:  
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New Zealand, phone 06-362 6675  
PO Box 281 Levin.

## Good press for DU from Royal visit

John and Diny Dermer hosted Prince Charles for an afternoon during the whirlwind Royal tour last November.

As a director of Ducks Unlimited John, along with DU patron Jim Campbell were able to promote the organisation to the wider public through the large number of news media present.

There was a short tour of the Dermer farm Waipiko near Cheltenham, and as Prince Charles is interested in both farm forestry and wetlands the Dermer's property was perfect.

The Dermers have been farm foresters for many years, and have several wetlands including a large pond developed in 2007 that boasts a rustic bridge which provided an ideal photo opportunity spot for the news media.

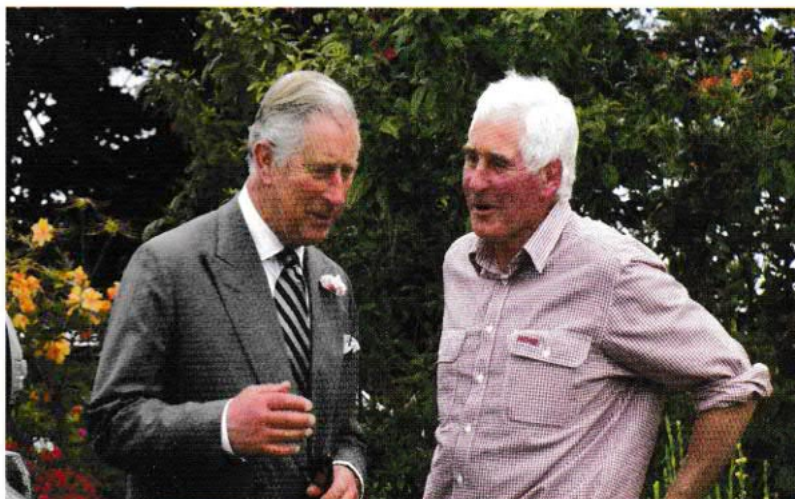
John, who recently stepped down as president of the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association, said the Prince was amazed by the growth rates of the trees. "He couldn't believe the speed they grow in New Zealand," said John.

The relaxed atmosphere continued during afternoon tea on the homestead veranda, where the Prince enjoyed tea and when offered some sour cream lemon cake he said to Diny "Not now thank you but I would like to take some with me to eat on the plane, and I think my wife would like some too."

Diny said "His personal secretary sidled up to me and said 'I will be



**Attention:** Jim Campbell (green shirt) explaining some interesting aspect of wetland. From left, John Dermer, David Carter, the Prince, Jim and the Prince's secretary. Photo: Bobbie Nicholls.



**Relaxed:** Prince Charles and John Dermer discuss the farm. Photo: Courtesy of Country Wide.

sitting with him, and I would like some too'. How flattering for a hopeless baker!"

The Prince also commented on her crop of lemons and agreed they went well in the gin and tonics. "So I gave him some of those too," said Diny.

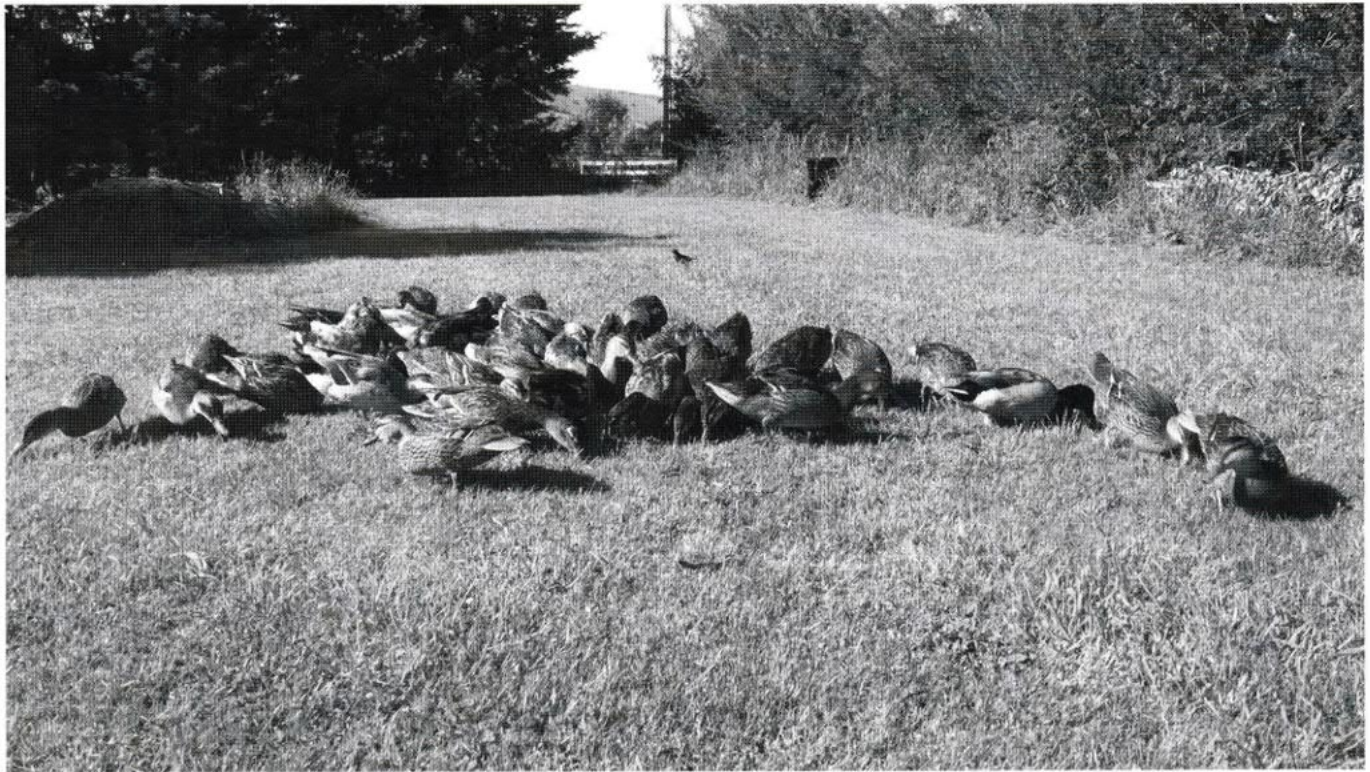
"He was the easiest and loveliest person to talk to," she said.

Mr Dermer also said the Prince was easy to talk to and seemed genuinely interested in the various activities on the farm. "I would like to have shown him more, but time was limited," he said.

Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall spent the afternoon visiting Massey University where she saw the veterinary hospital Wildbase, and had the chance to hold a kiwi. At the equestrian centre she watched a show jumping clinic where students are tutored by John Cottle.

All up the Dermer's were delighted with the Prince's visit and his relaxed friendly manner. Especially his interest in the farm, not just the forestry and wetlands, but also the animals and of course the wool.

# Rapidly approaching demise for mallards



**Safe Haven:** Some of the more than 50 mallards reared by the Hayes family on their home pond last season.

## *Insights into the decline of mallard numbers from Neil Hayes.*

Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) were first introduced to New Zealand with birds imported from Great Britain in 1897. Approximately 400 were then imported in 1927 and a further 150 between 1937 and 1941 from the US and Great Britain. Eggs came from the US in 1941 and their distribution prompted widespread breeding and release continuing into the 1960s and 1970s.

Over 30,000 mallards were reared and released by acclimatisation societies. In the 1960s the Southland Acclimatisation Society released over 10,000.

It took many decades to establish the mallard as New Zealand's most abundant species of duck – which two decades ago numbered between two and three million.

So, why have mallard numbers plummeted in the North Island to a guesstimated 120,000 over the past 15-years – and are still declining?

### **Counting ducks**

Before any waterfowl population can be successfully managed the first ingredient is to ascertain the size of the population.

The movement of mallards needs to be determined for Fish & Game Councils to set hunting-season bag limits and season length.

In addition to aerial counts and banding programmes what is long overdue is the use of GPS transmitters attached to groups of mallards all over the country. This inexpensive exercise is already being used successfully in the study of bird migrations. The results from GPS application to mallard populations will, in a very short space of time, provide a wealth of essential data for mallard management.

Reports received from Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Manawatu, Waimarino, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Taihape district, Wairarapa and the South Island show identical results: the country's mallard population is the lowest seen in living memory.

So, what has changed since the 'good old days'?

Over the past couple of decades changes that have adversely affected mallard numbers have been:

1: Soon after the publication of the Thorp report in 1997 – one section of which recommended permanent crimping of magazine tubes of semi-auto and pump-action shotguns to just one cartridge – the Fish & Game Council allowed five-shot semi-automatic shotguns to be used for gamebird hunting. This helped ensure many more ducks were harvested. But in itself this would not have been a problem if the size of the population was known and bag

limits and season lengths had been adjusted accordingly.

2: In 1999 the government made it mandatory for steel shot to be used for waterfowl hunting. For our mallard, grey duck, shoveler, Canada goose and black swan populations – and for our wetlands – this has been an unmitigated disaster, as steel shot is now known to increase the crippling factor for ducks not recovered, from 7 percent to close to 50 percent, so for each duck hunter that has retrieved a limit bag an additional limit has been lost to harrier hawks.

On Sunday afternoon, opening weekend last year, my Labrador picked up 12 wounded mallards (10 were drakes) – all from a group using steel shot and no dog.

Many countries, including the US – are seriously looking at banning the use of steel shot and it is time for us to take the initiative and institute a comprehensive 'anti-steel shot' programme – and get its use banned – before it is too late.

In the early 1970s NZ Wildlife Service research showed that lead shot in shallow wetlands rapidly dissipated into the floor of the wetlands – far beyond the reach of all waterfowl.

3: Also apparent is a massive imbalance of male to female mallards – an imbalance of 80 percent male to 20 percent female. Such

an imbalance is known to occur amongst rare and endangered birds.

4: The removal of the restriction on the number of decoys hunters could use and it is now common to see 100-200 decoys in use. Along with electronic decoys with revolving wings and power, these factors are contributing to the decline of mallards.

5: Pond feeding became widespread – automatic feed dispensers were erected, and mallards are suckers for a cafeteria diet!

6: We also have better educated duck hunters who use camo clothing, camo face paint or masks, use a duck call and play the right tunes, have greatly improved shooting skills and shoot from totally camouflaged maimais.

7: The mallard also has to survive the ever increasing numbers of predators; including the Australasian harrier hawk, which gained partial and extremely unnecessary protection in 1980 and is known to kill sitting ducks, eat eggs, take live mallards, scaup, grey teal, grey duck, black swan cygnets, mute swan cygnets and ducklings half a dozen or more at a time. There are now a guesstimated 2.5 million harriers flying rampant.

8: Until the last few years the daily bag limit was believed to have been excessive, as shown by the rapid downward population trend - not just mallards, but shoveler, black swan and Canada geese.

9: Habitat is an integral part of the number of waterfowl available for hunting and far more needs to be done to manage existing wetlands, create more wetlands, restore drained wetlands, protect wetlands (QEII covenants), plant wetlands with suitable plants and trees, and remove noxious weeds. Of course, mallards not only need wetlands that fulfil their annual flocking and behavioural rituals, and the survival of

their progeny – they need lots of wetlands to provide them with an adequate supply of food: gastropods, invertebrates (including beetles, flies, lepidopterans, dragonflies, and caddisflies), crustaceans, worms, and a wide variety of plant matter.

10: The paradise shelduck is rapidly becoming important game, but it is a species that needs careful management - a female does not breed until her third season, they have a strong monogamous pair bond and they are suckers for a good decoy layout and call. The result is that a population can be decimated very quickly.

11: Poison - In May 2012 it was widely reported that the pesticide Dew600 was being used to kill caterpillars. Dew600 contains over 60 percent of the poison Diazinon and the run off of Diazinon into wetlands and waterways has resulted in thousands of waterfowl - both endemic (NZ paradise shelduck) - and native (NZ grey duck and grey teal) and the introduced waterfowl (mallards and black swan), together with all birds that feed on pasture, being killed.

Freshwater invertebrates, eels and trout have also been eliminated; all very reminiscent of the environmentally disastrous impact of 1080.

Dew600 has also been widely used in the Bay of Plenty to kill crickets – and thousands of waterfowl at the same time.

### Suggestions

1. Clearly the future of waterfowl hunting in New Zealand is under serious threat – immediate remedial action is needed by the NZ Fish & Game Council to avoid a catastrophic result.

2. Essential matters that need immediate attention to save duck hunting are: instituting a comprehensive research

programme using GPS tracking to:

- Determine the size of the population
- Determine the movement of the population
- Determine the survival of adults and the number available to breed and the predation of each.

From this, reasonably realistic management will be possible:

- Setting realistic daily limit bags that ensure that some birds survive to breed – including reducing bag limits after opening day
- Setting season lengths in line with the known population.

3. Concerted efforts need to be applied towards:

- Eliminating the use of steel shot
- Eliminating electronic decoys
- Managing wetlands for wildlife
- Enhancing, creating, restoring and protecting wetlands – and encouraging more individuals and groups to do something positive for the environment
- The total elimination of poisons in the NZ environment
- Providing a sustainable natural environment.

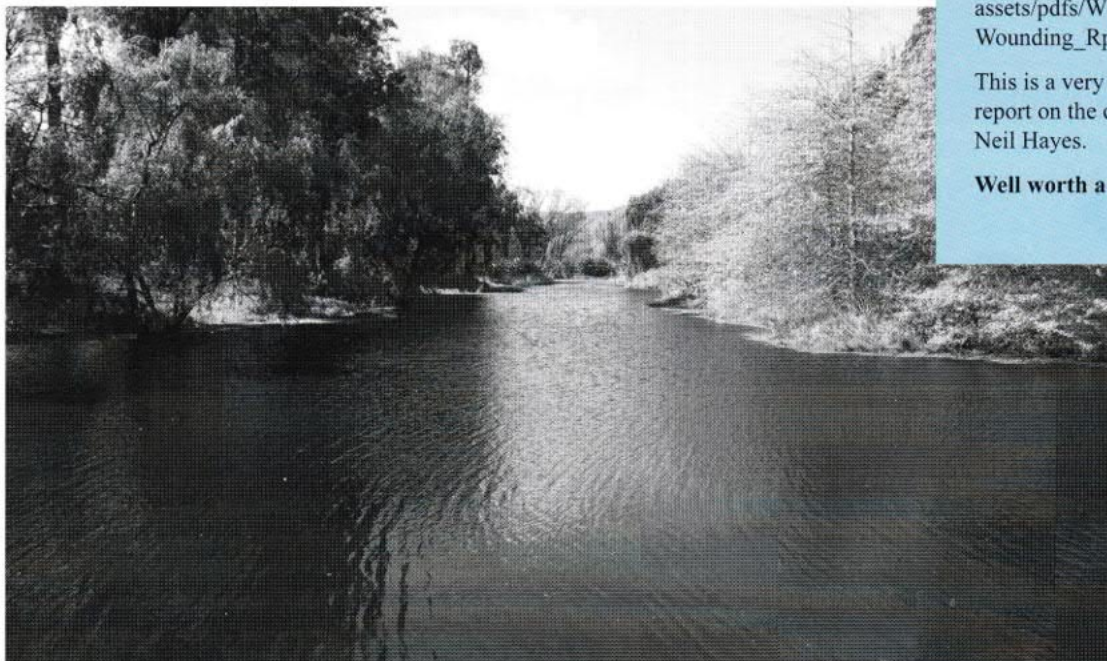
### Note:

The Fish & Game Council rejected the call for steel shot in 20 gauges. The vote from regions was six against and five in favour! The five in favour had most likely not read the Humane Society report on the wounding of waterfowl by steel shot:

[http://www.humaneociety.org/assets/pdfs/WILD\\_Waterfowl\\_Wounding\\_Rpt.pdf](http://www.humaneociety.org/assets/pdfs/WILD_Waterfowl_Wounding_Rpt.pdf)

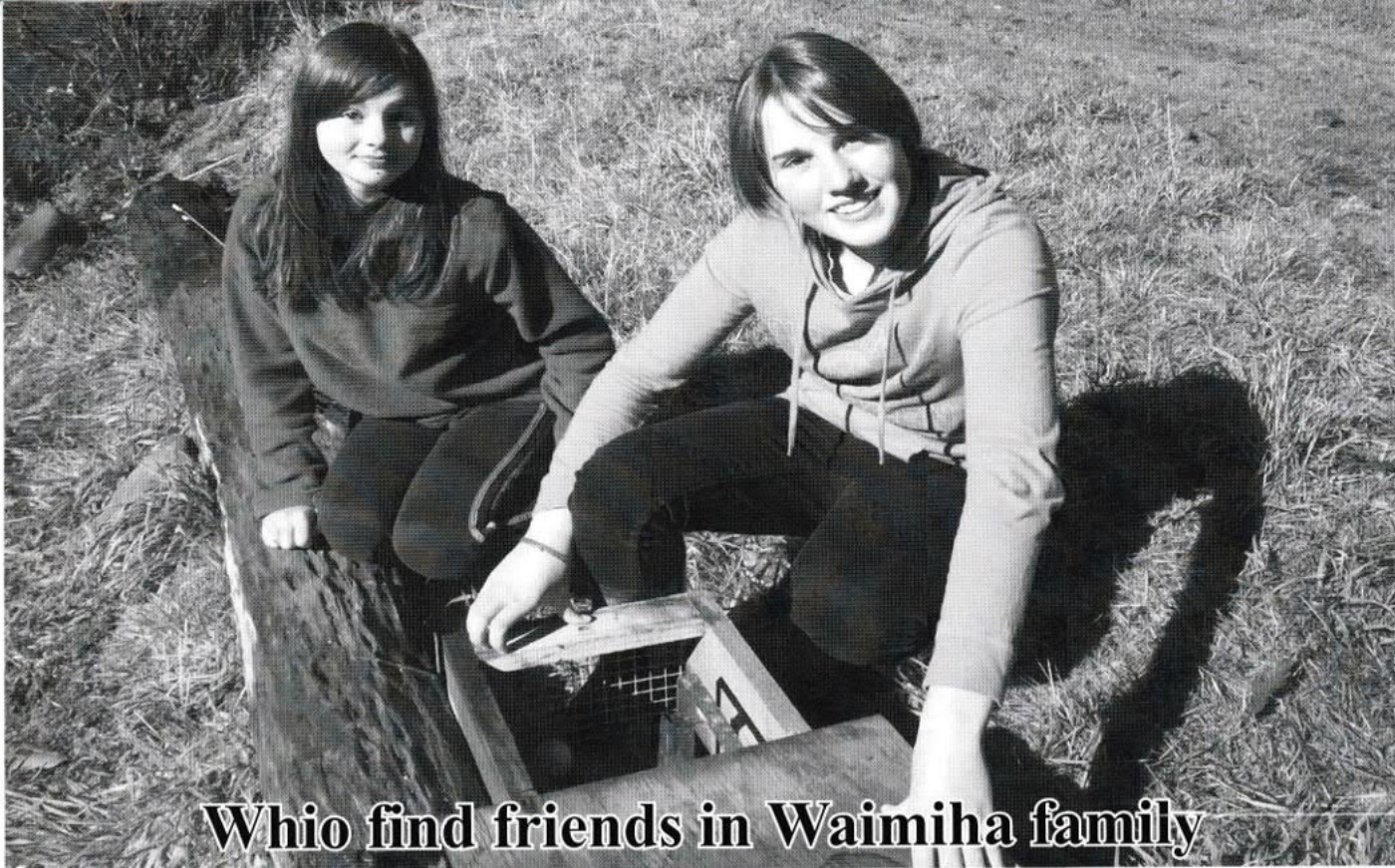
This is a very seriously damaging report on the crippling factor said Neil Hayes.

**Well worth a read. Editor.**



**No ducks:** Broadlands Lagoon in the Wairarapa – only one mallard was shot here during the 2012 season.

**Photos:** Neil Hayes



## Who find friends in Waimiha family

**Young saviours:** Megan Park, 10, left, and Anna Park, 13, show one of the traps they use to keep pest numbers down.

Along the upper reaches of the Ongarue River, south-east of TeKuiti, committed trapper Mike Park and his family are doing their bit for the survival of one of our native treasures, the whio (blue duck).

With only an estimated 1340 pairs of whio remaining nationwide they need all possible help.

At least six of these pairs inhabit the upper Ongarue River which starts on the slopes of Mt Pureora, and the community has high hopes for this breeding season. Mike's wife, Maree, said the family made the decision to become kaitiaki, or guardians, of the whio following a harrowing experience in 2010 when a pair of chicks were killed by predators at the front of their house.

"It was very emotional when those babies were killed," said Maree. "The male duck sat on a rock and whistled for about three days straight. It sent shivers through both of us and we knew there was no looking back."

The Parks approached their neighbours, Maria and Kerry Tuffin, at Black Fern Lodge, who offered to provide some stoat traps and suggested keeping a log of their trapping.

Their trapping efforts have expanded from 3km to cover more than 10km of the river with support from Horizons Regional Council, the Department of Conservation and Genesis Energy's Blue Duck Trust in the form of traps and funding.

The project is still very much fuelled by family and community with Mike going out on his motorbike at least once every two days to check the traps, re-bait, take photos and log results. The area's farmers are onboard with permission and

assistance to trap on their land.

Daughters Anna, 13, and Megan, 10, are both keen participants and Maree said humane trapping was a top priority for them.

"There's not a bird Anna doesn't know about and it's an important part of the girls' learning," she said.

Horizons environmental management officer Joe Martin describes the family's efforts as amazing and commends both the Parks and the Tuffins for the work they've been doing.

"Mike's gone out there off his own bat not expecting anything back, and the work the community's put in to reduce pests and boost whio numbers is outstanding.

"He's the sort of guy who wouldn't ask for anything and we're only too happy to help out. Through our environmental grant programme we've been able to provide more traps and funding this year and look forward to seeing the whio numbers rise in seasons to come."

Horizons chairman Bruce Gordon said: "This is a true example of collaboration and community at its best.

"Working with our communities and organisations such as DOC and Genesis we can work to preserve our patch of native New Zealand," he said.

**For more information contact: Ally Koehler, Communications Advisor, Horizons Regional Council, 06 9522 893 or 021 2277 215**



**Lucky pair:** Megan Park with a pair of whio.  
Photos: Horizons Regional Council



# William's picture gallery

William Abel is not only a keen waterfowl and wetland advocate, he is also a keen and able (sorry about the pun) photographer. Here is a selection of some of his recent shots.

This is a challenge to other keen photographers – send in your best bird shots – get your own Gallery page – maybe even a front cover.

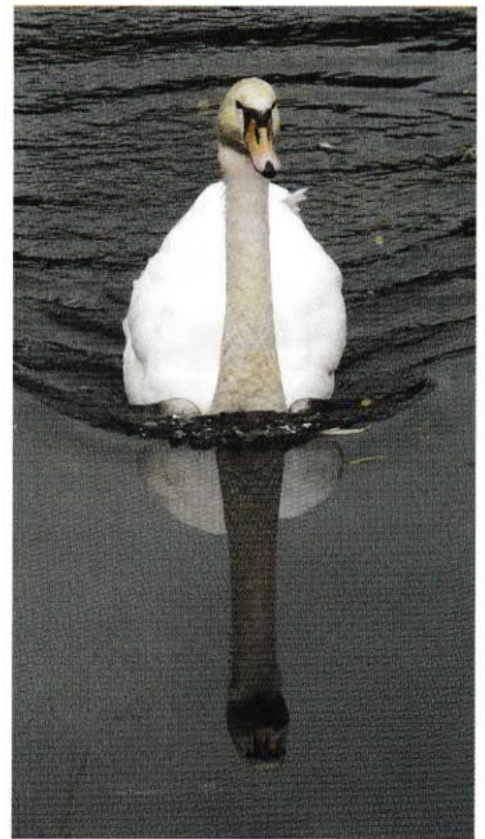
**Snow:** The Tararua Range from the tranquilly of Huritini wetland.



**Ride along:** This is the way to go...



**Oops:** Where did Mum go?



**Tranquil:** Mute swan safe at Huritini wetland.



**Variety:** A few Dab chicks add a touch of difference.



**So young:** Soft down for a Canada goose gosling.



## *Busy pair - high reproductive drive*

### Pateke ducklings

A prolific pair of pateke (brown teal) above, at the Palmerston North Council aviary with their latest brood, have been setting records. They have been together since 2006 and put out three clutches of six or seven eggs each year.

Last November they hatched seven ducklings and that took them to over

100. Peter Russell, aviary keeper and DU member, said he was not sure why these two were such good breeders, though they are in a safe environment with good cover and plenty of food.

When the ducklings are ready, they will be flown (by plane) to Christchurch to Peacock Springs where they will attend duckling

finishing school before being released into the wild.

Peter said the parents will be kept at the aviary until they stop breeding.

**Photo: Liz Brook**



**Saved:** The rough but gentle hands of Peter Russell hold the tiny week-old whio (blue duck) rescued from the Mt Taranaki. Photo: Liz Brook

## Lucky duck

Emily King of DOC was surveying the Waiwhakaiho River at Mt Taranaki for duck signs, when this little one went "skating" across the river.

Emily said her instinct was that it was on its own. She searched for its family without success so decided to take the duckling for safety. She contacted Peter Russell, the Palmerston North Council aviary keeper and a DU member, and took the bird down to him the next day.

Peter, also a member of the Blue Duck Recovery Group, looked after the duckling until he had a number of other birds to send down to Peacock Springs in Christchurch.

Both Emily and Peter hope this whio is a female, as there are fewer females than males. It will eventually be returned to its home area at Mt Taranaki.



*Ducks Unlimited New Zealand has lost not just our patron, but a special friend and benefactor, with the death of Diana, Lady Isaac, she will be sadly missed by our organisation.*

## ***Diana Lady Isaac*** ***- Inspiring woman*** ***with generous nature***

Diana, Lady Isaac, patron of Ducks Unlimited died last November. She was 91. She caught pneumonia, and did not recover.

Lady Isaac had been a joint patron of DU for many years, first with Norman Marsh and then with Jim Campbell, who is still our patron.

DU was just one of the many organisations Lady Isaac was involved with. In 1977 she and her husband Neil established The Isaac Wildlife Trust. Neil Isaac was awarded a Queen's Service Order in 1982, and the following year he was knighted. Sir Neil died in 1987.

In 1989 it was Lady Isaac's turn to be awarded a Queen's Service Medal, and in 2009 she received the New Zealand Order of Merit.

Born in Devonshire, England, September 2, 1921, she met her New Zealand husband, Neil, when they were both in the British Army at the end of WWII.

They married in India and settled in New Zealand in 1950 where they founded Isaac Construction. Lady Isaac is probably best known for co-founding and then running the construction business after her husband's death.

Although she arrived in New Zealand in 1950, it was not until 2012, that Lady Isaac officially became a New Zealand citizen.

She made significant contributions to wildlife projects to save endangered species, and to the arts, including the restoration of the Theatre Royal in Christchurch. She established the 1214ha conservation park, Peacock Springs and Salmon Farm, on the fringe of Christchurch for recreation and scientific study.

To those who knew her Lady Isaac presented two sides. The tough, astute, successful businesswoman, who did not suffer fools and who some people found quite daunting. And the other side; a warm, loving and very private person with a great sense of humour.

Ian Campbell met Lady Isaac and Sir Neil many years ago, though he is not totally sure when he first met Lady Isaac. He thought it must have been while picking up mute swan signets.

"She was a person of huge generosity to DU over the years, allowing us to pick up the signets from 1986 each year until the earthquake last year when they didn't breed. They had signets again this year (2012) and at some stage we will go down to collect more.

"Over the years we have seen more of Anne Richardson, manager of the wildlife area, than Lady Diana.

"Several times, Lady Diana came out to a meal with us. She was a very astute business woman, obviously with a passion for wildlife. They even put in an area at one stage for breeding the endangered Asian otters. A pair of mute swans now use one of those enclosures.

"She always made us most welcome, even invited us for a meal at her place on one of the trips. It was amazing foresight of both



**Lady Isaac**

her and Sir Neil in forming the wildlife area and especially in making use of the natural springs in the quarry."

Jim said endangered species have been bred at Peacock Springs for some time; these include the orange-fronted kakariki, whio, black stilt (kaki), and yellowhead (mohua).

Hand-reared ducklings are sent to Peacock Springs from around the country to "duck finishing school". The wildlife centre has huge enclosures to get them feeding as they would in their natural environment. The birds still get supplements, but it provides more chance of them recognising natural food.

"They have just finished building two new aviaries, as the previous ones were destroyed by snow. Any project Lady Diana was involved with was meticulously correct, right down to such things as using stainless steel in the water so it would not rust," Jim said.

Lady Isaac once told Flight editor Gail Isaac (no relation) back in 2007, that she was happy with the progress of DU, "allocating money that can be usefully used through other people's work." She said the organisation should continue on its present path of enhancing what is already there.

The land at Peacock Springs was originally acquired by the Isaacs for quarrying stone. While excavating for roading material they dug into part of the network of aquifers that exist under the greater Canterbury Plains. This provided the opportunity to establish the wildlife area and conservation park.

# What a sky full

Approximately 6000 pinkfoot geese all attempting to land in a field in Norfolk, England.

DU member Graham Gurr sent the photo that was taken by a friend of his **Nathan Finch**, who gave permission for DUNZ to use the picture in Flight.

The following information is courtesy of Wikipedia:

The **Pink-footed Goose** (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) breeds in eastern Greenland, Iceland and Svalbard. It is migratory, wintering in northwest Europe, especially Great Britain, the Netherlands, and western Denmark. The name is often abbreviated in colloquial usage to Pinkfoot (plural Pinkfeet).

A medium-sized goose, 60-75cm long, wingspan 135-170cm, and weighing 1.8-3.4kg, with a short bill, bright pink in the middle with a black base and tip, and pink feet. The body is mid grey-brown, the head and neck a richer, darker brown, the rump and vent white, the tail grey with a broad white tip. The upper wing-coverts are a similar pale bluish-grey as in the Greylag Goose, and the flight feathers blackish-grey.

The species is most closely related to the Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*, sharing a similar black-and-coloured pattern bill, but has pink on the bill and legs. The Bean Goose is orange and in the paler, greyer plumage tones. Pinkfoot produces high-pitched honking calls, being particularly vocal in flight, with large skeins (such as those pictured) being almost deafening.



## Private haven for water birds

The lake at Assisi provides a peaceful spot for water fowl, and also enhances the surrounding garden that is open to the public. The garden is less than 10 years old and the pond was excavated by the owners in the early days of ownership. The owners say the terrain and climatic conditions are a challenge. Its position on the eastern hills provides stunning views over the Wairarapa.

The centre of the extensive garden is the pond, where willow, flax and larches surround the water. Steps lead down to a jetty and an opportunity to see the birds close up.

### Top:

Happy family.

### Left:

Man-made.

Photos: Liz Brook



# Wairio Wetlands

## Wairio meeting

An update of work to date on Stage 1 at Wairio Wetlands was given to the Restoration Committee last August by Trevor Thomson (QEII) and Ross Cottle (DU).

Wairio Wetland in Southern Wairarapa had considerable bulldozing done to create more extensive areas of semi-permanent water and islands made from the excavated debris. Although the original plan provided for "in-fill" planting at Stage 1 it was decided to plant out the new island areas instead. This planting used all the budgeted funds for planting plus an agreed additional \$2300 worth of trees, bringing the total for trees to \$9378.

Some noxious weed and release spraying had also been conducted at Stages 1, 2 and 3 by the contractor, Andrew Marshall, in late autumn.

Further work had been suspended due to the limited funds donated by normal supporters of the project meaning that nearly all of the current spending had been funded by DU. Jim War advised that approximately \$18,000 of the total Base Case Budget of \$25,000 had been spent to date and that no invoices were outstanding.

It had also been previously agreed that further work could be done at a new Stage 4 to be created at the northern end of the wetland, contingent upon extra funds being raised. This would be within an area already fenced-off



**Wairio planting:** Always more plants to go in, and more weeds to control.  
Photo: Jim Law.

and a scoping estimate for a first year's work at Stage 4 had been prepared but no funds were expended.

## Funds boost

The Rotary club of the South Wairarapa has approved the request for assistance with work on the Wairio Wetland Restoration Project and granted \$2000 to Wairio Wetland on the understanding the funds

will be put towards the key areas of the restoration project. Namely, water supply and retention, vegetation, earth works and predator control.

This makes a total of \$14,480 that has been donated by this Rotary club since 2007. Meanwhile, an application to the Nikau Foundation was also successful and a grant of \$2715 in the 2012 funding round was given towards the wetlands restoration,

## Bird counts at Wairio Wetland

DU director John Cheyne has been engaged as a contractor to carry out walk-through surveys through spring and summer in five Lake Wairarapa wetlands, including Wairio.

Nikki McArthur, Biodiversity Monitoring Advisor for the Greater Wellington Regional Council, was able to report it was making progress on setting up some bird counts in the Wairio Wetlands.

The aim is to:

- count numbers of waterfowl and wetland birds present in each wetland
- carry out dawn/dusk surveys to estimate the number of booming bittern present in each wetland
- use call-playback to detect whether or not spotless crane, marsh crane, banded

rail or fernbird (the latter three species are a bit of a long-shot) are present in each wetland.

Nikki said: "These surveys have been designed as a repeat of the bird surveys carried out by wildlife service staff in the early 1980s, so by comparing our results to this previous survey we hope to be able to describe any major changes that have occurred to the wetland bird communities over the past 30 years or so.

"We are also hoping to repeat these surveys for at least the next three seasons to average out any short-term fluctuations in bird numbers recorded in any particular year."

A second piece of work being planned is to set up an automatic digital sound recorder over the summer months in each of the five wetlands to provide a second means of detecting some of the more cryptic bird species that may be present; help to generate a list of the more common species found in each wetland (those that are not targeted during John's walk-through surveys); and give local community groups (e.g. Wairarapa OSNZ) the opportunity to contribute to the survey work by listening to the recordings that are generated.



**Captain Ross:** DU President Ross Cottle, organising volunteers at Wairio.  
Photo: Jim Flack, Greater Wellington Regional Council.

## Director Profile

# John Cheyne

I was born in Pahiataua and raised in Wellington with most school holidays spent in the Wairarapa on the banks of the Mangatainoka River catching eels. For a townie this was great. Involvement with scouts and many camping trips further cemented a life-long interest in the outdoors and wildlife.

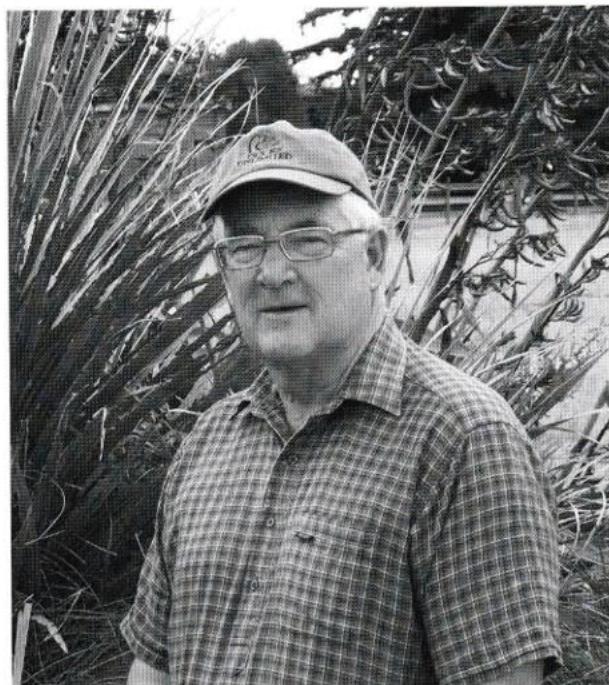
This led to a career, starting in 1967, with the NZ Wildlife Service involving wetland and waterfowl management in Southland, Otago, Waikato and Northland. I also assisted in a number of threatened species projects (kakapo, blue duck) and spent three years based at the National Wildlife Centre at Mount Bruce.

While I was a late starter to waterfowl hunting, I did own the odd useful hunting dog which had plenty of training opportunities with my work capturing and banding mallards, grey duck, shoveler, grey teal, brown teal (pateke) and blue duck (whio).

In 1987, after restructuring of a number of government departments, I ended up in Hawke's Bay with the new Department of Conservation and continued with them until 2001 when I retired and set up a small wetland consultancy business now called WetlandWorks. I currently work part time for Fish and Game advising landowners on wetland restoration and for regional councils on wetland and bird surveys.

Habitat protection has always been the key to wildlife conservation along with predator control at some sites. For some waterfowl, such as pateke and whio, captive breeding and release has also been useful in establishing new populations. Water birds need wetlands and wetlands need water to function. Without it, they are doomed.

These initiatives are also fundamental to Ducks Unlimited and Wetland Care NZ operations, so it was not surprising that I ended up as director of DU. I was a member back in the early 1980s in the Waikato along with the late Jack Worth, a DU stalwart. The memories of the annual DU "duck pluckers hootenanny" fundraising events at Te Rapa Racecourse are legendary and I will carry them to my grave. My work at Mount Bruce brought me into contact with our patron, Jim Campbell. After I moved to Hawke's Bay in 1987, my membership with DU lapsed but



John Cheyne: Captured by the birds.

six years ago I re-joined DU. I was appointed a director shortly after and also represent DU on the NZ Game Bird Habitat Trust.

I live with my wife, Gail, on five hectares at Waipukurau across the road from the 210-hectare Lake Hatuma and we can lie in bed and listen to the male bittern booming in spring. My association with DU has enabled me to combine my professional work with my passion for wetlands and water birds. We enjoy the interaction with other like-minded people and never cease to be impressed by what members have achieved.



Dog training

## Sleeping on the job

Training Dogs is the title of the book on this guy's lap, but there was not much visible training taking place when this photo was taken. Perhaps the training was happening through dream transference, or possibly osmosis.

With the hunting season not too far off, now might be the time to sharpen up your dog's pointing and retrieval skills.

If you have some good dog stories and pictures why not send them along to Flight to share with other members. Jpgs of more than 500kb are okay, but 1mb or more is better. Email to the editor: [liz.brook@farmside.co.nz](mailto:liz.brook@farmside.co.nz)

## Kids present idea

A birthday present for the young children in your life could be the recently published Joy Cowley book *Manukaura: The Little White Kiwi*.

Manukaura was born and lives at the Pukaha Mt Bruce Wildlife Centre in northern Wairarapa. She has since been joined by two other white kiwis, probably her siblings.

Most of you will know Joy's work from her timeless childrens stories. But the exciting thing about the Manukaura book is that you can read it to the kids and then if you live not too far away, take them to see the actual bird.

## Obituaries

# Bill Wilkinson, auctioneer extraordinaire

An auctioneer with flare, Bill Wilkinson died last November.

Bill is remembered as a star attraction at Ducks Unlimited AGMs. After working as a real estate agent and as an auctioneer at the flower market in Wellington Bill proved to be an able auctioneer for DU from its beginnings in May 1974.

At the 1987 DU AGM, his talent for entertaining the audience while persuading them to bid high was a godsend as many items destined for the event had been stolen from two of the directors' vehicles.

Working with what goods remained, Bill was still able to raise the bids to ensure a good financial result for the evening.

Jim Campbell believes it was the Parani brothers who would have "pulled him in to DU".

"He was a larger than life character, had all the smart quips, he even had husbands and wives bidding against each other," said Jim.

"Bill lived in Wellington and was the auctioneer for the Wellington chapter of DU. He used to come and do the auctions for the Masterton and Eketahuna chapters as well. Race commentary was also a speciality, and he called the Castlepoint races for many years."



Top auctioneer: Bill Wilkinson in full cry at the 1985 AGM.

## DUNZ thanks to Richard Trethewey

Richard Trethewey Ducks Unlimited Canada, died on March 19, 2012. He was 89.

DU member Dawn Pirani has written that there would be no Ducks Unlimited in New Zealand if it hadn't been for Richard Trethewey's association with Jack Worth and talking him into establishing DUNZ. "This is where it all stemmed from," said Dawn.

"Richard was a very strong supporter of DU and was involved in many projects in Canada.

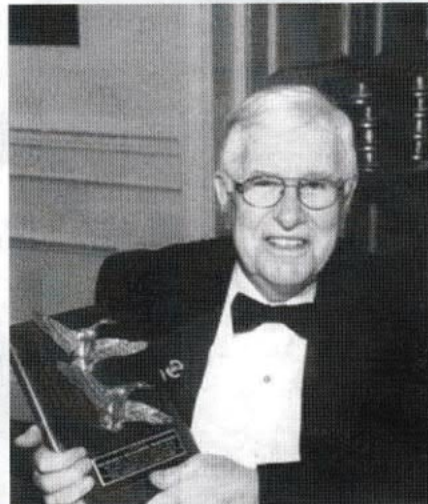
"To name a few there was the Carolina Wood Duck, Canada geese and Whooper cranes. These cranes were on the endangered list and Richard bred many. "You were always welcomed to his home and he would spend many hours entertaining fellow duck enthusiasts," said Dawn.

Richard was one of many Canadians who spent time and money in the cause of DU. Dawn and Ian Pirani say they were very sad in hearing of his passing and the ducks will miss his input.

### *The following background is thanks to the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Times.*

Richard was a Flying Officer and later a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Canadian Air Force during WWII, flying Cansos (flying boats) over the Indian Ocean based in Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

He continued his RCAF career post war in Canada, flying Search and Rescue missions in the arctic, and working as a recruiting officer until his three brothers Alan, Bill and JO invited him to join their businesses in Abbotsford. After retiring from business, he purchased and operated the family farm in Maple Ridge. Richard was an enthusiastic volunteer for Ducks Unlimited Canada, Delta Waterfowl and BC Wildlife Federation.



Richard Trethewey: Generous with both his money and his time.

Photo: courtesy British Columbia volunteer newsletter.

### *And from the British Columbia volunteer newsletter.*

#### Money Man

Richard Trethewey was a relentless force for conservation fundraising in BC. Behind every volunteer organisation there's always a person or two whose passion, commitment and leadership are so extraordinary that the organisation itself can trace a good portion of its success directly to their efforts. For Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) in British Columbia, Richard was such an individual.

A member of the prominent BC Trethewey family, Richard joined DUC in 1975 as a member of its National Board of Directors after retiring from his family's forestry business. He brought to DUC tenacity and

drive that served the organisation well, especially when it first started to fund raise in BC during the early 1980s. Before that time, fundraising was not conducted in Canada as all of DUC's funding was derived from Ducks Unlimited in the US.

"When the board said we have to start fundraising in Canada, Richard said 'Great! When do I start?'" remembers friend and long time DUC colleague Ian Barnett, Vice President Regional Operations for the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Over the next decade Richard would wear two hats for DUC, performing both his Board responsibilities and those of Provincial Chair for BC's Volunteer Network. Richard's enthusiasm proved important as he started at ground zero on the fundraising front in the province. At the time, there were no chapters or fundraising infrastructure for him to work with. In fact, most people hadn't even heard of DUC. But these obstacles did not deter Richard.

For the next decade Richard was pretty much "a one-man-show" for fundraising in BC. The contacts he made, and the events he helped initiate, would not only raise millions of dollars for DUC, but also laid the foundation for the growth of DUC throughout the province. By the early 1990s, DUC BC increased from zero chapters when Richard started fundraising to around 100 (it has since settled back to around 70) and, for many of those chapters, their first contact with DUC was through Richard. "Richard played a large role in creating DUC that we see in BC today. Without his passion and drive, many chapters in BC would not have come into existence as quickly as they did. His let's-get-it-done attitude is still prevalent among many people at DUC BC; one of Richard's many legacies to the organisation and wetlands preservation in Canada," said Mr Barnett.

## Penguins just the beginning

A little blue penguin chick born on the southern Wairarapa coast within the Aorangi Restoration Trust land was in good hands.

Late last year Bron De Grey, administrator and co-ordinator for the trust at that time, made it down the coast to photograph the new penguin chick in the nursery.

"What a little honey. The parents were doing a fabulous job looking after their new addition and very protective of him or her.

"Both adults take it in turn to head out to sea and fish for food, returning to share with the chick," she said.

Bron commended Adrian Buckley, a trustee for the trust, for taking care of the penguin site with regular predator trap patrol and generally keeping an eye on the area.

She also said the trust will possibly be putting in more nesting boxes, doing



**At home:** A young chick tucked behind a protective parent.

Photo: Bron De Grey.

some planting in the area just behind the penguin nest site and stretching parallel to the sea along that strip to offer them more protection and encourage more of their

"rellies" into the area.

"This will also help when they eventually undertake the moult," said Bron.

The trust is a charitable community-run conservation body founded to protect and restore the Aorangi Range, surrounding land and coastline in Southern Wairarapa and to enhance the natural heritage values of the Aorangi Forest Park and the private land surrounding it.

The trust has the dedication of its chairman, and local winemaker Clive Paton, and other committed South Wairarapa residents and business people.

The long term vision is to enable the reintroduction of locally extinct species and to ultimately reintroduce species such as kiwi, whio (blue duck), weka and other forest birds that once graced the Aorangi Forest.

## Wetland odyssey to Scotland's peat bogs

Australian civil engineer Peter Burns, who works as a conservationist in both Australia and Scotland, took a party in September from the two countries to the Highlands of Scotland and its Western Isles to see what he describes as the world's "most intriguing examples of high altitude wetlands." In other words, the region's peat bogs.

He said that over time the bogs had given humans the essentials for their survival, most notably fuel. They were created by the presence of impenetrable sub stratas of rock that held the surface water instead of letting it diffuse.

Mr Burns is programme director with Odyssey Travel, a special-interest travel organisation that is jointly owned by the universities of New Zealand and Australia. In the photograph he is shown with his party at the Moine Mhor National Nature Reserve, Scotland's major peat wetland restoration project where water levels are recovering their ancient position, thus allowing the peat to re-generate.



**Scottish bog:** Peter Burns explains features of the high wetlands.

## Tough course – even for the pros



**Anthony Gurr:** winner of the Pete Harvey Trophy.

Graham Gurr and his son Anthony travelled from Auckland to attend the target shoot held by the Blue Rock Gun club and Ducks Unlimited last November.

Graham sent in the following account of the day, and also the photo.

It was a beautiful Wairarapa day, a little cloud and soft breezes.

The course was very difficult. All 70 plus shooters found it challenging.

Gary Gervin was top gun with a total of 75

(Normally the top gun is 95-99 just shows how tough this one was).

Di Pritt was top female shooter, but then she nearly always is.

Anthony Gurr won the Pete Harvey Trophy for most improved shooter between rounds one and two.

"Ross Cottle was not in attendance as he was away on horse trekking somewhere, we all wished him a numb bum," said Graham.

# Possum problem?

For Auckland DU members there is a chance to buy possum traps at a reasonable rate.

Timms Possum Traps are lethal for those furry pests, so for those of you living in, or near bush they could be the very thing that will help keep the fruit on your trees and the birds safe from possums.

Kate Leggett, biosecurity advisor with the Auckland Council, says Timms Traps are available from Maureen Lata Ford, Customer Service at 1 Greys Avenue. 09 373 6369 Extn: (40)6369 or email Maureen.LataFord@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

The cost is \$25 including GST, which is a whole heap cheaper than the usual retail price.

For Waitakere members, Chris Bindon, who is also with the Environmental Services unit of the Auckland Council, can be contacted if you have any doubts or difficulty getting into town. Chris can be reached at 09 301 0101 Extn (42)8236 or mobile 021 914 799.

Chris says he appreciates this is a long distance for many members to go, so if you are interested he is happy to go into Auckland city and get them, but only if this is a help. You can collect them from him in Waitakere.

If you do use Chris as a courier, a donation/remuneration for time and travel would be appropriate.

# Raffle results

Last year's raffle.

- 1st Colin Stewart Wairarapa,
- 2nd Raewyn Castle Wairarapa,
- 3rd Ross Linton Wairarapa,
- 4th Di Pritt Ohakune,
- 5th Ray Haywood Hamilton,
- 6th Gus Gardner Auckland,
- 7th Steve Lyttle Wairarapa,
- 8th Tony Mackereth Manawatu,
- 9th Frazer Wairarapa.

Raffle ticket selling wonder-woman, Joyce Brooks will be thrilled, she sold 2nd, 3rd, and 7th, Jim Law sold 9th.

### And a not so gentle rebuke:

Disappointing overall, sold only 290 books out of the 500.

After costs the profit was approximately \$4665, and would have been a lot less without the donated first prize.

Probably the best thing that came out of it was the number of late memberships that came in because of the reminder. The worst thing was the four members who have received wetland funding from DU who didn't buy their books (two of them taking the time to return them though). Where do they think their funding was sourced from?

## Change of Address - are you moving? Please send us your new details.

Name.....

Old address..... New address.....

.....Postcode.....

Phone..... Email.....

For membership and general inquiries, Ducks Unlimited, PO Box 281, Levin, 5540,

or email: [info@ducks.org.nz](mailto:info@ducks.org.nz)



## DU Membership form

YES, I wish to join Ducks Unlimited as a member

Please send me further information, I may join later.

Title..... First Name..... Surname.....

Address.....

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Phone..... Fax.....

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Bronze Sponsor  \$90 Silver Sponsor  \$160 Gold Sponsor  \$310

My Donation of \$ ..... is enclosed. Please find my cheque attached.

Please charge my VISA/MASTERCARD No: .....

Expires: ..... Signature: .....

Please renew my membership each year and charge my credit card ..... YES/NO

Post to: Ducks Unlimited, P.O. Box 281, Levin 5540.

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