

From the President

Although the country side is dry at the moment it would appear there has been a fairly good season for Waterfowl breeding, at least that has been my observation in the Wairarapa. Only time will tell.

Jim Law, Jim Campbell and I have been putting in quite a bit of time on the Wairio Wetland Restoration because we have been allocated a dollar for dollar subsidy from Greater Wellington Regional Council from their Fresh Water Accord Fund. This is designed to improve water quality in Lake Wairarapa by diverting nutrient laden water into Wairio so it can be filtered and said nutrients stripped out. This will also keep water in the wetland for considerably longer into the summer. The plan is to get water into the northern end and let it drift all the way down and exit at Stage 1, at the southern end.

So watch this space.

Our AGM is being held in the Hawke's Bay this year on August 3-4. John Cheyne has organised an interesting Field Trip for us, so put it in your diaries.

Hope to see you all then.

Ross Cottle



Members passed away

It is with great sadness we note the following death. Our sincere condolences go to the family of Bob Wood of Levin

Lost members

From time to time mail arrives back from overseas and it is difficult to know if the members have passed away or simply moved. If anyone knows what has happened to the following two members, please let Jan Abel know at info@ducks.org.nz
Mr Ebe Walter of Florida USA
Mr Barry A Morrison Ontario CANADA

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Cover photo: Stretching it wings or showing off.
Black Swan, Lake Taupo.

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
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.

Web Masters report

Visibility, increasing our profile and ideas for helping our website become more visible and ways we can apply this, such as attending events like the World Wetland Day (WWD). Conservation seems a tight knit group, we discussed at last year's AGM trying to work closer with other agencies, my attendance at WWD highlighted this. Our Facebook also continues to increase our publicity.

Out & About - WWD

I attended the WWD at the Auckland Zoo. First impression was that everyone involved was very friendly and happy for us to be having a presence there. The write up by Kristy (Senior Ecologist) from Boffa Miskel seemed to echo this. Everyone was very interested in what we were doing for the children with Quack Club. Many took away our material promising to pass it on to schools etc or even use it with their educational packages. Some people were also helpful with material for future issues etc. As a PR exercise this was successful and I would advise we try to be involved in similar events in the future. I could only really represent Quack Club and had hoped to have someone who had a deeper understanding of Ducks Unlimited there, but it turned out Quack Club was exactly right for that event.

As to the children and how successful this interaction was with them, I took an array of resources and material, from colouring and craft pages to stickers and our Quack Club fact sheets. These all proved very popular and at points of the day I struggled to keep up with the demand and hand out sheets. In the morning when the children (and adults) were fresh we had 10 enrolments on the spot. In the afternoon flustered parents were very happy and grateful for our resources (I was thanked so many times) but as they were flustered they took applications away with them. Time will tell if these produce results. Being at WWD was successful and with more events like we can get the kids club to soar.

Could attendance at farmers expos achieve similar exposure for wetland projects? Also a similar concept on Volunteer and/or Public days at Wairio etc.

Facebook

Our Facebook following is up to 123 members. Whilst Andrew and I try to keep news tidbits etc flowing on that page it would be good to have DU specific updates on there and some photos would be really good to keep it fresh and interesting. Notification of relevant events would be good. Every time we post we are putting a small piece of DU publicity on



Good PR: Michelle and son Jaeme waving the DU flag

some of those 123 members pages for other people to read.

DU Webpage

A brief look at our hit rate over the last three months shows a steady trend of hits and visits to the DU website.

I have learnt of a service for approx \$300 that can increase visibility of website in browsers, but we have increases already so it depends on the growth rate DU would like. We do not appear on first page of 'wetland' or 'duck' searches in Google.

Michelle Cooper

Australian invaders – Neil Hayes explains why they should not be here.

World record - NZ has the highest number of endangered birds.

Australian Harrier (Circus approximans)

In my Brown Teal Management Manual – “Natural History Captive Management and Survival of the NZ Brown Teal”, published in 2002 by the Brown Teal Conservation Trust – I attempted to create an awareness of the very serious impact the Australasian Harrier was having on the endangered brown teal (*Anas chlorotis*), and some success has been achieved in this area! But what is urgently needed is the withdrawal of the partial protection accorded the Australasian Harrier in 1985.

Here is some of what I wrote on this subject:

The Australian harrier is widespread throughout Australia, is also widespread throughout New Zealand and common in other areas of the South Pacific. Fossil research shows the harrier introduced itself from Australia less than 1000 years ago, and in the early 1800s when Europeans arrived, most of the country was covered in native bush and there were few harriers present - but the harrier benefited from the massive deforestation that took place from then until the 1970s (70 percent of the country's native bush was destroyed). And whilst the harriers wetland hunting areas are now significantly diminished to what they were (by some 90 percent) the harrier population has expanded dramatically - to a guesstimated NZ population of around 3 million by 2012.

In the outstanding book published in 1922 by GM Thomson entitled “The Introduction of Animals and Plants on New Zealand”, the author spends considerable time discussing the impact the harrier was having on birdlife. One would have thought we would have learnt from this?

The harrier is, without question, responsible for the demise of large numbers of nesting ducks, especially endemic species such as brown teal, shoveler, scaup and blue duck, and not only has the harrier been regularly recorded killing nesting female ducks, as well as numerous other adult ducks, it has been seen destroying eggs, killing large numbers of ducklings, and plucking cygnets and gosling off water!

The Australian Harrier gained partial, but very questionable politically correct protection in New Zealand in 1985 and since then their numbers have dramatically increased, with irrevocable evidence showing this aerial predator is assisting in pushing brown teal and other endemic birds towards extinction.

This partial protection was ‘inspired’ by the



Caught: An Australian Harrier in a trap. Photo: Neil Hayes.

Wellington Acclimatisation Society – after its staff had an extremely ‘bad idea’! Remembering that feral cats, mustelids (ferrets, stoats and weasels), rats, possums and hedgehogs are totally alien to the New Zealand landscape, and both the Harrier and Pukeko are Australian species, one would have thought that political correctness would never have raised its ugly head and that everyone would have been encouraged to use whatever trapping methods are available to control predators as they are the main reason for the decline of all the country's endemic birds and the reason why New Zealand holds the world record for the highest number of endangered birds. Research into the dramatic decline of the endemic NZ Brown Teal - from a population of 2-3 million in the early 1800s to a population of 2000 today – show the harrier is now the third most prominent brown teal predator, with only feral cats and mustelids ahead of the harrier on the ‘need to exterminate/control’ list.

Historically the harrier was considered a pest in Australia and New Zealand and huge numbers were killed; with bounties placed on them in New Zealand.

The result was that until they became partially protected in 1985 the population had been drastically reduced/controlled and the harrier was nowhere near the problem predator it is today.

In the excellent ‘Gamekeepers for the Nation’ (McDowall 1994) comprehensive details show that between 1920 and 1960 the New Zealand acclimatisation societies, which were well aware of the impact of harriers on birds, eliminated over a million harriers (1,000,000).

Whilst the main diet of harriers is historically known to be - mice, rats, small birds and dead animals (many of these are road kills, which are now quite low in number), the result of partial protection has seen a massive expansion of the harrier population, to a level where the 3 million harriers now impact heavily on all our waterfowl - adult birds, their eggs and their progeny, including: NZ Brown teal, NZ Grey duck, Grey teal, NZ Shoveler, NZ Scaup, NZ Blue duck, NZ Paradise Shelduck, Mallard, Canada geese, Mute swan and Black swan cygnets; with the NZ Brown teal being especially vulnerable.

This year several observers have reported seeing harrier hawk remove whole broods of both mute and black swan cygnets at Henley Lake in Masterton!

The harrier also impacts heavily on the survival of our all other endemic birds, including – Kiwi, Tui, Bellbird, Pigeon, Kaka, Fantail, NZ Dabchick, Banded Dotterel, Morepork, Kea, etc. Many also believe that the harrier impacts on the very survival of the threatened NZ Falcon!

The good news is that in 2012, amendments were made to the Wildlife Act which allows harriers to be culled to protect threatened native species. This is good news for all waterfowl in New Zealand!

The other good news is that regional councils’ that have recently introduced predator control programmes for cats, mustelids and rats have found that the harrier is readily caught in cage traps and sizeable numbers are eliminated in the highly successful Timms execution trap! This is in spite of some wildlife ‘experts’ claiming that the harrier cannot smell. A typical harrier elimination method for brown teal is by first severing the epinal cord.

Fossil research in 2002 determined the NZ Brown Teal (*Anas chlorotis*) – also now commonly referred to as Pateke - has been present here for over 10,000 years and evolved in an almost totally predator free environment.

The population prior to Europeans arriving in the early 1800s was believed to have numbered several million and it was found throughout all types of New Zealand wetlands and on the Chatham and Stewart Islands.

But, with an ever increasing number of alien predators a gradual decline in Pateke numbers started in the mid-1880s and from several million the decline accelerated to a point in 1999 where only 750 survived - and total extinction was imminent.

However, thanks to some very serious predator control programmes at intrinsically important sites on the Coromandel, Great Barrier Island and in Northland, together with wetland protection, creation, restoration and enhancement, plus an all important and a dedicated group of Pateke captive breeders by 2012 the population has now risen to over 2000.

The Australian Harrier is in the top four alien predators (cats, mustelids, harriers and rats), that wreak havoc on all our native and endemic birdlife and if we are to save any of our endemic birds - that evolved from the very beginning of life here - as well as enhance the populations of all species of waterfowl - the Australian Harrier has no place in Aotearoa.

Two sides to every story. Lead v steel shot. Neil Hayes article in the January Flight has initiated a response.

Letter to the Editor

On looking at the January issue of Flight magazine, I was shocked at what I read in Neil Hayes' article. Neil's information about steel shot is incorrect. I have great respect for the work he has done protecting and providing habitat for waterfowl, but proposing to allow lead shot into waterfowl hunting would greatly undo his good works. There is overwhelming scientific data and publications (going back into the early 1900s) showing the negative impacts of lead shot on waterfowl species around the World. I have been a game bird biologist for over 12 years in the United States and two years in NZ and am familiar with the negative impacts of lead shot on waterfowl species. When starting my career at university, the banning of lead from waterfowl hunting was praised as a win for wildlife conservation and seen as hunters being proactive about conserving waterfowl and providing hunting opportunities for future generations. The Wildlife Society (one of the largest organisation of wildlife biologists and a pro-hunting organisation) has a policy statement and a technical review that is a great summary of the impact of lead in the environment on wildlife species: <http://www.wildlife.org/policy/position-statements> and <http://www.wildlife.org/publications/technical-reviews>.

In Canada and the USA, not only is lead shot banned from waterfowl hunting it is currently being banned for other game hunting (including big game) and in fishing equipment in several states and provinces. I encourage people to take a look at the rules and regulations from North America. A site that breaks down the

non-toxic regulations by state in the US is: http://www.huntingwithnonlead.org/state_info.html. Not only is this happening in North America, but in other parts of the world. For example, lead shot is also being banned in many countries throughout Africa and Eurasia (<http://www.unepaewa.org/publications/leadshot/leadpage2.htm>), for waterfowl and migratory game bird hunting. As for Neil's reference to the Humane Society report on wounding rates, this report has been highly criticised by waterfowl biologist as Dr Alison's report was not a full review and he chose to ignore studies that showed decreases in wounding rates in waterfowl. For example the study done by the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center (<http://www.npwr.usgs.gov/resource/birds/pbpoison/toxicosi.htm>), which showed wounding rates decreased after the implementation of steel shot. Wounding rates and what affects those rates is a hard issue and many of the early studies were done before the ballistics of steel shot was figured out.

A little research on Google scholar may change the minds of people who want to bring lead back into waterfowl hunting. I encourage people to read the information available and make informed decisions. A lot of hunters base their knowledge on what they hear from their peers or a chat room on the internet. But in today's world, we can find good solid scientific information on the internet on which to make good informed decisions.

I am sorry the lead shot issue distracted from the rest of Neil's message, which I feel has merit. I also would wish in the future

that articles like these have references of where the data was obtained. I am interested in his statement of sex bias in mallards. I looked at the banding data that Eastern and the Auckland/Waikato Fish and Game Regions have published and it does not support his views.

I wish Ducks Unlimited the best and hope that they spend some time thinking about this issue and their position. A little research and a few calls to Fish & Game for data will go a long way in furthering the conservation of waterfowl species in NZ. We as hunters and waterfowl conservationists need to work together to provide waterfowl hunting opportunities to future generations and we cannot get there if we keep fighting over issues like lead shot. If hunters would get as passionate about developing and restoring wetlands as they get about bringing lead shot back, we could bring waterfowl numbers back to historic levels.

Frank Bellrose (a well-known and respected waterfowl biologist), in the book *Waterfowl Tomorrow* (1964) wrote: "If lead shot continues to be scattered in waterfowl marshes across the country, it is inevitable that losses from lead poisoning will increase."

Nathan Burkepile

Nathan has a Master of Science in Wildlife and Range Management with an emphasis on wildlife toxicology. He has 15 years experience working with game birds both in research and management. His interests are game bird conservation, management, wetland creation and restoration. Before coming to New Zealand three years ago Nathan worked for several parks and wildlife organisations in North America. He is currently a Fish & Game Officer in Northland.

News from Pukahā Mount Bruce reserve

White kiwi No3

It is getting to be a habit, another white kiwi for Pukaha Mount Bruce, hatched just before last Christmas.

This is the third white kiwi hatched at the centre. Staff knew the eggs had come from Manukura's father, (Manukura was the first white chick) so they knew there was a 25 percent possibility of another white kiwi, but it still came as a surprise.

It is rare enough that two brown kiwi carrying the rare recessive white gene to mate in the first place, that they would go on to produce three white kiwi is really something special.

A small number of North Island Brown Kiwi carry the recessive white gene which both the male and female must have to produce a white chick.

All three white birds have the same father, who has been identified through his transmitter. A positive identification of the mother is less certain, but staff assume she is the same because of the rarity of the white gene. There is a one-in-four chance of such a pair producing a white chick.

Local Maori iwi Rangitane o Wairarapa are delighted that Pukaha Mount Bruce has been blessed a third time. "We have always known the reserve at Pukaha Mount Bruce is a very special and spiritual place, this third white kiwi is confirmation of what we have always known," Rangitane chief executive and Pukaha board member Jason Kerehi said.

Kaka tricks

It is estimated that more than 160 kaka now live at Pukahā Mount Bruce reserve. The 2007 census estimated 82 established at the reserve - so numbers have doubled.

In 1996 nine juvenile kaka were released - the first kaka at Pukaha in 50 years.

This dramatic increase is due to kaka breeding in the wild, not part of the captive breeding programme. The pest control programme plays a significant role in keeping predator numbers down, allowing kaka eggs and chicks to survive. Over \$150,000 each year is required just to maintain the current level of pest control on the reserve. In addition, Greater Wellington Regional Council and Horizons Regional Council help to protect the 'buffer' zone around Pukaha Mount Bruce.

Kaka are known to fly to Kapiti Island and back in a day, so tracking them is no easy feat. At the reserve the Kaka engage in an entertaining 'kaka circus' each day at 3pm when they receive an afternoon snack. The snack provides the kaka with an incentive to come in and provide a close up look for the delighted visitors, but isn't enough to replace the need to hunt for their own food in the wild.

They are particularly intelligent birds, with powerful wings and feet that allow them to jump through the trees and tumble through the air, hanging from branches to reach fruit and flowers. They are close relatives to the cheeky kea.



Director profile

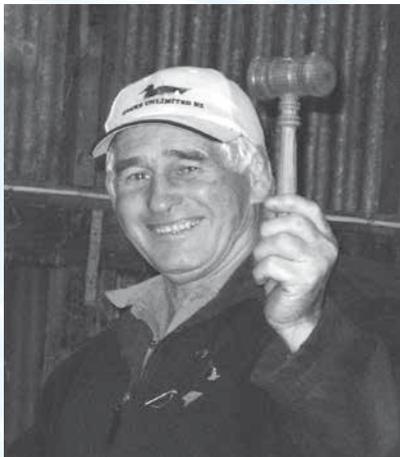
John Dermer

Diny and I joined DU in the late 1990s after being invited to join a bus trip which finished at Jim Campbell's lodge. We were both so impressed with what we saw and the people who are involved in running DU that we joined shortly afterwards. I was invited to become a director in 2004.

We run a 186ha sheep, bull beef finishing and cropping farm at Cheltenham, 15km north of Feilding. We have been here for 37 years and have enjoyed the chance to plant lots of trees and create two larger and several smaller wetlands - the last three with a tractor and front end loader. I have been chasing ducks here since I



Waiting for water: John Dermer, all his own work.



John Dermer: Still chasing ducks.

was old enough to hold a shotgun as I am the third generation of Dermer's on this land.

My farming career has mostly been here but I had two years at Homewood station on the east coast out of Masterton, and spent seven years chasing perendale sheep round the hills on a property at Kumeroa, just up the road from Neil Candy.

Diny and I joined the New Zealand Farm Forestry Association in 1996 to improve our knowledge of the trees we were planting, and I have been on the National Executive for nine years and was national president for 2011 and 2012. I am also the director of a forest investment company.

I see the creation of wetlands more from a land use perspective and through a farmer's eye. They go into the box which includes the use of trees to enhance a farm. If anyone has areas that are too wet to be any use on the farm and very expensive to drain, then fill them with water and watch the wetland birds enjoy them. I also love duck shooting so one supports the other.

The latest dam, just recently excavated, is now waiting for the drought to break, and water to arrive to fill it. The creation of this dam also provides better access to an adjoining paddock. These difficult little gullies can be turned into excellent small wetlands - more homes for more waterfowl.

First Saturday in May, duck shooting season starts

Are you ready? May 6 to July 25.

Fish & Game NZ provides regulations for game bird hunting throughout New Zealand. These regulations are amended each year to suit changing sporting and environmental conditions.

Each region has its own set of regulations working in conjunction with the national regulations

Please be aware of and adhere to local regulations - they are designed to ensure the sustainability of game bird hunting and fishing, and the wonderful natural resource that is the New Zealand environment.

The purpose of the Game Notice is to set out the conditions under which a licence holder may hunt for game birds in each Fish & Game region.

After the notice for each season is approved by the Minister of Conservation, the NZ Council is required to publish the notice in the New Zealand Gazette. Fish & Game New Zealand reproduces the conditions contained in the Notice in the form of North and South Island booklets as free guides

for anglers and hunters. Hunters should ensure they obtain a booklet when they purchase a hunting licence.

There are different booklets for the North, and the South Island. Make sure you have the right one.

Hunter Guides issued this year are valid until April 2014.

Ready for the Duck Shoot

Take note and remember these important safety rules.

Firearms Safety Code

The seven basic rules of the Firearms Safety Code are:

- **treat every firearm as loaded.** Check every firearm yourself. Pass or accept only an open or unloaded firearm;
- **always point firearms in a safe direction.** Loaded or unloaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction;
- **load a firearm only when ready to fire.** Load only the magazine after you reach your shooting area. Load the chamber only when ready to shoot.

Completely unload before leaving the shooting area;

- **identify your target beyond all doubt.**

Movement, colour, sound and shape can all deceive you. Assume colour, shape, sound, and shape to be human until proven otherwise;

- **check your firing zone.** THINK! What may happen if you miss your target?

What might you hit between you and the target or beyond? Do not fire when you know others are in your firing zone;

- **store firearms and ammunition safely.**

When not in use, lock away the bolt, firearm and ammunition separately. Never leave firearms in a vehicle that is unattended; and

- **avoid alcohol and drugs when handling firearms.**

Good judgement is the key to safe use of firearms.

A copy of the Seven Basic Rules of the Firearms Safety Code can be downloaded from www.mountainsafety.org.nz

Dune weeding at Tawharanui



People who care:

The sort of February day when the sea looks inviting and a swim is in order, but first there was the dune weeding to be done.

Mainly lupins and fleabane were targeted by the six hardy souls who turned up to help. And what a great place to do a bit of weeding, on the sand dunes directly above the West end of Anchor Bay on Omaha Bay.

Others were working in the Nursery getting seedlings ready for this year's plantings that will take place during May to September.

Photo: Patte Williams.

The Tawharanui bird hide



Bird watcher comfort:

A way to make bird watching fun for everyone and a welcome addition to the

Tawharanui reserve, is this bird hide just completed at the end of January. It has been designed on the lines of similar hides at another regional park in Mangere.

Inside there are two benches for sitting

and the centre is open and suitable for wheelchair access.

Photos: Patte Williams.

In to the wild - Whoio Update



Gently does it: Whoio being released at Egmont.



Into the wild: And another one goes in.



New home: A just released whoio cautiously checks its new surroundings.

Whoio were not having a good breeding season when this report was filed.

Whoio Captive Co-ordinator, Peter Russell said by November 2012 the wild whoio females had been flock-matted successfully. They were all sent to new homes. Queenstown, Otorohanga, Peacock Springs and Mt Bruce all received new pairs.

Breeding results at November saw six hatched and five reared while there was also a pair sitting on another clutch.

At Peacock Springs there were six hatched and five reared and also a pair sitting on another clutch. Also a new pair had a clutch but only one fertile egg, and three other breeding pairs had done nothing.

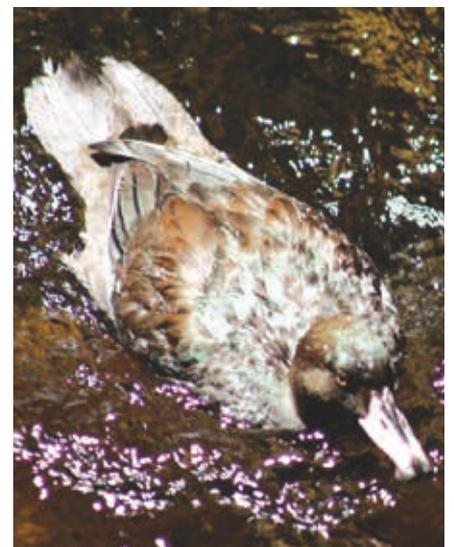
“It is disappointing, but these things do happen,” said Peter.

“I did have two eggs come in from Egmont National Park which were found in a cave near a stream. It looked like they had been flooded as there was no nesting material and two other eggs had been eaten by a rat. Both eggs were fertile, with one dying at about two weeks to go and the other about a week to go,” said Peter.

Only three South Island clutches had come in, well down on what was hoped. They were looking for at least 12 clutches this season. The weather in the south had not been good.

Peter was hoping they would still get more clutches in for making up pairs for breeders.

Since the release on Egmont eight birds were released on March 12 on the Manganui-a-te-ao which Peter said went really well, and another six birds were released onto the Tongariro the following week.



Loving that water: Fast and free.

Photos: Peter Russell.

The important roles wetlands perform in filtering nutrients and pollutants, and in absorbing water to reduce flooding or drought are not always realised or acknowledged.

World Wetlands Day in Auckland

World Wetlands Day is celebrated on February 2 each year to promote wetland awareness and conservation, and to commemorate the international Convention on Wetlands, adopted on February 2, 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar.

The theme this year was Wetlands and Water Management to acknowledge the role wetlands perform.

In Auckland, the Day was hosted by the Auckland Zoo and supported by the National Wetland Trust of New Zealand, Forest & Bird, Fish & Game, Ducks Unlimited, and WaiCare. The event was located at Ngā Repo, the wetlands exhibit in Te Wao Nui, the new native area of the Zoo.

Ngā Repo replicates a lowland swamp with sedges, reeds and threatened plants on the edge of a lake. Native birdlife including pateke (brown teal), tete (grey teal), papango (NZ scaup), and white-faced heron, and several enormous long-finned eels swim in a large tank.

Zoo staff provided talks covering conservation issues with wetlands and the species that inhabit them, along with feeding encounters with the birds and eels.

National Wetland Trust Deputy Chair, Kristy Hall, and member Paul Woodard, a native fish expert, provided activities for kids including colouring-in and crafts. Paul brought along two aquaria of native fish that kept both adults and children entertained. The first tank held the nationally endangered burgundy mudfish (*Neochanna heleioides*). This species was only discovered in the late 1990s and is endemic to Northland. Mudfish are unusual as they often inhabit acidic soil in peat bogs, and burrow into the mud to aestivate (similar to hibernating) during periods of dry weather. The biggest threat to this and other mudfish species is habitat degradation, mainly the drainage of wetlands and the maintenance or clearance of drains.

In the second aquarium tank, there were two whitebait species, inanga (*Galaxias maculatus*) and banded kokopu (*G. fasciatus*), along with a large common bully (*Gobiomorphus cotidianus*). Inanga are at risk species and declining, but are legally caught as the main component of whitebait fisheries. Inanga breed in estuarine wetlands which are at risk of drainage, grazing and land development. Inanga are poor climbers and can be excluded from adult habitat upstream by culverts, dams, ponds and other barriers to fish passage.

Forest & Bird promoted the risk of introduced predators to New Zealand's flora and fauna, and the importance of pest control. The Waitakere Branch runs 120ha Matuku Reserve near Bethell's Beach that comprises coastal broadleaf forest and kauri-tanekaha forest with 20 hectares of wetland, part of the Te Henga Wetland, and part of the largest relatively unmodified freshwater swamp in mainland Auckland.

Fish & Game provided stickers for the kids and educational material to encourage farmers to restore wetlands and protect game bird habitat. The 2013 Game Bird Habitat stamp this year features the endangered New Zealand bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*). Bittern are not allowed to be hunted but they share similar wetland habitat to game bird species. Fish & Game use the proceeds from the stamps programme and other activities to fund wetland habitat protection.



Wetland exhibit: Ngā Repo at Te Wao Nui, complete with pateke (brown teal) and papango (NZ scaup).

Ducks Unlimited works to conserve wetlands through protection, funding, technical assistance and education. At the Zoo, DU promoted the Quack Club that specifically aims to get children enthused in wetland conservation. The Club provides a newsletter and activities about wetland habitats, and the species that inhabit them. The first 12 months of membership is free. DU other activities include establishing a pateke captive breeding programme and administering Wetland Care New Zealand which funds a number of community projects throughout New Zealand.

At the WaiCare tent, children were kept entertained spotting water boatmen, Potamopyrgus water snails and introduced pest fish gambusia (*Gambusia affinis*) that were literally fished out of the adjacent Meola Creek. WaiCare is funded by Auckland Council that promotes caring for waterways and catchments across the region.

World Wetland Day 2014, just a few days prior to the National Wetland Trust Symposium, February 12-14, 2014 at Unitec in Auckland.

Kristy Hall, National Wetland Trust

Pohangina wetland – dry



The big dry

As the big dry crept over the Pohangina wetland ponds, with a similar picture around the country as dams, even lakes were showing areas usually hidden well below the water line, where had all the birds gone? A sprinkling of wet stuff landed in some areas, but not nearly enough to fill the many dried mud holes that usually host our wetland birds. Even after the downpours of March 18-19 more was needed.

Photos: Gordon Pilone, taken just days before that mid March rain.

From the dark side

So dark, no one seems to know just what she is. Spotted on the lake Taupo waterline with her brood, she was certainly different to the other ducks hanging about. Having consulted a few DU members, the best suggestion seems to be that she was probably a mallard cross. If any member has a better idea please let me know.



Left, **reening:** A mallard doing her morning ablutions, also at Taupo.

Photo: Liz Brook



So dark: Spotted on the lake Taupo waterline with her brood

Nikau Foundation grant for Wairio Wetland Restoration Project

A cheque for \$6500 from the Nikau Foundation was handed over to Ducks Unlimited (DUNZ) President Ross Cottle and Patron Jim Campbell by Gus van de Roer of the Nikau Foundation to go towards the restoration of the Wairio Wetland.

Nikau Foundation Chairman Kevin O'Connor said he was delighted the Foundation was able to support Ducks Unlimited with its restoration work at the Wairio Wetland on the eastern shore of Lake Wairarapa.

While most grants had previously gone to Wellington based organisations he added that the Wairarapa is part of the wider community supported by the Foundation.

Ross Cottle said the grant would go towards site preparation and tree planting at the joint venture project with DOC.

“We are starting to see the results of four years of effort and this injection of funds will help maintain the momentum of the project,” said Ross.

Tree planting is planned for May/June and volunteers are welcome. In past years children from Pirinoa Primary School, students from the Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre, Rotarians and DU and F&B members have assisted with the planting.

Nikau Foundation is the community foundation for the Wellington region, part of a worldwide family that provides a simple, effective and long-lasting way for people to leave a gift for causes close to their heart and close to home. Because the capital is invested and only the income is given out, the gift keeps on giving forever.

The grant for the Wairio Wetland restoration project has been arranged by Nikau on behalf of the Richard and Doreen Evans Trust.



Hand over: L to R: Jim Campbell, Patron and past president, Gus van de Roer, Nikau Foundation trustee, and Ross Cottle President accepting grant for Wairio Wetlands from Nikau Foundation.



On site: Jim Law left, with manager of the Nikau Foundation Brian Burge at Wairio Wetland.

Whio happy



Fast water: And loving it

Eight happy whio tasting freedom on the Maunganui-a-te-ao river were among several released in March from the breeding programme.

All of these birds are from North Island population although they have attended the “finishing school” at Peacock Springs.

There is a clear genetic split between North and South Island populations, although there is relatively low genetic differentiation between sites within islands. This suggests that the South Island populations are an evolutionary significant unit i.e. a historically isolated and independently evolving population. As such, the North and South Island populations are managed separately. The South Island birds have no captive population.

Photo: Peter Russell.

Rewards of life in the back blocks include the sounds of the bush and the river and of “100s of tuis”.

Awards for caring

Conservation and the environment are the motivators for the Steele family and for Retaruke Station and for all their hard work Richard and Rachel Steele received two of the Horizon Regional Council district Ballance Farm Environment Awards last month.

Richard and Rachel are the parents of DU director, Dan Steele. It is not hard to see where Dan gets his motivation for conservation.

Richard said Rachel loves the birds, and the family conservation ethic comes from her.

“I speak for the trees,” said Richard.

Rachel is truly a bird woman. She has counted up to 27 different birds in the garden in one day, and 40 different birds in a month.

Dan’s adjoining property Blue Duck, is where protection of the whio is important, and one of the main draw cards for the volunteers at Blue Duck, who Dan calls Eco Warriors.

Another son Rich shares his work between Retaruke and Blue Duck, while daughter Anna, an accountant, is home three nights a week putting energy into the website and business administration.

The couple have already developed a house that is totally free of the national grid, and have plans to build another for themselves.

The Steele family came to the 830ha Retaruke in 1993. In 2005 they bought the 611ha next door. 150ha of redwoods have been planted in headwaters to mitigate earth flow movement. They also retired 80ha of regenerating native bush and put a 119ha of mature bush into a QEII covenant. Some of the trees there are estimated to be 890-years-old.

The two awards presented to the couple were the Massey University Discovery Award and the Meridian Energy Excellence Award. Judges for the Horizons/Ballance awards said the Steele’s operate their 1441ha predominantly steep hill country with vision and passion.



Happy pair: Richard and Rachel have a bit of fun when their farm house turned 100.

Picture: Blue Duck.

Whio still endangered

The captive management plan for whio is a slow but steady build up from being reared in captivity to being released into the wild and slowly building up their numbers in their natural habitat.

Whio will continue to need the intervention and help of people for a long time yet. They are classified as ‘Nationally Vulnerable’ under the New Zealand Threat Classification System.

The Recovery Plan lists six objectives to aid their recovery. One is the use of the captive breeding programme to assist in the re-establishment of their populations. To date the programme has been used to establish a breeding population of whio on Mt Taranaki, and using similar techniques, could be used to supplement or establish populations elsewhere.

The first attempt at keeping whio in captivity was in 1957, when a pair and their four offspring were sent to Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust England. In 1964 whio were

first held Mt Bruce. The first successful breeding occurred in 1965, and again in 1975. Two of the male offspring, along with two wild caught females were once again sent to England in 1986, and the entire captive population of whio in England were descendants from these birds. By 1998 the population stood at 17 birds, although there is currently only one surviving offspring remaining.

By the 1980s, eggs were routinely removed from pairs at Mt Bruce for artificial incubation and ducklings were hand reared. However, from 1987 the captive programme was gradually handed to Ducks Unlimited.

The Blue Duck Captive Breeding Group was formed in 1988, consisting of members from Ducks Unlimited and the Department of Conservation. To date, a total of 43 birds had been produced with around 29 birds in captivity within New Zealand and four in England, mostly descendant from the two original pairs at Mt Bruce. The National

Wildlife Centre distributed all their whio to Ducks Unlimited members.

The Whio Recovery Group identified Mt Taranaki as an ideal site to investigate the possibility of re-establishing a population of whio. In 2000, 11 captive reared ducklings were released on the mountain. By 2007, a further 77 captive reared birds had been released at this site and the first breeding attempts of the population had occurred. However, the birds in captivity were becoming old and the breeding programme began to struggle to produce offspring.

A request for wild birds was issued to two sites in the Central North Island in 2008, and resulted in the gifting of two clutches from Tongariro Forest and two clutches from Manganuioteao over four years. From these broods, 11 males and 6 females were added to the captive programme.

To date, 286 birds have been recorded since 1971 in the studbook and 13 facilities in New Zealand hold North Island whio.

Ramsar Convention and wetlands in New Zealand

New local sites being investigated

In 1971, the value of wetland sites around the world was formally recognised at the signing of a Wetland Convention in the Iranian town of Ramsar. To date, this is the only international convention on an ecosystem type.

The anniversary of the Convention's signing is celebrated on World Wetlands Day, February 2 every year. (see page 2, and page 9)

By 2012 there were 163 countries as signatories to the convention, with 2062 wetlands covering more than 197 million hectares designated as sites of international importance.

The Ramsar definition of wetlands includes;

- swamps and marshes
- lakes and rivers
- wet grasslands
- peat bogs
- oases
- estuaries, deltas and tidal flats
- coral reefs
- human-made sites such as fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and salt pans.

The Ramsar Convention encourages the

wise use of wetlands, so that they can be sustained economically, socially and environmentally.

The Ramsar sites around the world acknowledge the flyways of migratory birds. Visits to New Zealand's wetlands by migrating birds is a constant reminder of our global connections, with some birds travelling distances of 12 thousand kilometers non-stop from the Arctic.

New Zealand has six Ramsar sites, internationally significant wetlands. Farewell Spit at the top of the South Island, Firth of Thames in the Hauraki Gulf, Kopuatai Peat Dome on the Hauraki Plains, Manawatu Estuary near Foxton, Awarua Waituna Lagoon in Southland, Whangamarino wetland in the northern Waikato.

The National Wetland Trust has produced a full colour booklet on five of our six Ramsar sites. It gives a snapshot of their main features, highlights some of the special wetland bird, plant and animal species, and includes stories of those who live, work and study around the wetlands. Maps

of each wetland outline their distinctive characteristics and how to visit them. Or take a virtual tour of New Zealand's Ramsar sites on Google Earth.

A copy of "Our Wet and Wild Places" is \$10 per copy. Contact Ramsar for one.

Read a report on wetland management in New Zealand, or download a factsheet on Ramsar sites by the Department of Conservation.

Coming up:

Several other New Zealand sites are being investigated for listing including;

- Avon-Heathcote Estuary in Christchurch
- Mangarakau near Farewell Spit
- Okarito Lagoon (home of the white heron colony) in South Westland
- Lake Wairarapa near Wellington
- Ohiwa Harbour in the Bay of Plenty
- Kaipara Harbour north west of Auckland.

The National Wetland Trust Ramsar committee has a key role in advising on suitable sites.

Don't leave home till you have seen ...

Auckland has an estimated 3700ha of freshwater wetlands and 14,000ha of estuarine wetland, along with over 30 lakes and 10,000km of rivers and streams.

Have you visited any of them?

As a maritime region nestled between the Tasman Sea and the Pacific Ocean it provides a wide variety of interesting places for birdie types to visit.

Forget about the active volcanic field and enjoy the water features.

The region's landforms are diverse and stunning; a marine park dotted with islands, an intricate coastline, bush clad ranges, extensive sand peninsulas, and lowlands of uplifted ancient sea bed.

Its wetlands are diverse, and include:

- harbours and estuaries,
- dune lakes and swamps
- volcanic springs, swamps, and crater lakes
- flax or raupo-dominated gully wetlands
- remnant swamp forest
- gum land heaths
- water supply reservoirs and water treatment ponds.

On the narrow isthmus, the low-lying western suburbs were once full of cabbage trees and flax swamps, and inhabited by weka, banded rail, bittern and pukeko. Wetlands formed here when lava flows blocked streams, or in volcanic craters and ponds on lava flow depressions.

In the Kaipara, Franklin and Rodney district



Bitten: in cover. Photo: DoC.

lowlands, swamp forests with kahikatea, pukatea, swamp maire, raupo, cabbage trees and harakeke (flax) covered large expanses of poorly drained land. At the coast they graded into salt marshes with oioi and sea rush.

Dune lakes formed on the peninsulas of Awhitu and Kaipara built by sand deposited by the Waikato River and transported northwards by strong currents.

As with the rest of New Zealand, wetlands here have been seriously depleted and degraded, with most freshwater wetland now less than 10 hectares in extent,

however they continue to support a range of native species including:

- Australasian bittern, fernbird, brown teal, grey duck, banded rail, NZ dabchick, spotless crane, and marsh crane
- Eight native fish species including inanga, kokopu, and black mudfish
- Around one third of the nationally threatened plants in Auckland.

And now that we know Auckland Zoo has its own native area including a wetlands exhibit, that is another place to take the kids.

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- ⦿ Railblaza rod/gun rest for use while paddling



The Flow is a great hunting and fishing kayak due to being small, fast, manoeuvrable and featuring plenty of storage space.



RRP \$949
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- ⦿ Camo Kotare Kayak
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- ⦿ Camo Fishing PFD
- ⦿ Black Waikato alloy paddle



This larger sit on top kayak has a weight capacity of 230kgs and plenty of storage area making it a very safe and stable hunting platform.



RRP \$1299
was ~~\$1499~~

AGM -- Exciting programme lined up

When: August 3-4, 2013

Where: Quayside Conference Centre, Ahuriri Napier, right on the waters edge.

Accommodation: Bluewater Hotel, Ahuriri Napier alongside conference centre.

** So far nothing much about Friday night, maybe a meet and greet in a bar at the Quayside? Sportz Bar?? **

AGM to be held Saturday morning with morning tea to follow.

A bus trip on Saturday will visit a number of nearby wetlands including Ahuriri Estuary, a wetland restored specially for bittern, and the restored Pekapeka Wetland south of Hastings which has a short wheel chair standard walk with education sign boards.

Dinner and Auction on Saturday night at Quayside.

Talk and morning tea Sunday morning – John Cheyne is giving a presentation

on the Wairio wetland project in the Wairarapa, work to date and what is planned for the future as well as an interesting discussion re the benefits of grazing to the edge of a wetland or not.

More detail to follow - Watch our website for further information and booking details and registration form or alternatively visit our Facebook page or email Jan at info@ducks.org.nz

An exciting couple of days.

Mark August 3-4 in your diary.

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



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.....

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For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

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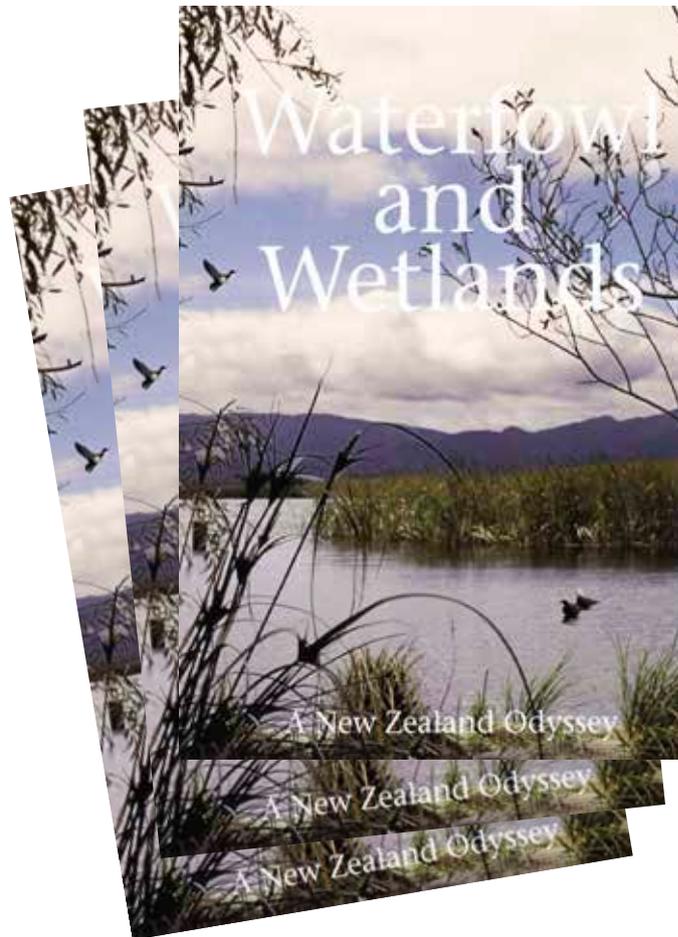
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“Waterfowl and Wetlands – A New Zealand Odyssey” is a 75 minute programme that illustrates the value of wetlands, the waterfowl that depend upon them and the efforts being made to reclaim the country’s rapidly shrinking wetland areas.

New Zealand is home to some of the world’s rarest waterfowl as well as the more common introduced species. Each one is shown in detail.

There is information on the various types of wetland and their management, waterfowl predators, the conservation value of hunters and also the Ramsar sites of ecological importance.



This is a programme for educators, conservationists, hunters, natural historians and anyone with a love of the outdoors. DVD indexing takes you directly to any waterfowl species, wetland type, Ramsar site and other subjects.

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