

Flight



ISSUE 157 - OCTOBER 2013



AGM photos & reports
Mute swan round up
Dead pest best pest

From the President

I am privileged to be the new DUNZ President appointed by my fellow DU Directors at our meeting at the Napier Conference in August. I thank them for their confidence and hope I can make as big a contribution to wetland and waterfowl conservation as our past President Ross Cottle. To Ross, a big thank you for your stewardship of DU over many years and I know as a Director you will continue to keep DU on track. To your wife Sharon, we really appreciate the support you have given Ross and DU.

The strength of DU is based around its members and the sterling work of Liz Brook, editor of Flight, Jan Abel, secretary and Michelle Cooper, facilitator of the Quack Club and DU webmaster.

Our AGM in Napier was an outstanding success. We had a great venue and good attendance by members who supported the fund raising auction. The field trip on Saturday morning to Pekapeka Swamp was led by Steve Cave, Wetlands Manager with the Hawke's Bay Regional Council who talked about their restoration programme for the wetland. They have an excellent interpretation trail with boardwalks which take you right into the middle of this wetland. Pekapeka is located on SH2 south of Hastings and is well worth a visit.

In the afternoon we visited the Ahuriri Estuary on the edge of Napier, now only 20 percent its former size following land uplift in the 1931 Napier earthquake and associated drainage work. Ahuriri is a very valuable estuarine wetland with a rich Maori history, high biodiversity values with a number of northern hemisphere breeding birds like godwit using the area in our summer, and diverse recreation values.

The future of wetlands is both exciting and challenging. Projects like Wairio in the Wairarapa where DU has gained the support of a diverse group of organisations and individuals in helping to restore this degraded wetland. It is a great model which should be extended to other regions where many other wetlands require help.

The future of wetlands is largely dependent on private landowners and organisations like DU, Fish & Game, Game Bird Habitat Trust, National Wetland Trust, DOC, QEII, Forest & Bird, Regional Councils, community biodiversity groups and others. We all have a strong interest in wetland conservation and often work independently of each other. I hope we can take advantage of every opportunity to work more closely together in future. It is important that legislation, like the Resource Management Act which underpins much of this work, is not weakened during the current review.

A decision has been made to hold the 2014 AGM in the Wairarapa at Brackenridge Country Retreat near Martinborough. Look forward to seeing you all there.

John Cheyne



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New Members

A warm welcome to:

Colin Shore and Joanna McVeagh, Masterton
Andrew Bean of Napier.

Membership numbers

To date 93 percent of members had renewed for the year 2013/2014.

Board of Directors

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William Abel Levin 06 362 6675

Neil Candy Woodville 06 376 4448

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Jim Law Wairarapa 06 307 7855

Dan Steele Whakahoro 07 895 6276

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Liz Brook, Brightnook Farm, RD9, Feilding 4779.

Email: liz.brook@farmside.co.nz

Tel: 06 328 9836.

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Cover photo: Ross Cottle can hardly keep the smile off his face as he brings another swan to join the other captives. Story page 5.

Photo: Catherine Ott, Peacock Springs.

Canada needs wetlands (so does NZ)

Ducks Unlimited Canada are celebrating 75 years of existence this month, October 20013. In a special souvenir issue put out by the Calgary Herald there is a piece that explains why Canada needs wetlands. In New Zealand we need wetlands to be looked after as well, so here are the reasons given by the Canadians. These are reasons New Zealand can also take to heart.

Ducks Unlimited Canada are celebrating 75 years of existence this month, October 20013. In a special souvenir issue put out by the Calgary Herald there is a piece that explains why Canada needs wetlands. In New Zealand we need wetlands to be looked after as well, so here are the reasons given by the Canadians. These are reasons New Zealand can also take to heart.

Wetland - like marshes and ponds are some of the most productive ecosystems in the world. They work behind the scenes, providing many important benefits to all Canadians.

Clean water: wetlands filter harmful pollutants from the water we drink and improve the health of our lakes and rivers.

Homes for wildlife: hundreds of species depend on wetlands for food and raising their young.

Flood and drought prevention: wetlands act like giant sponges, holding water during wet periods and releasing it during dry periods.

Fun and recreation: wetlands are beautiful places for people of all ages to be active and enjoy nature.

Given all they do, it is shocking that wetlands continue to be lost. Every day up to 80 acres of wetlands are lost in Canada. Your help is needed. Join Ducks Unlimited, Canada's conservation community at www.ducks.ca/

The following are excerpts from another article in that Calgary Herald publication linking science with nature and wetlands. This is already happening with the work DUNZ has instigated at Wairio Wetland in the Wairarapa. In Southland Waituna Lagoon is also attracting scientific interest.

The science of nature

Science is helping to increase the knowledge about wetlands and what they do.

Ducks Unlimited Canada biologist Owen Steele said: "As one of the Earth's most productive ecosystems, wetlands are also among the most threatened.

"A lot of people don't care if wetlands are a good place for ducks or frogs or anything else, society is so urbanised we've lost touch with nature.

"But if their home is going to get washed away of they're no longer able to drink their tap water because of disappearing wetlands, they are suddenly interested. "

Steele says if the river that runs through their town is going to be green, scummy and unattractive to walk by, they are going to sit up and pay attention.

Research in North America clearly shows

the critical environmental benefits wetlands provide, which include clean water and habitat for wildlife, reducing flooding and erosion and lessening the impact of climate change. As wetlands are lost so too are the benefits they provide. These include phosphorus removal - without wetlands more phosphorus will go into our lakes and rivers.

There is also the carbon stored in wetlands. The biological diversity and the social benefits of wetlands start adding up. Landscape changes that include roading, rail lines and pipelines can all affect wetlands.

Owen Steel said: "Things like our jobs, the economy and our health are all important issues; we need to figure out a way to link wetland protection and conservation to those issues.

"We still have a long way to go in prevention of wetland loss."

Pekapeka



Pekapeka Swamp: an ideal place to learn about wetland importance and why they must be saved. More pictures page 8.

Photo: Dan Steele.

wetland care NEW ZEALAND



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

Wetland Care members recognise that wetlands are vital to the wellbeing of the environment, acting as huge ecological

sponges by soaking up pollutants and filtering water before it reaches streams, rivers, lakes, aquifers and the sea.

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

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

Funding for projects comes from the Waterfowl and Wetlands Trust established by Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc in 1991, as well as from 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
- Steyning Trust, Hawke's Bay
- Travis Wetland Trust, Christchurch
- Wairo Wetland, South Wairarapa
- Wetland Trust New Zealand, Rangiriri
- Waitakere Branch Forest and Bird
- 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.

Largest wetland in Auckland area - Te Henga



Proposed predator control is vital for Habitat Te Henga and for the reintroduction and survival of many birds including pateke. John Sumich, Chair, Habitat Te Henga puts the case.

Matuku, Forest & Bird's sanctuary, is approximately 120ha of regenerating mixed kauri and podocarps that merges into West Auckland's Te Henga wetland, the largest in the Auckland area.

Visiting a dozen years or so ago, Sean O'Connor and Ossie Latham declared to John Staniland, the resident guardian, that it was ideal for pateke although the whole valley would need predator control.

Finally in 2012 the current Pateke Recovery group leader Tiff Browne and Nigel Miller agreed the blend of forest, swamp, and farmlands offered all that pateke desire. With the large dune-impounded Lake Wainamu just over the ridge it would also be part of the habitat any released pateke would utilise so that (area) also needed predator control. And while you're at it they'll (pateke) probably use the small estuary at the beach so include that!

Since 2002 the Ark in the Park project had been steadily expanding predator control to the current 2400ha and its north western boundary is conveniently the eastern boundary of the suggested predator controlled area.

The Ark has successfully introduced robins, whitehead and kokako and has an extensive mustelid and rat control program. Additionally a volunteer beach care group have been controlling predators for some years and have seen the return of New Zealand dotterel for their efforts. Other volunteers run a trap line at the north of the beach where on a headland there are five species of shearwater; the highest number co-habiting on a mainland site.

I was able to get grants from WWF, and Auckland Council Biosecurity to purchase traps both DOC200s for mustelids [the stainless steel model owing to the proximity of the wild West coast salt air] and also Belisle kill traps for feral cats.

Although the existing trap lines at the beach and at Matuku are fairly short and well managed by volunteers the new requirements have two

Wetland: Te Henga, perfect spot for a Bitten. Can you spot it?
Photo: D Roberts.



Lake Waimanu: This could be Pateke paradise at Te Henga.
Photo: John Sumich.

long trap lines each over 12km and therefore too long for a sustained fortnightly trap checking by volunteers. Another grant gained from the Auckland Zoo Conservation fund is for a contract trapper who will alternate the long lines.

Fernbird sightings and perhaps territories are to be recorded, as they believe fernbird will be an indicator species showing a positive response to predator control. Over 100 traps were placed during September and between volunteers doing the shorter lines and a contract trapper doing the long lines we hope to maintain the effort year round. So far the perimeter traps enclose over 1000ha.

Robins from the Ark in the Park sanctuary have dispersed and have been seen around the lake; a kokako has also visited Matuku and tomtit are now being seen at Matuku so the original vision of the Ark in the Park, "From the ridges to the sea" could become a reality with this new venture aimed at bringing back pateke. The potential then is for other waterfowl and rails to become established in the wetland and gradually disperse upriver toward the Ark.

Check it out at www.forestandbird.org.nz/habitattehenga

Kiwi call monitoring at Tawharanui

In New Zealand we have our special icon, the Kiwi. This is the only country in the world where Kiwi live. They make their burrows in the undergrowth and enjoy running about searching for worms and spiders.

However, with such a lot of predators now, it is wise to have Kiwi either in a safely fenced or pest monitored area.

At Tawharanui we have just that right situation, with the Predator Proof Fence across the Tokatu Point at the termination of Tawharanui Peninsular, giving freedom to all native creatures within.

Kiwi breed around Autumn each year, once they are old enough. This is about two years old. They like to call at twilight which is the two hours after the sun goes down. So Kiwi Call Monitoring occurs when volunteers sit during those two hours usually 6 – 8pm, in June each year, silently

listening for the calls.

Once the first call is heard then a count is commenced, slowly, sometimes reaching to over 20 times. These are usually the male birds with their shrill high whistles. Then occasionally a female will call with her lower guttural tones. Sometimes, all is then quiet. Perhaps they have found their mate!

Once the two hours is completed the volunteers collect together again at their base for supper and a chat about their evening event.

Sitting out in the dark at this time can be very cold in New Zealand. So good warm woolly and dry clothing is essential. Usually dry nights with little wind are chosen. The moon is rarely visible.

Try it sometime – it's a thrilling experience!

Patti Williams



Quick snack: A banana break for Patti Williams while monitoring kiwi.

Catching up the swans

There is something majestic about Mute swans as they glide gracefully on the surface of a lake, no wonder they are in great demand.

Swan Upping* has been an annual event for Ducks Unlimited for about 28 years with some members travelling quite a distance to take part in “catching up the swans”.

Peacock Springs, now The Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust donates Mute swans to DU, and the swans contribute a major amount to DU’s yearly fund raising.

This year Ross Cottle and Jim Campbell brought seven swans north.

Back in the North Island they collected all the birds that DU members have reared (in total 17) and they were taken to Ross’s place in Masterton to sort into breeding pairs for distribution to members who want them.

Catching the swans is called Swan Upping short for catching up the swans.

Two Cape Barren Geese were caught up in this event. They are Grey Geese native to the southern coast of Australia called Cape Barren. They have black feet, pink legs, a blue grey body and lime green beak. They have gone to long time DU member Mike Burke in northern Manawatu.

*Swan Upping is an annual ceremonial and practical activity in Britain in which Mute swans on the River Thames are rounded up, caught, marked, and then released.

Traditionally, the Monarch of the United Kingdom retains the right to ownership of all unmarked mute swans in open water, but only exercises ownership on certain stretches of the river and its surrounding tributaries. This dates from the 12th century, during which time swans were a common food source for royalty. Swan Upping is a means of establishing a swan census and today also serves to check the health of swans.

Photos: Catherine Ott, Peacock Springs.



Hard yards: For this heroic helper at Peacock springs.



Press gang: Staff from Isaac Construction help catch the swans.



Caged: Two beautiful Cape Barron Geese.



Captured: These swans still retain their dignity.



Fun, games and serious stuff at AGM



Wairio Wetland restoration

Tranquillity: Beauty at Wairio Wetland Photo: William Abel.

Jim Law explained what is happening at Wairio Wetland in the southern Wairarapa when he presented the following at this year's AGM.

During 2012/2013 restoration work increased significantly and the research programmes by Victoria University's Wellington School of Biodiversity and Restoration Ecology were expanded to include nutrient studies and hydrology.

However, of greatest interest are plans we have been pursuing for some time to reticulate water from the neighbouring Mathews lagoon (and possibly boggy Pond), under the Parera Road and into the Wairio Wetland. This would be a great boost to the health of the Wetland and assist in stripping nutrients before the water finally reaches Lake Wairarapa.

This year's increased work cost just over \$25,000 (prior year \$15,000), and was once again financially supported by the Nikau Foundation, Rotary, the Pharazon Trust and the Ron Greenwood Trust and the Estates of

two former DU members, Bruce McKenzie and Ron Brookes. Greater Wellington Regional council also contributed funds received under the Government's "Fresh Start for Fresh Water" programme. In total third parties contributed \$15,000, with the balance of \$10,000 coming from DU resources.

For the 2013/2014 year we have an even higher budget of \$35,000. Key items include our normal planting, led by DU's Trevor Thompson and again involved a number of our stakeholders, notably pupils from the local Martinborough School, students from the Taratahi Agricultural Training Centre, Rotarians and other interested parties, including of course, DU members. Good local media coverage was provided by Gill Lundie, the Wairarapa Chapter Chair. Further planting is planned for late August brings the total for the year to 4000 plants – a record!

The other main 2013/2014 item that has been completed is the construction of a bund wall



Update: Jim Law gives his report.

Photo: Liz Brook.

around the western side of Stage 4 that has retained significant water in the Wetland.

Wairio is no definitely being seen as a success story by the wider community and DU's profile has grown accordingly.

The birds' place – the Ahuriri estuary



Well used: Looking East across the estuary towards Napier. Photo: Ian Jensen.

An interesting visited during the AGM/ Conference was the long, narrow Ahuriri estuary. We travelled by bus, so there was no chance to dip a toe in the water. With its wide range of fresh to salty, shallow to deep, and sandy to muddy habitats the estuary supports a diverse range of birds, fish, invertebrates and plant life.

It is a sanctuary for a wide variety of wading birds including Grey herons, Royal spoonbills, Pied stilts, Shags, Kingfishers and Gannets.

Over 70 species of resident and migratory waterbirds use the estuary as a feeding and resting area. Bar-tailed godwits/kuaka, Knots and Golden plovers migrate here each year from their arctic breeding grounds.

Presentations and farewells



Surprise: Di Pritt receives an award from Chairman Ross Cottle.



Last report: David Smith stepping down from the directorship.



Orchid reward: Jan Abel DU secretary gets a reward for hard work.



Treasurer: John bishop presents the financials.

Web Feet and Websites = Ducks Unlimited

It is satisfying to see the steady rise of Ducks Unlimited website usage over the last year. Contributing factors are the great work DU are doing in Wairio and country wide, the improvements we are making to the site, word of mouth and a substantial amount of traffic directed to us by Google searches, mostly people looking for information on our web-footed friends.

Also on a rise - the use of our facebook page with now 161 members. It is a great venue to share thoughts, facts and photos on conservation and wetlands. A great place to visit and scroll through the 'posts' to get news on DU and other conservation organisations. We are linked with many organisations through Facebook, sharing and exchanging

relevant information, as is the social networking way.

I have proudly been involved with DU's website and other promotional projects for about three years. In that time the site has had a bit of a facelift, new additions and plenty of changes. Work continues and we look forward to further use of these resources in the coming year.

If you have not visited our website or facebook site we urge you to:
DUCKS UNLIMITED www.ducks.org.nz
QUACKCLUB (kids club) www.quackclub.co.nz
FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/pages/Ducks-Unlimited-NZ/142374525787862

Michelle Cooper



Webmaster: Michelle Cooper explains the DU website. Photos: Liz Brook.

Help at hand for Waikato wetlands

Tony Roxburgh, chair and trustee of the National Wetland Trust provided the AGM with a glimpse of happenings with wetlands in Waikato.

The Trust plans a state-of-the-art interpretation centre, with research and educational facilities, wetland gardens and heritage trails on land next to Lake Serpentine in the Waipa district. This is one of 69 peat lakes in Waikato.

Issues to be worked through include highway access and formal agreement with the Department of Conservation. DoC has already given approval to construct a 1.4 km predator fence around 10ha of the reserve at Lake Serpentine near Ohaupo.

Tony said the plan includes a visitor concept plan, an interpretation plan, business plan and landscape developed for the site. These were funded by grants from Transpower, Trust Waikato and Waikato Regional Council (Environmental Initiatives Fund), and supported by Waipa District Council.

They are looking at the best way to restore wildlife, including the feasibility of a predator exclusion fence. Funding from the Waikato Catchment Ecological Enhancement Trust, and a grant from the DoC's Community Conservation Fund allowed them to produce a re-vegetation plan to restore vegetation and habitat.

Students of Te Awamutu School have been

searching for native and exotic fauna, and have been the first to confirm long-tailed bats at the site. Other species confirmed include Australasian bittern, North Island fernbird, Black mudfish and Spotless crane.

The pest fence was completed in June this year and they now need sponsors and donations to help with pest eradication and re-introduction of native species.

Other work in the Waipa district includes Lake Ngaroto one of the peat lakes. It currently floods the peat and Tony said this could be one of the larger projects for the Waikato basin aimed at reducing loss of wetland and preserving the quality of the peat lakes.

Pekapeka Swamp – an icon for Hawke’s Bay



Swamp transformation: Discussing the merits of the restoration, from left Will Abel, Chris Thomas and Jim Law.



Briefing: DU members get background information about the swamp.
Photo: Liz Brook.



Eastern view: Taking from the lookout.
Photo: Ian Jensen.



Railway: Behind the people see the railway line running right through the swamp.
Photo: Dan Steele.

Our intrepid group of AGM attendees visited the Pekapeka Swamp, squeezed in between the railway on the Eastern side, and State Highway 2 on the West. This area is well known to travellers who use SH2 south of Hastings. Older people who passed this way remember the swamp as being totally overgrown by grey willow.

Steve Cave, Operations Environmental Manager for the Hawke’s Bay Regional Council (HBRC) explained the 98ha site is being restored to protect the cultural and historical value but also to help people understand the significance and important part wetlands play.

When Maori arrived in the area about 1530 this peat swamp, part of the limestone area, would have been very different. Its trip down hill started in 1873 with the dumping of rubble, fill and waste. The rail line was built in 1875. Between 1942 and 1970 channels were dug to drain the swamp, and in 1955 SH2 was straightened, cutting through the western side.

In 1970 Pekapeka was made a reserve. Willow control started in 1984 and finally a management plan to restore the wetland was approved by the HBRC.

Helicopter and ground spraying targeted the willows. Community and school

groups have put in many volunteer hours at the swamp. A clearing programme improved the flow of water through the wetland, and controlled animal and plant pests.

A plain to restore the wetland was approved by the HBRC in 1998. Work included a weir with a fish passage, to manage wetland flow, and funding allowed the site to be developed as a public reserve.

Illegal dumping had continued at Pekapeka for many years and as a reminder of how wetlands had been treated it was decided to leave some rubble and reinforcing rods exposed as a reminder of the past.

Pekapeka opened to the public in 2010. Board walks, observation decks and even hides provide access and viewing points. Information boards give background and there is a picnic area. No toilets though.

During duck shooting members of a local club use half the area and it is closed to the public. Club members are also involved in a predator control programme.

Steve said red tape, and resource consents often hold up restoration. So far it has cost them \$60,000 for consents, eating into the small amount of funding they do receive. Thank goodness for volunteers.



More Info: Steve Cave talks about reclaiming the swamp. Photo: Liz Brook

Auction - fun and drama



Double Act: Murray and Margaret Shaw unknowingly provided one of the best shows for the night as they bid for various items at the auction.

New auctioneer gets the dollars

Two successful auctions, one silent, the other noisy and very lively, kept members alert with lots of laughter to boot.

Auctioneer Dan Steele successfully filled the big shoes left by Bob Wood who sadly died in February this year.

Dan's banter was every bit as funny as Bob's had been, and he cajoled many a bidder to go "just that little bit higher".

The main auction raised \$5255, the silent auction plus the raffle raised \$1540. All thanks to those members who donated some amazing items for the auctions and the raffle.



Auctioneer extraordinaire: Dan Steele kept the bids rolling.



Silent auction: Participants Lyn Wood and Jan Abel.



Catch up: New DU President John Cheyne and Robin Borthwick.



Amusing: Dan Steele and his assistant William Abel share the fun.



Not bidding: Ross and Sharon Cottle watch proceedings.



Enjoyable: Audrey Pritt enjoys the shenanigans. Photos: Liz Brook.

Captive breeding keeps up Whio numbers

Peter Russell keeps a watchful eye on Whio to make sure the numbers are kept up and they return as much as possible, to the areas where they started life.

Breeding Results

The past year has been the best to date with 26 ducklings reared and released back into the wild. This was achieved by three pairs, the Auckland pair produced 11, the pair at Peacock Springs having 10 and the Orana pair five. These pairs had all been flock mated. Both the Auckland and Peacock pairs did double clutch which really helps with numbers produced.

Three pairs at Hamilton, Palmerston North and Staglands that I was hoping would produce, did nothing. I hope they do better in the coming season.

Flock Mating

This season we have flock mated four more pairs that gives pairs to Otorohanga, Mt Bruce, Queenstown and another pair at Peacock. I was a bit disappointed with Mt Bruce who took so long in sending male birds to Peacock that the female in the new pair at Peacock laid a clutch of eggs without a male.

It was also disappointing that no wild clutches came in last season to keep on making up more pairs for captive population.

Releases

The first release of 10 was at Egmont National Park on the January 29 with Andrew Glaser of DoC coming over and taking staff through putting transponders in and a video team taking footage of this and the release.

We had a group of school children who attended and Andy was in his glory.

The second release was on the Manganui-a-te-ao and it was good to see Alison Beath also of DoC come down to put the transponders in. We released a total of eight birds with two older birds which came from there as juveniles and have only bred once and hadn't done anything for the last three years. It was a great day. Lots of school children.

The third release was on the Tongariro which also went really well with lots of people and Genesis staff involved. Six birds were released.

The last release was back at Egmont on a Saturday so their volunteers could attend as most of them work during the week. There were four birds plus a duckling I had hand reared and then sent to Peacock Springs so it would be brought up with other birds.

It has been so much better now with Air New Zealand sponsorship for moving ducks about and saving costs on breeders and Peacock Springs when sending for release. It is a bit more work for me but it goes with the job.



Released: A Whio seems bewildered by its new freedom.

Photo: Peter Russell.

Quality

Duckling quality is very good and I am sure that the matting's we are doing with eggs that are coming in is paying off with a very good bird for release.

Deaths for the year

There were seven deaths during the year. Two were neonatal and one a 20-year-old male and another 19-year-old male. We also lost 15 males including one eight-year-old. These males were not in the breeding programme.

The breeding male from Auckland Zoo died after a very good first season. The female is now at Mt Bruce and has been flock mated with the surplus wild males.

Pairs still needed at: 1. Nga Manu, 2. Mt Bruce, 3. Peacock Springs, 4. Kowhai Aviary, 5. Willowbank, 6. Auckland Zoo, and 7. Ron Munro.

We need to bring in more clutches this coming season.

Releases for next year

Egmont wants to carry on releasing next season though we still need to look for new sites. Also returning birds to areas where the clutches of eggs are from.

Kahikatea wetland at Motu

Motu Scenic Reserve is a 20 hectare kahikatea wetland forest located just past Motu township in the Eastern Bay of Plenty.

The reserve is unique as it contains: an oxbow wetland (crescent-shaped lake lying alongside a winding river) and an original kahikatea swamp forest, one of only two percent left in New Zealand.

The remainder of the reserve is alluvial forest with a low canopy of houhere (lacebark) and wheki-ponga (tree fern). Kahikatea (white pine) emerge 30 metres above the canopy.

Motu Scenic Reserve is also habitat for aquatic bird species and provides valuable habitat for weka and common bush birds.

Visitors can access the reserve, although there are no formal walking tracks.

In 1913 the government approved 70 acres

of native bush and lagoon for Motu Scenic Reserve now managed by the Department of Conservation. Visitors from the Motu Hotel often went boating on the lake in the early 1900s when the hotel was at its most popular.

A photo taken by well known local photographer William Crawford in the 1900s features the oxbow lake with Christian Hansen rowing his children and James Whinray (nearby Whinray Scenic Reserve is named after).

DoC undertakes trapping, weed control and restoration planting at the reserve.

The trapping programme targets rats, mustelids and possums. While weed control focuses on Japanese honeysuckle, old man's beard, English ivy, Japanese walnut and various willow species.

Visitors can learn more about problem weeds in the reserve from an information panel installed next to the lake.

Sponsorship from Matua Wines has enabled restoration planting of manuka, flax, karamu, kahikatea and koromiko on the grassy margins of the reserve.

Motu Scenic Reserve is 47km from Opotiki, and 87km from Gisborne, turn off at Matawai on the Motu Road. At the township keep left, cross the bridge over the Motu River and the entrance to the reserve is located on the corner of Motu Road and Phillips Road.

Nearby places are the Whinray Scenic Reserve Track and Pakihi Track.

For more information check out www.doc.govt.nz



On the wing: Plenty of birds at the Wairio wetland. Photo: William Abel.

Enthusiasm moves project along

“We had a great day – about 1600 plants in the ground!” was the enthusiastic report from Jim Law after a successful planting day at Wairio Wetland in southern Wairarapa.

Mainly flaxes and sedges (about 1200) were planted around the southern and south eastern sides of the new dam wall at Stage 4 and 400 Totora and cabbage trees planted went in at Stage 2.

A good turn-out included Martinborough School students and staff, Taratahi trainees, Rangitane members, Rotary members, Greater Wellington Regional Council (who provided the sausage sizzle), some Rabobank staff, DOC staff and a few locals plus some co-opted farm workers - about 60 folks in all.

More clover seed was sown on the dam wall at Stage 4 by Ross Cottle and Jim Campbell.

A good year so far at the Wairio Wetland – in total just over 4000 shrubs, flaxes and trees in the ground and a great new dam wall trapping about 30 hectares of water in Stage 4. There is more to come with plans advancing for the reticulation of water from Mathews Lagoon and Boggy Pond into the Wairio Wetland.



Signage: Jan Abel and Ross Cottle show off the smart sign.

Photo: William Abel

Ross and Jim will now organise the fencing off (one hot wire for cattle), of the planted area in Stage 4.



Helping hands: Rabobank crew with Jim Law from left. Rachel Angus, Simon Campbell, Charlotte McDonald, Jane Watts and Matt Hood.

Photo: Toni de Lautour.



Planting: Women to the fore, from left, Rachel Angus, Charlotte McDonald and Jane Watts.

Photo: Toni de Lautour.

Predating the predators

To help protect the birds, a trapping programme is underway to get rid of ferrets and other pests to provide a safer environment for rare native birds in the Wairarapa Moana wetlands.

These include Australasian bittern, royal spoonbill and the dabchick. Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) started trapping around Matthews lagoon and Boggy Pond in July.

Using covered traps that exclude birds, pest animal officer Steve Playle was successful straight away, catching 13 ferrets and three feral cats in the first month.

“These are large and powerful predators that need to catch and kill regularly. If we can control them around the wetlands, the wetland birds are bound to increase in numbers,” he said.

Hawke’s Bay wetland bird expert and Ducks Unlimited president John Cheyne, said numbers of Australasian bittern were low in a count taken earlier this year, and the work being done by officers like Steve should help



Predator and prey: Steve Playle, pest animal officer with Greater Wellington Regional Council (left), with a ferret trapped at Matthews Lagoon and DU president and wetland expert John Cheyne, with a stuffed Australasian bittern. Photo: GWRC.

raise bird numbers in the wetlands.

“There is a lot of great wetland habitat at Wairarapa Moana, but I only heard eight bitterns calling. There should be more. Trapping ferrets and feral cats should allow them and all the other ground-nesting birds to breed more successfully.”

The trapping programme is part of a wider project to enhance the wetlands around Wairarapa Moana, involving the councils, DoC, iwi, farmers, environmental groups and the community.

Story courtesy of the Greater Wellington Regional Council.

Pests best dead



Good catch: A good one is a dead one.

Trapping is the name of the game. DU member of Pohangina wetlands Gordon Pilone, sent in these shots of a recent catch.

He uses DOC 250 traps to eliminate stoats, rats and hedge hogs. The kill traps are elevated on a plank on blocks to delay weed invasion and stoats seem to like “running the plank”. Gordon said a hen egg as bait can be successful even at several weeks old. Also used successfully for stoat kill is a Timms tunnel trap baited with a fish head.



Dead: Running the plank.

Photos: Gordon Pilone.

The traps Department of Conservation uses

Animal pests and predators are a major threat to the survival of New Zealand’s special native flora and fauna. A wide range of techniques and tools are used to control pests, depending on the threats and the terrain.

Ground control is Department of Conservation’s main approach. They use traps, bait stations or culling. It can prove highly effective where the terrain is suitable and regular checks can be made.

It is DoC’s most widely used pest control approach with more than 400,000 hectares under ground control management. Around 80 percent of the Animal Health Board’s operations are ground control. Ground control

methods are precise, but are also labour-intensive and expensive.

However modern self setting trap are effective and designed to avoid harming native birds if correctly operated. DoC maintains a network of over 180,000 traps and spends more than \$5 million per annum on stoat and rat trapping.

DoC also supports possum fur recovery in a number of regions. But even with high fur prices, consistently high numbers of possums are needed to make trapping economic. Also, to ensure the protection of native species, possum numbers must be driven down to very low levels, this in turn is uneconomic for a fur industry.

This website will inform you of three new types of humane kill traps developed by the Department of Conservation and Philip Waddington. These traps are designed to assist conservationists with their protection of native species that have almost been wiped out by introduced predators.

These traps are regarded as innovative and responsible:

The DOC 150 and 200 humanely kill three pest predators - stoats, rats and hedgehogs.

The DOC 250 targets and humanely kills four pest predators - ferrets, stoats, rats and hedgehogs.

Pest problem – A24 helps



Effective: Dan Steel shows how an A24 sits in position.



Ready: Blue Duck 'eco-warrior' Michelle from Canada sets the trap.*

Photos: Blue Duck Station.

Blue Duck Station, where DU director Dan Steele and his family live, work, conserve and save ducks, have discovered traps that seem to be super efficient. Here is something about them.

We are pretty excited about the latest technology for dealing with pests; Good Nature's A24. The A24 is quite different from the DOC200 (350 of which we maintain), and has some advantages over it.

The A24 does not need regular maintenance as it automatically re-sets and is therefore great for places with difficult access. The auto-resetting also means they have the potential to catch more as there is no waiting period between kills. For these reasons we plan to put them in the far back blocks and inaccessible ridges on the station.

We have also purchased some counters to indicate when to replace the gas canisters and to give us some catch numbers. The A24 cannot tell you what it has caught as the carcasses of the creatures rot away or are often carried off by other predators so we will continue to rely on our DoC200s for this. We plan to record A24 catch numbers however and add them to our catch database, linked to our GoogleEarth application.

We believe that anything is worth giving a go in our battle against predators and protecting our whio and other species. We do not plan to

replace our DoC200s with A24s but will use them as an addition and in different areas. We are looking forward to seeing results after we have had the traps up for a while.

It is also worth mentioning that the public feel the same as two of our A24s have been sponsored by visitors as part of our 'sponsor a trap' programme!

*Blue Duck Station hosts a number of overseas people they call eco warriors, who visit and work on the station, learning about conservation and helping to protect the Whio.

Partnership to help Waituna Lagoon

The improvement of Southland's Waituna Lagoon and catchment health and wellbeing has become the focus for a number of organisations with statutory roles for this unique site.

The Waituna Lagoon is part of the 20,000ha Awarua Wetland, a designated Ramsar Wetland of International Importance and one of the best remaining examples of a natural coastal lagoon in New Zealand. It is culturally significant to the local Ngāi Tahu people, acknowledged under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998.

In recognition of the importance of this natural resource, the Department of Conservation (DOC), Environment Southland (ES), the Southland District Council (SDC), Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and Te Rūnanga o Awarua have formally come together to work alongside the community and other stakeholders for the long-term benefit of Waituna Lagoon, its catchment and community.

Concern was raised in February 2011 about the poor health of the lagoon. Monitoring information from ES and DOC, drawn together for the Report on the State of Southland's Freshwater Environment, showed it was at risk of flipping into an algae-dominated state.

A multi-pronged emergency response was initiated and remedial practices were put in place, further scientific investigations were undertaken and communication channels established for sharing information.

While flipping remains a potential risk, the focus is now a long-term one to improve the health and wellbeing of the Lagoon, its catchment and community. Formalising the statutory partners' group is a strong, future-focused commitment ensuring their actions are aligned and complementary, and that they are working together in the most effective way possible.

Setting and achieving goals will require considerable effort over a number of years. An organised structure to guide efforts allows for a comprehensive and coordinated approach designed to achieve greater improvements than if organisations worked separately and avoids duplication of effort. Working in partnership with the local farmers, the community and industry will be crucial to the success of the project.

To recognise the establishment of this formal arrangement, a ceremony took place on August 8 at Te Rau Aroha Marae in Bluff, where the terms of reference to guide the on-going relationship between the partners of

the Waituna Partners Group were officially signed.

A web camera recently installed at Waituna Lagoon is providing scientists with regularly updated images of Walker's Bay, where the lagoon was opened to the sea in late July.

Aquatic Ecologist, Dr Andy Hicks said the main benefit of the web camera was to help monitor the lagoon's opening and closing processes, and to help with the long-term monitoring of environmental conditions in the lagoon.

"The camera allows us to keep an eye on the lagoon without having to physically be there," he said.

Setting up the remotely activated camera was a challenge, plus occasional issues mostly related to the weather. Environment Southland technical staff have now resolved them.

Dr Hicks said the images taken by the camera would be useful for a variety of additional purposes. Recreational boaters would be able to check if lake conditions are suitable for boating, and if the images prove clear enough, the web camera could even be used for monitoring local bird populations.

Letter to the Editor: Attitude change

I have been a member of DUNZ since the early 1980s, and a past Director. I owned my first wetlands in 1962 when I was 18 (100 acres in the Waimarino Wetlands, now known as the Deans Block), and I have been actively involved in wetland ownership and preservation ever since. I am currently a partner in the wonderful 'Home of the Duck' wetlands in Broadlands.

I have been a keen shooter most of my life, but now chose not to shoot live game. I still attend duck season opening weekend, set decoys and call birds, but decided to not kill birds any more. Even so, I still cannot help but draw a mental bead on any duck or pheasant that flies past, and I enjoy clay bird shooting.

As a youngster with my father I have shot godwit on the Manukau tidal flats outside the then Henry Kelliher home. I think it was legal then, maybe not! I have shot sparrow and pigeon at the Auckland Met Gun Club, seagulls, hawks, and starlings when I got bored as a stropky young duck shooter, pheasant, and quail, and duck aplenty. On reflection, I am not pleased with some of my shooting decisions, but I have many wonderful memories of shooting seasons past and the camaraderie that accompanies the hunt.

The reason for this preamble is to firmly place myself in the shooters camp, although I no longer shoot birds. I feel my past and present experience give me a fairly balanced view of wetland conservation trends, and I would like to once again raise the old discussion on the position and relevance of Ducks Unlimited in a modern society.

There are many indications of the modern city view of shooters.

A recent (June 2013) Campbell Live programme on TV3 highlighted the scorn heaped on swan cullers. Even though it was entirely legal, and possibly environmentally justifiable, it was presented in the worst possible way. It was hard not to see this as a pretty squalid and cruel affair.

With the urbanisation of the country and more farms being turned into larger corporate style holdings, there seems to be less and less city folk interested in shooting game. Indeed, there has been a very strong swing against shooting with a majority seeing killing birds for 'sport' as barbaric. Forget the argument that their lamb chop for dinner has come from a cute baby sheep- live bird shooting is seen as a brutal and despised occupation. There used to be scores of cars and utes, loaded with eager blokes and an over excited Labrador dog and towing a shabby duck punt, all heading out of Auckland for that first May weekend. This last year I was on the southern migration, and several of us remarked that we saw very few like minded souls. Many traditional swamps and ponds seem undershot compared to years past.

I am blessed to live in the Mahurangi region, close to the magnificent Tawharanui Regional Park. Apart from some of the world's most beautiful coastline, this park has a total predator control system and a significant wetland presence. Ducks Unlimited and Banrock Station Wine donated a very generous \$40,000.00 to the wetland development a few years ago. I was at a recent Queen's Birthday planting exercise with a turnout of about 180 volunteers over two days. There was a cross section of the community, but all with a conservation bent. Speaking with some of those present, there seemed

an underlying feeling that Ducks Unlimited was a vaguely threatening entity to have as a benefactor. There is that strong perception that Ducks Unlimited is a shooters 'club', and certainly I cannot dispute the general correctness of this. I would have found it difficult to find DU membership prospects.

I note with interest that the Directors of DUNZ are engaging with other like minded groups in an endeavour to harness the combined membership of other environmental groups, all whom seem to be confronting similar dwindling membership. It is a concept that makes sense to me. As an aside, where does The National Wetland Trust fit into all of this?

Is now a time to yet again consider a change of name and direction? The direction would be much the same as the existing core principal of Ducks Unlimited- preserving and creating wetland habitat- but the emphasis would come off the shooting of ducks.

We already have a vehicle in the DU affiliate "Wetland Care", and maybe this could be pushed to the fore?

There would be major problems involved. Would this alienate existing members, most of whom are keen hunters, and who have traditionally been the backbone of DU?

Would it excite any potential new members in major numbers? Would it encourage sponsors? Is there the energy, resources or passion to rejuvenate this group?

I am conscious of the danger of being a standoff commentator with no real input to a solution, if indeed one is needed. I hope my comments are taken as positive input into a group that has been doing such fantastic environmental work over many years.

Mark Newcomb



Sacred ducks: Ruddy shelducks at Kaidawagyi gardens. Photos: Liz Brook.

Ruddy Shelduck in Myanmar

Lots of interesting birds in Myanmar (aka Burma) I was told. I looked forward to seeing a few. A very few was what I got.

Domestic ducks were almost everywhere, the variety of colors was amazing. Out on Lake Inlay I saw an Egret perched high on a pole, and flocks of gulls also on this inland lake.

Finally at the Kandawagyi Gardens at Pui Oo Lwin in the hill country, there were some interesting ducks. Golden ducks I was told. A Google search came up with only Golden Duck restuarants.

Gordon Pilone of Pohangina Wetlands came to

the rescue. They are Ruddy shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*). They breed in south-eastern Europe, east through southern and central Asia to Mongolia and western China, with separate populations in northwest Africa and Ethiopia. As a migratory species they travel south before the onset of winter, with most European and Asian birds moving to south and south-eastern Asia, from Afghanistan east to eastern China. North African birds go eastwards along the North African coastline, and Ethiopian birds move into lowland areas.

They are hunted in much of south-eastern Europe and south Asia, but are relatively well

protected in Buddhist countries by its status as a 'sacred' bird. Consequently, numbers of ruddy shelducks in central and eastern Asia are thought to be stable, even increasing.

The ruddy shelduck reaches maturity at around two years of age.

Courtship is brief, with male and female engaging in head-bowing and jerking. The nest is a cavity created in a sand or clay bank, usually up to nine eggs. The male defends the nest while the female incubates them up to 29 days, and then both adults tend to the chicks.

Liz Brook



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In Brief

Duck brood study

A \$300,000 Fish & Game study is hoped to shed light on nesting success of native birds, in particular duck broods.

The three year study is the first of its kind in New Zealand, and aims to pinpoint when birds nest and lay, how many ducklings hatch and how many survive and fledge.

DU in NZ

Ducks Unlimited is New Zealand's leading wetlands and waterfowl conservation group. We work to save our wetlands through protection, funding, technical aid and education so that the flora and fauna of our most endangered ecosystem are a legacy we can pass down to future generations.

Our key focus is to increase the efficiency and number of New Zealand wetlands developed and support any relevant wildfowl recovery programmes. To aid

in this worthwhile cause we harness community support and Government resources, plus utilise global links and findings from wetland global research programmes.

Second generation kiwi on way

MB23 - he's one of the first generation North Island Brown kiwi born at Pukaha Mount Bruce after Operation Nest Egg delivered his parents there in May 2010. Now he's sitting on his own nest!

Department of Conservation Ranger Yuri Forbes is tracking his activities with a chick timer transmitter which tells Yuri that he's nesting. The eggs (there's usually two) will be removed at around 70 days incubation and with any luck the reserve will have their second generation kiwi about 20 days later hatching in the nursery.

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