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KEEMAN REPORT

FROM SOUTHLAND:

'Duck counts were continued on the Gore oxidation lagoon by the Keeman and the first brood of ducklings were mallard, noted on 7 November 1977 and the final brood for the past breeding season being Grey, noted on 5 February 1978. On two occasions - 7 November and 9 November 1977 - a Scaup was observed on the lagoon. This is the first instance of this species of waterfowl being seen at this location.

The duck breeding season suffered a set back this year from widespread flooding over three days - 29 to 31 October 1977. This may account for some of the later broods counted on the lagoon. From figures collected by the Southland Acclimatisation Society during the 1976-77 waterfowl breeding season, the average brood sizes were: Mallard 7.1; Paradise 5.1; Shoveler 5.3 Grey 6.5. Taking an average from the Keeman figures for 1977-78 breeding season on the Gore oxidation lagoon, the average brood size for Mallard was 6.6 and Grey 5.8.'



Dudley Bell, Keeman Supervisor comments: 'It appears that other Keemen from around the country must have got 'stuck in' the swamps counting ducks this season because DU Headquarters has not heard any news from other centres. Hope all Keemen have since made it to safety and are able to catch the next 'pony express' with their waterfowl reports!'

A WARM WELCOME IS EXTENDED TO THE FOLLOWING NEW DU MEMBERS

Arnold D.H.	(F)	Gordon G.P.	(S)	Mullay I.S.	(F)
Ashburton Acclimatisation Society	(F)	Grofski T.	* (S)	Paine R.	(S)
Cotterell B.	(S)	Halkyard Mrs D.C.	(S)	Roberston Miss R.	(S)
Crossland J.A.	(F)	Hawkes Bay Gun Dog Club	(S)	Rogers Mathew	(J)
Cuming, Alistair	(J)	Hayes Christopher	(J)	Russell D.H.W.	(S)
Diggs L.A.	(F)	Hyde S.	(F)	Scott W.	(S)
Edmunds E.R.	(S)	Knell Mrs G.H.	(F)	Sutherland, Mrs S.	(S)
Eldridge Jan	(F)	Knight Mrs S.J.	(S)	Sutherland, S.	(S)
Fraser G.	* (S)	Leefe E.	(S)	Svenson A.N.	(F)
Freestone, Mrs	(S)	Lewis G.	(S)	Telfer N.J.	(F)
Gamble R. (+ donation)	(S)	Menlove, John	(J)	Wilden E.J.	(F)
				Wright A.N.	(F)

* = sponsored by another DU member

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PROJECT REPORTS

OPERATION BRANTA MAKES PROGRESS

Operation 'Branta' - establishment of the Canada goose in the North Island - has made further progress this year with another shipment of geese from the South to the North Island. In a joint operation with the Wellington Acclimatisation Society, a good number of birds were airlifted to Wellington in January. Ian Buchanan, DU member and Senior Field Officer of the Wellington Acclimatisation Society flew to Christchurch in early January to assist the Wildlife Service with Canada goose banding and while there worked with DU director, Peter McLeod, arranging the capture and transfer of the DU/WAS birds. A number of DU members assisted with the operation and special thanks are due to Alan Hart, Yvonne Skilton and Ted Paton, all of Christchurch.

The Wellington birds were captured at Lake Forsyth one week before they arrived in Wellington - see Fig 1. On arrival, the geese were taken to Masterton where they were held, with the kind permission of Mr Neil Petrie, in pens to await pinioning - see Fig 2. All the geese are juveniles, which means they should adapt readily to the North Island. Veterinary surgeon, Andy Palmer, of Masterton was called in to pinion the birds - Fig 3 shows him hard at work, with no shortage of helpers! After allowing the geese time to recover from pinioning, they were released on to three farms near Masterton.

While Operation Branta has continued to make excellent progress in the Wellington district, DU did encounter problems with part of this year's programme and instead of the twenty geese we had hoped to transfer to Ohakune, we were successful in obtaining a permit for only two birds! (Fig 4 shows member Dianne Pritt admiring the geese in pre-release pen at Ohakune) It certainly seems that a great deal more work and negotiation with the local branch of Federated Farmers is needed if Operation Branta is to succeed in that particular area.



Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4

OPERATION 'BLUE DUCK'

In September last year, Jan Eldridge of the University of Minnesota, wrote to DU with a request for assistance toward a three month study she planned of the New Zealand Blue Duck. Jan, aged 27, graduated Master of Science with a thesis on the Torrent duck of South America, having spent three months in Chile studying these birds. Torrent duck habitat is similar to that of our endemic Blue duck - fast flowing mountain streams - and Jan was keen to establish whether the behaviour of the two species is related. It seemed an ideal opportunity for such a study as Jan was going to be in this part of the world after completing a three month study of seal behaviour in the Antarctic.

The DU (NZ) board saw Jan's study proposals as an excellent means of obtaining valuable and much needed information about the behaviour of the Blue duck - and readily offered financial assistance, together with offers of accommodation. The New York Zoological Society also came forward with some financial assistance, and the New Zealand Wildlife Service offered research facilities at Mt Bruce plus expert advice.

The Blue duck is certainly a unique bird in the waterfowl world and nothing like it is found elsewhere. If the study is successful, Jan will become the first person to have studied both the Torrent duck and the Blue duck in the wild. While not yet an endangered species, the Blue duck is now confined to remote mountain streams. Little is known about the bird's behaviour, particularly in respect of feeding and habitat requirements. The study was therefore thought to be very important for the future well-being of the species.

On 14 December, Jan arrived at Christchurch where she spent a few days under the wing of DU Director, Peter McLeod before heading for a meeting in Wellington with Dr Murray Williams of the Wildlife Service and Wellington DU Director, Neil Hayes. After a couple of days in Wellington, where she was kept busy banding and liberating Grey ducks - see photograph below - Jan, heavily laden with literature, maps and equipment, journeyed to Mt Bruce where she spent four days over Christmas studying captive Blue ducks. While at Mt Bruce, Jan was fortunate enough to witness the hatching of a Blue duck from the incubator. Glen Fraser, who was in charge at Mt Bruce during Jan's stay at the reserve, was very helpful. On 29 December, Jan travelled to Raetihi with Neil Hayes and was introduced to local farmer and Waimarino Acclimatisation Society Secretary, Harry Brown. Over the Christmas period, Harry - with some outstanding assistance from local DU member, Bruce Wilde, had done fine work in managing to locate a caravan for Jan to use during her stay. Harry, who has fished the Raetihi area for many years, was confident that the area supported a sufficient number of Blue duck for a worthwhile study. Confidence in his predictions was certainly enforced when Blue duck were observed within minutes of arriving at the proposed site - refer photo below. The area of study is a section of the Mangau-A-Te-Au River which flows from Mt Ruapehu to the Wanganui River. In the higher reaches of the river, which have not yet been mutilated by man, there is a good population of Blue duck. Through local DU members, Dianne Pritt and Bruce Wilde, we have been kept up to date with progress in the study. Neil Hayes also made a second trip to Raetihi to check on Jan's progress.



In the early stages of the study, Jan had successfully marked six birds - using coloured plastic leg bands supplied by the Wildlife Service - and she is quite confident that a very important scientific paper will result from her study.

Apart from her scientific background, Jan is also qualified in journalism and photography and, from three cameras and a case of film, we hope to see some fine photographs. Several articles of a general nature are also expected to be written as a result of the study. For photographic work, Jan designed and built an impressive looking raft which looked very much like the large boulders in the river. Throughout the study, Jan received valuable assistance from fellow American, Bob Dye. Bob, who is also a science graduate, stopped off on his way home after teaching in Australia for three years to give his old schoolchum, Jan, a hand. Members of the Waimarino Acclimatisation Society, particularly Harry Brown and John Dobson, also did great work to ensure that Jan's work was successful. Harry even let Jan borrow his motorbike for the duration of her visit - this proved invaluable on many occasions. Bill Pritt and his family at Ohakune were also very helpful, as was Brian Williams of the Wildlife Service at Raetihi. Jan left New Zealand in early March and later in the year we hope to see the results of the study. Jan is very enthusiastic about some of New Zealand's unique waterfowl and it would be no surprise to see her back again to carry out more research work. We certainly hope so.

OPERATION GRETTEL EXTENDED

At the December board meeting your directors decided that after a very successful season (56% usage of the 'O' type box shown below) DU should extend the project to other areas of New Zealand. Specific areas the board had in mind were the Manawatu, Wairarapa and Dunedin districts - these locations having habitat which already support some Grey Teal, plus a good number of DU members to carry out the work and inspections.

Thanks to some valuable assistance from Ian Buchanan, Senior Field Officer of the Wellington Acclimatisation Society and a DU member, we have been fortunate in receiving the kind permission of Mr John Barton of Featherston to erect Grey Teal boxes at his Lagoon near Martinborough in the Wairarapa. Three photographs of Barton's Lagoon can be seen overleaf - about thirty Grey Teal are regular users of the lagoon and the area appears ideal for the initial expansion of project Gretel. Manufacture of the nesting boxes is already under way and Wellington based members will be asked to assist in the construction, erection and eventual monthly inspection of the boxes - a full report will be made in the June issue of FLIGHT.

DU directors Kelvin Mackie and Paul Pirani of Auckland erected a further 20 Grey Teal boxes at Flexman's property, Pokeno - and director Dudley Bell of Hamilton has just been successful in gaining approval to erect 20 boxes at the Mountleigh Piggeries, Ngaruawahia which will be a project for Hamilton based members.



Left: Grey Teal photographed by Neil Hayes

Right: The 'O' type box of tanalised pine construction, 25" high, 12" x 12" sq. with removable top for inspection. The interior of the box has chicken wire up to the hole, to enable ducklings to climb out.



OPERATION GRETEL - CONTD

Below are views of Barton's Lagoon in the Wairarapa - these and other photographs in this issue, by Neil Hayes.



OPERATION PATEKE - PROGRESS AND REPORTED SIGHTING IN WAIRARAPA

Steady, if not spectacular, progress was made in DU's most important project - Operation Pateke - which aims to save the New Zealand Brown Teal from extinction. The last season saw 18 birds reared by members, which brings the total reared to 50 since the project began three breeding seasons ago.

The project programme has recently been revised and DU will now attempt to 'farm' the birds rather than have large numbers of members with one pair. However, there will still be birds available for any member seriously interested in participating in a project which DU directors consider the most important conservation project undertaken by a private organisation in this country. If everything goes according to plan, DU will have a number of birds available for liberation this year. These birds will help supplement the earlier Wildlife Service liberations, from which birds have already reared young in the wild.

Brown Teal at Barton's Lagoon, Wairarapa

While on a surveillance of Barton's Lagoon on 22 January Wellington DU member Jack Byrne (author of 'Duck Hunting in Australia and New Zealand') and Wellington director Neil Hayes observed a Brown Teal flying low over the water only a few yards from them. This is a rare and interesting sighting of Brown Teal in the region. The bird was possibly one from a group of 40 liberated in the Manawatu early last year.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS PROTECTION

Early this year, the Minister for the Environment published a discussion paper on 'Wild and Scenic Rivers Protection' and invited comments on the paper from interested organisations, among them Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Inc.

DU presented what it considers were important submissions pointing out the serious effects on two of New Zealand's waterfowl species - the Blue duck and the Brown Teal - which will occur if the 'wholesale' erection of small hydro dams, and mutilation of the country's wild rivers, continues without more serious studies being carried out.

DUCKS UNLIMITED ANNUAL MEETING 1978 - DON'T MISS IT!!

The fourth annual conference will be held at Hamilton in late June/early July (the date and venue are just being finalised and will be confirmed in the June issue of FLIGHT).

Members will be aware that New Zealand is in the grip of a severe economic recession just now and we are all faced with some 'belt-tightening'. This year, DU intends to be more 'austerity conscious' and plans a more simple, but no less stimulating, annual gathering of members. The gathering will commence around 6 pm with refreshments available - at 7 pm the formal part of the proceedings will begin with the President's address and there will be a guest speaker from the Wildlife Service, followed by a slide presentation. Around 8 to 8.30 pm there will be a further 'social hour' with drinks and light, tasty snacks and the annual auction begins at 9 pm. The auction, the purpose of which is to raise funds for DU projects in 1978/79, promises to be as exciting as in the past and a pleasurable way to raise funds for the ducks.

DU members and friends are welcome - bring along wives, girlfriends, sportsmen! This could be your opportunity to introduce a friend to DU and to meet with friends with similar interests. There will be an opportunity for members to renew subscriptions, purchase T shirts and lapel badges etc, and for enrolling new members.

REMEMBER LAST YEAR'S MAGNIFICENT AUCTION ITEMS !

WATERFOWL ART, DECOYS, AMMUNITION, WINE & SPIRITS
CAMOUFLAGE OUTFITS, POTTERY, ISLAND HOLIDAY, MACRAME!

Generous donations of auction items have already been committed. Members, friends, business houses are invited to donate suitable items for auction - all gifts will be welcomed and acknowledged in FLIGHT and at the conference. Last year approximately \$ 1,000 was raised to assist DU projects in 1977/78. This is our major fundraising effort of the year - let's make it a memorable one for the ducks!

Formal notice of the annual meeting and full details of the conference will be published in the June issue of FLIGHT, to be issued late May/early June.

RECOMMENDED READING FOR 'DUCK PEOPLE'

The following list of books will be of interest to many members. If your local bookseller cannot obtain these publications for you, most of them can be obtained direct from THE BOOKSHOP, THE WILDFOWL TRUST, SLIMBRIDGE, GLOUCESTERSHIRE, ENGLAND.

"DUCKS PONDS AND PEOPLE"
by John Swift of Wildfowlers
Association, U.K.
Price to DU members \$ 3-50
incl postage (available from
DU (NZ) P O Box 74 Hamilton)

"A COLOURED KEY TO THE
WATERFOWL OF THE WORLD" by The
Wildfowl Trust, 96 pages

"THE SWANS" by Peter Scott
Published by Joseph U.K. 242 pages

"RAISING WILD DUCKS IN CAPTIVITY"
by the International Wild Waterfowl
Association, published by Dutton
New York, 320 pages

"THE PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ORNAMENTAL
WATERFOWL" by John & Phyllis Parker
Published by ARCO, U.K. 184 pages

"WATERFOWL OF THE WORLD", 4 volumes
by Jean Delacour, Illustrations by
Peter Scott, published by ARCO.

"ORNAMENTAL WATERFOWL" by Johnson &
Payn, Spur Publications U.K. 102 pages

"WILDFOWL IN CAPTIVITY"
by Richard Mack Martin
Published by John Gifford Ltd,
London, 157 pages

"WILD WATERFOWL AND ITS CAPTIVE
MANAGEMENT" by American Game
Breeders Federation, 2 volumes

"WILDFOWL OF EUROPE"
by M. Owen, published by
McMillan, U.K., 255 pages



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ANY BOOK ABOUT DUCKS AND GEESE WILL TELL YOU WATERFOWL ARE A RENEWABLE RESOURCE GIVEN GOOD HABITAT PROTECTION DURING REPRODUCTIVE TIMES ETC ETC. FOOD, WATER AND SPECIAL COVER ARE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THIS 'GOOD HABITAT' BUT, FIRST, SOMEONE MUST ASSURE THERE WILL BE HABITAT TO BEGIN WITH. THAT'S WHAT YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN DUCKS UNLIMITED IS ALL ABOUT.



AT DU WE CONSIDER YOUR MEMBERSHIP A RENEWABLE RESOURCE TOO. WHEN YOU RENEW, YOU GUARANTEE THE COMPLETION OF WATERFOWL PROJECTS ALREADY UNDER WAY FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR AND PROVIDE FOR NEW PROJECTS, SO - JUST AS FOOD, WATER AND COVER ARE WHAT GOVERNS HABITAT QUALITY REGULAR MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE WHAT GOVERN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 1978/79 ARE NOW DUE - HAVE YOU RENEWED ?