DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC. For Wetlands and Waterfowl

# flight

ISSUE 168 August 2016

## Whio in the limelight
## Mallards down South
## Birds around the world

# *from the* PRESIDENT

I am sitting here at the computer looking out the window towards Lake Whatuma watching the rain continue to fall. We have had 30mm over the last 12 hours with more to come!! A real blessing as we in Hawke's Bay, like many other regions, have experienced one of the driest autumns over the last 100 years. Climate change means we will be faced with increasingly less rainfall and warmer air temperatures. Wetlands need water to function and as one of our prime goals is to enhance and create wetlands our task is not getting any easier. We need to continue with this important work and encourage others to do likewise.

The annual DU conference at Taupo was a real success and it is always great to catch up with like minded people. For many of us it is the only time that we do meet and some of these friendships go back decades.

**John Cheyne**

**Wetlands feature:** Patron Jim Campbell has several lakes, both big and small on his property, along with the ever happy and active dog.


Flight published by: Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc.
P O Box 165, Featherston 5740, New Zealand.
ISSN 1173-2776 www.ducks.org.nz
**Advertising in flight per issue (ex GST).**
Full colour back cover $400, Full colour inside $350.
Full colour half page inside $200, Black and white full page $300.
Black and white half page $180, black and white ¼ page $90.
All to be camera ready. Discounts for long-term adverts.
Waterfowl adverts free to members.
Contact the Editor to book space or check discounts.
Contributions to Flight from members or other readers are welcome.
**Deadline for copy for Flight 169 Oct 7, 2016.**
(Please make an effort to send photos & stories)
New publication months February, May, August & November.
Editing and Production:
Liz Brook, Brightnook Farm, RD9, Feilding 4779.
Email: liz.brook@farmside.co.nz Tel: 06 328 9836.
Printing: Lamb-Peters Print, 106A Main Street, Greytown.


# Contents

**August 2016 Issue 168**



## Board of Directors



**Cover photo:** Whio on the Tongariro River.
See Whio conference story P8 & 9.
**Photo:** Kerry Oates.

# There is a long, long trail a winding…

**Wario wetlands invaded:** An introduction to a swampy education day, and keen to learn more. See more page 4.

**Photos:** Stephen Hartley.

**Ross Cottle:** In the thick of it, questions and answers.

**Don Gunn:** Has an atentative audience.

wetland care
NEWZEALAND

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 and for specific reasons from an assortment of trusts and community based charitable organisations that like our work. Membership donations and corporate memberships also help.

Central to Wetland Care New Zealand's mission is forming partnerships with people and organisations with similar aims.

**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.

# Restoration Day – Success

Restoration Day at Wario May 21, proved to be a success with helpers like Ross Cottle, Ian Gunn, and Tapuwa Marapara, who were able to share their expertise with those who attended.

Adding to the success was the wide diversity of people present, both as presenters and as participants. There were 30 on the bus all up and the combination of talks on the bus and pauses during the field trips gave plenty of time for the story to unfold and for people to ask questions. The weather played its part too!

**Stephen Hartley**

(Stephen was the organiser).

**It's all science:** Two PhD students, Eve Sutter (wearing hat) and Elisa Piispa, from Victoria University School of Chemistry and Physical Sciences, using an array of electrodes to measure below-ground resistivity at various depths. The technique can be used to estimate the profile of the water table along a transect without the need to dig multiple bore holes.

**Photos:** Stephen Hartley

# Wairio wetland plant day – another success

June 21 work started at 9am for the organisers, supported by some strong lads from Taratahi Agricultural Training College and farm workers from a local sheep and beef station Palliser Ridge. Those strong faming trainees dug holes in pre-sprayed spots in rough, fescue infested terrain.

Just after 10am we also had about 20 school children from Martinborough and Kahutara primary schools arrive to "assist" in planting flaxes in the holes prepared by the aforementioned lads and workers. In all, around 65 folk helped with the planting and by 12 noon, 750 plants (about half of them kahikatea) were in the ground at the nor-eastern corner of the Wetland.

Greater Wellington Regional Council provided educational support and the school children, in addition to planting, were treated to a field class identifying plants common to the Wetland. That and the hot sausages for lunch (again provided by GWRC) made a great day for the children who said they would be back next year to see how "their" plants were growing.

**Jim Law.**

**Helping hands:** Wetland plant day, Diane Buckley and two pupils from Martinborough Primary School pitch in to help.

**Photo:** Jim Law.

# DUNZ member honoured for conservation work

Conservation rates highly with DUNZ members, so it's not surprising that one of our own received an award for commitment to the cause in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours list.

Andrew (Andy) Graeme Lowe, of Havelock North, a long-time member of Ducks Unlimited, was made a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to conservation.

Andy is the managing director of Lowe Corporation in Hawke's Bay and has been the initiator and vision-keeper for Te Matau a Maui, the Cape Kidnappers Sanctuary, which is the largest privately funded mainland wildlife reserve in New Zealand.

In 2006, Andy and other land owners began an ambitious project to restore the Cape Kidnappers peninsula back to its former wildlife glory. Covering 2500 hectares, the sanctuary has the most diverse range of native bird life on coastal mainland New Zealand.

Cape Sanctuary is owned by Julian Robertson and the Hansen and Lowe families who share the vision to restore the coastal community of land birds, sea birds, reptiles and invertebrates that once flourished there.

The project aims to achieve significant biodiversity gains alongside existing land uses of farming, forestry, recreation and tourism. The sanctuary includes a DOC reserve of 13ha.

There is also the Cape to City venture, a wide-scale predator control and ecological restoration project over 26,000ha of land between Hastings and Cape Kidnappers, extending south to include Waimarama and forest remnants at Kahuranaki. This is a sister venture to the successful Poutiri Ao o Tane ecological restoration project in the Maugaharuru ranges, near Tutira.

Andy Lowe at Cape Kidnappers.

Andy Lowe with a kakapo.

Looking south from Cape Kidnappers.

The Cape Sanctuary project is also part of Cape to City and is a partnership between the Hawke's Bay Regional Council, DOC, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research and various landowners and businesses, and has funding from the Aotearoa Foundation.

Andy is also involved with the Martins Bay restoration at the end of the Hollyford Valley in Fiordland National Park. Known as a "biodiversity hotspot", the area has unparalleled marine and terrestrial landscapes, habitats, flora and fauna, ranging from fragile dune systems and wetlands to unique prodocarp forest, and is the only place in the country where bottlenose dolphins enter a fresh water lake.

# Mallards in focus – and still under threat

**Erin Garrick -** *more information Mallard observations in Southland - and abroad - as a follow on from the Erin's piece in Fight No 167, May 2016.*

There is an erratum that is worth mentioning – in regards to the shallow ponds being most used by broods. The shallow ponds are all less than 43cm deep. This is the depth that is recognised in literature as the maximum depth adult mallards can reach when tipping up to feed (Phillips 1923 & Olney 1960 in Perret 1962).

Additionally, staff have now completed sifting through the 250,000+ photos from our 'Operation Duck Pond' study. As anticipated, ponds in Southland that were used most often by broods had the following attributes:

- A greater area of shallow feeding zone, defined as pond depth being less than 43cm (the accepted maximum depth an adult duck will feed on the bottom). The majority of the top producing ponds were in fact, 100 percent shallow feeding zone. This resulted in many photos of feeding ducks, "heads down, bums up!"
- A higher availability of food items present (such as macroinvertebrates: waterboatmen, freshwater snails, etc). Obviously, there are many factors that affect the presence and abundance of these food items in a pond.
- A suitable level of shelter particularly from the south and west pond edges, and overhead cover present along the western edge.
- A fence to keep stock off the pond periphery so that vegetated edges were not grazed by livestock. Whether this is a relationship with stock disturbance, or degree of vegetation, we do not know.

Creating shallow (or seasonal) ponds and wetlands that are protected from the elements will be a broods favourite retreat. These factors, coupled with successful predator control should see more ducklings (and mothers) survive the breeding season. However, that leads us to our next study.

**Bottoms up:** A Mallard drake getting dinner the hard way.

**Photo:** Liz Brook.

This upcoming mallard breeding season the game cameras will be placed throughout the landscape aiming to capture images of mallard nest predators, namely stoats, ferrets and feral cats. This will be combined with a heavy trapping regime and monitoring of nests within a marked study area. We look forward to reporting on our results!

Perret, N.G. 1962. The spring and summer foods of the common mallard (Anas platyrhynchos platyrhynchos L.) in south central Manitoba. Unpubl. MSc Thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

And -Yeh – looks like the same cat, obviously included the pond in its circuit – have a dozen photos where you can just see the ears and head in the grass, where it obviously just sat and watched for ages! (Camera was set on time lapse, taking photos every 5 minutes).

**Erin Garrick**

# Why – that is the question

**Why are zero scores in tennis called 'love'?**

**BECAUSE:** In France, where tennis became popular, the round zero on the scoreboard looked like an egg and was called 'l'oeuf', which is French for 'the egg'. When tennis was introduced in the US, Americans (naturally), mispronounced it 'love'

**Why do X's at the end of a letter signify kisses?**

**BECAUSE:** In the Middle Ages, when many people were unable to read or write, documents were often signed using an X. Kissing the X represented an oath to fulfill obligations specified in the document. The X and the kiss eventually became synonymous.

# Free flight aviary at Pukaha Mt Bruce

At Pukaha Mt Bruce staff have been delighted with the way the birds have settled into their new home in the free flight aviary. The whio and pateke are loving their new areas and are not difficult to spot. The whio are in an 'internal aviary' with a new river run while the other birds are all together in the bigger aviary space.

Both the pateke and whio are breeding pairs.

The korimako seem to spend all day singing and while the kaka and kereru took a little while to settle in, they have been busy exploring their new space and are almost oblivious to the visitors who walk through the aviary.

If you are lucky enough to be at Pukaha at the free flight aviary at around 4pm there could be a ranger talk at the "Final Flight" area. It tells the story of the restoration project for the Pukaha forest and how captive breeding can help to protect and grow our endangered species

# Million Dollar Mouse pest drops completed

The ambitious Million Dollar Mouse pest eradication project on remote Antipodes Island in the sub-antarctic was completed ahead of schedule in July.

A second helicopter drop of rodent bait across the island was finished in July, following a first phase completed on June 29.

"Despite very unsettled weather conditions, the Million Dollar Mouse team have done an outstanding job of making use of every available weather window to get the bait drop completed," Ms Barry, Minister of Conservation said.

"This is the most challenging pest eradication ever carried out in New Zealand and is a globally significant conservation achievement, safeguarding a unique, remote and forbidding land and the many extraordinary species living there."

Mice are the only introduced predator on the island, which is home to endemic species such as the Reischek's and Antipodes Island parakeets, snipe and pipit, thousands of seabirds and marine mammals.

"The second bait drop by mid-July is a major step on the way to returning Antipodes to the way it was before the arrival of humans, pests and weeds.

Million Dollar Mouse was jointly funded by DOC, the Morgan Foundation, Island Conservation, WWF-New Zealand and public donations.

Total eradication of mice cannot be confirmed until a monitoring team visit the island in 2018.

To find out more, visit the Million Dollar Mouse website (external site).

**Final drop:** Helicopter dropping bait across Antipodes Island.

**Photo:** DOC

# Whio in the spotlight

## With less than 3000 whio around New Zealand, they need all the help they can get.

A two-day Whio Recovery Workshop was held in June at Tokaanu, near Turangi, where people with a passion for the endangered native blue duck gathered to hear information, ask questions and get what answers they could, although the overwhelming conclusion was that there is still lots more to be done.

More than 50 people involved in whio protection in the North Island took part in the workshop, which was held at the Genesis Energy Tokaanu Power Station.

The attendees were able to grow and maintain links with like-minded people, share their skills, learn more about research and consider some of the innovations being tried to ensure the safety of whio and increase its numbers. That included new and better ways to keep predators away and, if possible, eliminate them with best practice monitoring and trapping techniques.

The workshop group also visited the Turangi Trout Fishery, where they were shown how to set and use predator traps and how to set nets to catch ducks.

The recovery programme involves not only paid workers, but private organisations and volunteers. They give up their own time to set traps, walk trap lines every two to three weeks, and keep an eye on the ducks at the same time.

This workshop was not just a talkfest, but included the chance to learn about the latest research and tools, and take part in practical demonstrations such as trap maintenance and safety.

**Threats to whio**

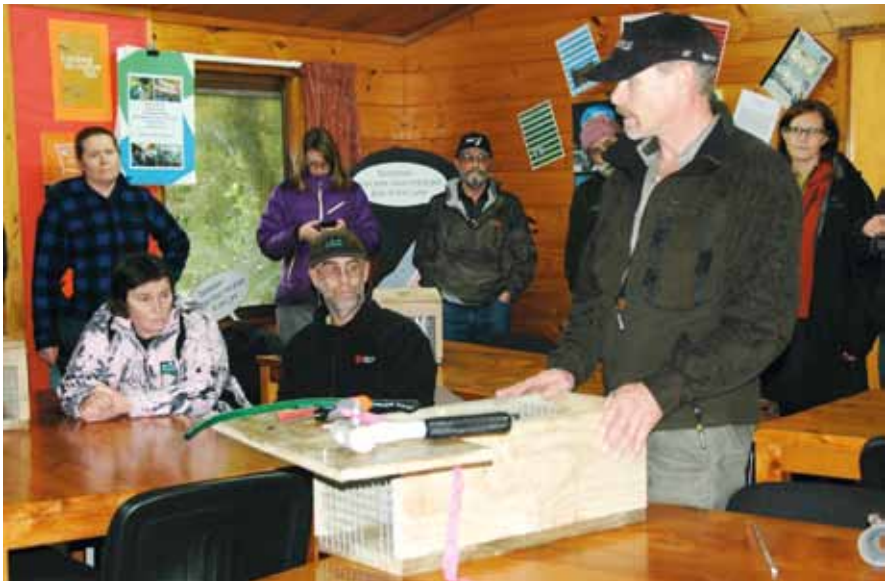
Introduced predators are the whio's worst enemies. A whio recovery plan includes trapping and the use of toxins to reduced predators. Without such work, there would be no whio.


**Whio nest:** Note the well-arranged feathers and eggs.

Stoats are the main killers, along with ferrets, feral cats, falcons and dogs. But events such as floods, that scour out riverbanks, can take away the whio's food source. Even resource consents, water use and discharge of dirty water are a threat. Then, for the females, their moulting phase makes them vunerable to predators, as they cannot fly away.

The recovery project, without which the whio would be gone, is expensive and a significant partner is a necessity. Genesis Energy has stepped in to provide funding - $2 million over five years - and its staff have become involved in helping with recovery projects.

In the early 1980s, the Moawhango Tunnel was commissioned in the upper Tongariro River and whio numbers decreased in that area because of the changed flow volumes of the river. By 2004, however, work was done to create a minimum flow and the population rebounded.



**Double trap:** Two compartments mean two predators can be killed in the one trap.

**Predation remains the key risk**

Around the country, both Government workers and volunteers continue to trap predators and take care of eggs. Floods can wipe out a whole season's ducklings. There is also a need to increase gender diversity and the transfer of juveniles to other areas helps with this.

Recent use of DOC200 traps and double set traps (where two predators are caught in the same trap), along with aerial 1080 drops, have helped survival. David Rogerson reported setting 85 traps and catching 50 rats a fortnight along the Maramataha River in the King Country. Malcolm Swanney trained Fern, a German short-haired pointer dog, to become a champion whio finder who will never hurt a bird.

**The Ruahine Ranges**

Janet Wilson, a keen tramper from the Manawatu, started work as a DOC volunteer trapper in 2011 in the Ruahines.

The Ruahine Whio Protection Trust was formed as a collective and now a strong group of volunteers works along120 kilometres of the range. Many drive to Napier and work the Napier ridge to the Orva and back south. There are 1500 traps and it is steep terrain.

Wellington Tramping and Mountaineering Club volunteers drive to Hawke's Bay once a month to check and manage traps from that side.

Janet said she was disappointed that not enough protection work was done by DOC. Along those ranges there were 60 huts, mostly old. There are 500 plus tracks, and lots of rivers. "We have seven groups working together as a collective and using DOC200 traps."

Jessica Scrimgeour said Janet and the collective have worked hard to keep the system going. "Janet's commitment has driven the plan over the years."

**Taranaki trial**

A trial whio recovery plan was put in place during 1999-2000 in Taranaki to investigate a viable population. Fifteen birds were introduced, but, for a variety of reasons, did not survive. The group persevered with stoat control in 2002 and in 2008, they released 170 ducks, with a 50-50 gender balance.

Between 2011 and 2016, the number of pairs has been good with a survival rate of about 81 percent. The next phase is to increase gender diversity. Predator control remains essential, but it was also found that it is best to transfer juveniles and not adults to other areas.

Some New Zealand Deer Stalkers Association members have agreed to help out by checking traps while out hunting.

**Tongariro**

Rachel Abbot talked about the Kia Whariti biodiversity project, which also involves DOC and Genesis Energy, in the 20,000-hectare Tongariro forest, bordered by the Whakapapa, Whanganui and Mangatepopo rivers, where they are using DOC 200 traps plus double set traps, and aerial 1080 drops. Since 2007, trapping has been in progress with 700 traps along the trap line.

**Future threats**

Another possible threat to whio is plantation forestry logging. However, recent information suggests that forestry companies who are aware of the presence of ducks will move their operations away from any nesting sites until the chicks have left.

The Whio Workshop was a success, but there's such a lot to do, so let's hope it will lead to more protection for the lovely whio. Alison Beath, the convenor, a senior ranger with DOC, is to be congratulated on the event.

**Trap & men:** Dean Flavell, Andy Glaser, Brian McGaw and Dan Steele stop talking about the trap, long enough to have a photo taken.

**Dog school:** Fern, a German short-haired pointer, is a champion whio finder here with her trainer and owner Malcolm Swammy.

**Group photo:** Some of the 50-plus people who attended the Whio Recovery Workshop at the Genesis Tokaanu Power Station.

**Photos**: Liz Brook.

# Duck hunting time

Keen for a bit of sport during duck hunting, Australian David McNabb checked in at Di Pritt's (our co-patron's) property to see what sport was on offer.

Di's two dogs Rommi and Luke were keen for some action but on the whole it seemed they were mostly just keeping an eye on proceedings at Swan Lake on Graeme Berry's land.

**On watch:** Labradors Rommi and Luke waiting for their chance to collect a duck.

**Duck check:** Australian David McNabb examines a grey duck, known as a black duck in Oz.

**Under cover:** Berry and McNabb in a maimai at Di's back pond.

**Photos:** Di Pritt.

# Pateke counts

## A little old but of interest to those who care about Pateke.

We will obviously have to extend our daytime surveys further up into the forest in future.

I have seen Pateke way up on the open hills in pitch darkness probably 1km from their daytime roosts showing just how nocturnal they are. And Surprise, surprise WAY up stream on ecology track.

**Roger and Patte Williams**

Tawharanui Pateke Counts from Sharon Kast is a good record to have. This is consistent with the work of Katie Sheridan at Zealandia, her presentation to Sanctuaries of NZ hui last was of interest. Unfortunately no notes with her slides but I do remember the story was these birds go well up some of the waterways (consistent with sub fossil records that had pateke as one of our more common riverine forest bird species before mammalian depredation).

Also- 'flock counts' under represented the population by as much as 50 percent (proportion of known birds present at flock site at any one time, most go there eventually) and some birds with stable territories never left their home territory to visit flock sites.

**Matt Maitland**

- For those interested in Pateke, here is a link to some interesting information and photos.

http://www.sanctuariesnz.org/meetings/documents/Sheridan2015.pdf

Plenty of Pateke.

**Photo:** Alison Stains

# Project Bittern (Matuku) Report – Ducks Unlimited NZ AGM (23 July 2016)

Emma Williams has continued working on the bittern project assisted by me and other volunteers.

**Key points are:**

1. Emma graduated with her Doctorate Degree at Massey University which was based on bittern research. A huge thank you to DU for helping fund a major part of her work to learn more about this iconic critically threatened species.
2. A total of 10 male bitterns (six 2014 and four 2015) were captured at Lake Whatuma and transmitters attached. Of these 10 birds, nine left the lake over summer with one bird remaining on the lake. The bird that remained on the lake was found dead in late April in raupo and cause of death unknown. Four of the birds have returned to the lake in July and one other is being monitored at a wetland 10kms away. In spite of extensive searching the location of the remaining four birds is unknown, but it is most likely they will return to the lake in time for spring like birds did last year. The DU funded transmitters have contributed significantly to our much increased knowledge of this secretive bird.
3. Emma travelled to Christchurch earlier this year to place transmitters on two bittern chicks that had been found abandoned not far from Travis wetland on the outskirts of Christchurch. These have been monitored by local people. One bird is still alive near the mouth of the Waimakariri River north of Christchurch and the other was found dead in mid May near the mouth of the Opihi River over 100kms south of Christchurch. This bird was examined and appeared to have died of starvation which is not uncommon overseas with bittern. Very interesting results plotting the movement of this juvenile bird and proves that bittern can move considerable distances.
4. We held a very successful meeting on April 6 for the local Waipukurau community, landowners and Iwi to up-date them on the bittern project. Over 50 people attended and DU received well deserved acknowledgment for their significant contribution to the project.
5. Emma has done no further school talks in the Wairarapa but will complete others this spring organised jointly between her and Gill Lundie. She has spoken to a number of schools in Hawke's Bay. Emma continues to provide written articles for Flight.
6. Bittern are a species under severe threat from wetland loss, predation, poor food supply and human disturbance. Population trends are negative. The Department of Conservation operate a conservation threat classification system of bittern and last month bittern were upgraded to the highest level of Nationally Critical Threatened Species. Kakapo and takahe share the same ranking which highlights the plight of this iconic wetland bird.
7. It is important that DU continue to support the bittern conservation programme and encourage others (DOC, Forest & Bird) to commit to the preparation of a national bittern recovery plan.
8. In 2015 DU Directors agreed to support the bittern project to the level of $25,000 to enable Emma Williams to continue her research work and purchase transmitters. Expenditure to date is (Emma Williams $7322) and (transmitters $9211.25). The remaining $8467 will be utilised this coming spring/summer.

**Risk taker:** Out in the open, but being cautious.

**Photo:** Emma Williams.

**John Cheyne**

**Coordinator Project Bittern (Matuku)**

# The wonderful white swan

The white swan arrived in New Zealand in 1866. It is one of seven swan species found world–wide. It maintained a tenuous hold in the wild on various wetlands and some live in a semi–feral state in town parks. They once numbered several hundred in the wild but the 1968 the Waihine storm destroyed much of their feeding habitat and the population crashed.

It is a protected species here in NZ. Quite different to its natural range is northern Eurasia from Great Britain to eastern Russia.

Outbreaks of botulism with ducks and other wildlife can be devastating to the swans.

The female does all the incubating of eggs with the male guarding her. He can be very aggressive. They are large and powerful birds. When the males have territorial fights they can be quite terrifying and each tries to seize the others head. Usually the stronger of the two managers to hold the other combatants head under water until it gives in and races away or worse is dead.

The cygnets are covered in a grey down when first hatch, and they are escorted round the lakes by their parents. The down changes to a brownish white, and then changes over the year to the white feathers of the adult.

The birds fledge at between 120–150 days. The parents may then chase off the young, as they become adults. Breeding starts at three to four years of age.

Aquatic plants make up a lot of their diet, but they will graze on grass and clover, as well as taking leaves from overhanging willow. Supplementary feeding may be needed at times and maize, wheat and a small amount of bread can be given, but it must not be mouldly.

The lifespan of the swan can be up to 25 years, but in the wild some only survive for five or six years. Reasons can be collisions with power lines, attacks by dogs, lead poison from digesting fishing weights, and botulism.

For many centuries, mute swans in Britain were domesticated for food. It is quite possible that this domestication saved the swan for being hunted to extinction in Britain.

Swans are no longer kept for food, but in England the Crown still has an official Swan Keeper and the ancient ceremony of swan-upping, when swans on the Thames are rounded up for identification by the Crown, still takes place in July. Old records show the menu for an important medieval banquet might include as many as 50 swans.

The swans have a very large place in European mythology and folklore.

*Around the world migrating birds take great journeys, often at their peril. Some countries open their hearts and provide shelter, others set traps for tired birds, and these become some one's dinner.*

*Here are a few pieces to let us know many countries are doing their best to help these birds on their long and often dangerous migrations.*

# China steps up

During a historic visit to Wetlands International's Head Office in the Netherlands on May 24, this year (2016), the State Forestry Administration (SFA) of the People's Republic of China strengthened international collaboration for wetland conservation.

The delegation was led by the State Forest Administration's Vice-Minister, Mr Chen Fengxue. During the visit he signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with Wetlands International's CEO, Jane Madgwick and met the Chair of Wetlands International, André van der Zande.

The discussions focused on how SFA and Wetlands International can collaborate in the coming years, for example on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in China, management and restoration of peat lands for climate mitigation and adaptation, and on the conservation and restoration of coastal ecosystems of outstanding importance for waterbirds, including through international collaboration to conserve Yellow Sea wetlands.

Through the discussions commitments for further collaborations were also reached, including a joint-workshop on river basin management and "room for the river" approaches, further programmes on peat lands, and technical exchange between the Wadden Sea and the Yellow Sea. Most importantly, the meeting was an opportunity to strengthen the friendship.

CEO, Jane Madgwick said: "The value of wetlands for people and nature are better recognised in China than in most countries. But with rapid growth and development, wetlands have come under great pressure. We are keen to share knowledge and collaborate with SFA and other ministries in China to find ways to safeguard and restore wetlands as a cornerstone of sustainable development."

**Signing time:** State Forest Administration's Vice-Minister, Mr Chen Fengxue during the visit singed a new Memorandum of Understanding with Wetlands International's CEO, Jane Madgwick.

China has enormous wetland wealth and has already included almost 18 million hectares of wetlands in nature reserves. Recognising that challenges linked to urbanisation, flood management, water scarcity, desertification, climate change and human health all connect to the status of China's rivers and wetlands, the SFA, the focal agency for wetlands, developed a National Wetlands Conservation Action Plan with 17 other ministries to guide measures for wetlands involving all sectors.

Wetlands International has collaborated with SFA since the 1990s, an office was established in Beijing in 1996 and the government of the People's Republic of China became a member of Wetlands International in 2000. In particular the collaboration has resulted in community-based management and rehabilitation of the vast high mountain peat lands of the Ruoergai Marshes on the Qinghai Tibetan Plateau and the peat lands of the Altai Mountains in NW China.

Wetlands International plays an important role in raising awareness about wetland values for people and nature and has supported the development of Wetland Parks in cities across China. Most recently, Wetlands International China organised a major waterbird count in the Yellow Sea wetlands, to highlight the importance of the remaining wetlands for waterbird conservation.

# World heritage site northern Australia

At Mungalla Stud, a property of 880 hectares there are approximately 230 hectares of seasonally inundated wetlands which are adjacent to the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef and also the IUCN listed Halifax Bay Wetlands National Park.

These wetland have been degraded by invasive plants as a result of installing an earth wall to halt the flow of saline tidal water into the wetlands and by spread in to the wetland of these "weeds of national significance". This has resulted in major changes to the nutrient regimes, ecosystem stability and function of the wetlands.

While biodiversity and amenity values have been compromised there is excellent capacity for restoration. The Nywaigi Traditional owners have determined to return the wetlands to a more natural state and through a series of projects funded through the Australian Government they have begun the process of rehabilitation.

Since the start of restoration the Mungalla Aboriginal Corporation for Business has concentrated on:

- Weed control on the Annabone Wetlands
- Revegetation Molongo creddk
- Removal of the earth wall
- Weed control in Palm Creek and other fringes.

Mungalla acknowledge and thank the Australian Government for funding and assistance through the Caring for Country programme. Community action Grants and the Biodiversity Fund and they acknowledge the support of the GBRMPA through the Sea Country grants.

"We have benefitted and worked really well with CSIRO who are providing Mungatta Aboriginal Corporation with advice and scientific direction on the rehabilitation and restoration of our wetlands.

This partnership has grown over the last 10 years and we appreciate the support of CSIRO and Dr Tony Grice. And especially acknowledge Mike Nicholas a friend and mentor, and we thank him greatly".

**Jacob Cassady (Director) and Chris Cassady (NRM Manager).**

# Neil flies 450 km to Moodie Swamp; Robbie at Tootgarook?!

The following piece was posted in late May this year 2016. Bittern watchers take note…

As if Neil's spectacular 450 km dispersal wasn't enough, photos taken in May have watchers wondering which of their other bitterns are down near Melbourne. But first Neil. He left his rice crop at Murrami and flew to Moodie Swamp, a top notch canegrass wetland between Benalla and Yarrawonga in northern Victoria. It was a u-turn of sorts, taking him via the Wakool River between Moulamein and Swan Hill.

Initially they thought he might be heading toward the same area Robbie dispersed at last season, but he made two of his own new connections. They know that the wetlands of northern Victoria and canegrass wetlands are part of the network that sustains the world's largest known Australasian bittern breeding population. "To think Robbie was in our arms at Murrami just 20 days earlier was amazing."

Moodie Swamp had recently received environmental water and is well known for its significance to wildlife, not least as a regular Australasian bittern site. While studying Brolgas 16 years ago, I had the pleasure of finding bitterns there and meeting May Moodie. She was a great custodian for this great swamp.

Now, back to Melbourne. One of the bitterns was photographed at the Tootgarook Swamp in May. That's down around Port Phillip Bay. We know it's not Neil. We're trying to work out who it is. Could it be ROBBIE?!

**On the wing:** Is this Robbie at Tootgarook Swamp near Melbourne? If not, who is it? Vin? Coly-Lion? Another?

**Photo:** Cam Brown.

Massive thanks to Cam Brown and Jess Durrant who found this bittern. They both contributed to the crowd funding and joked that one of the tracked bitterns might rock up there. It's a fitting reward for them and the swamp they love so much. Irrespective of the identity, the link between this most significant wetland near Melbourne and the rice crops of the New South Wales Riverina has been cemented.

# Louisiana Wetlands: Recognising a National Treasure

May 26, 2016 | Posted by Emily McCalla in coastal restoration,

May is American Wetlands Month, and Louisiana's coastal wetlands are some of the most productive ecosystems in North America. Not only do they provide habitat for numerous fish, wildlife and birds, but they also help improve water quality, provide recreational opportunities and protection for people and infrastructure from damaging storm surges.

Wildlife habitat and nurseries

Wetlands serve as a nursery environment for juvenile fish. The countless ponds, bays and bayous found in the Mississippi River Delta provide essential habitat for most commercial and game fish found in the Gulf of Mexico. Menhaden, shrimp, oysters and blue crab area all important commercial species that depend on healthy coastal wetlands to thrive. Additionally, fur-bearers like muskrat, beaver and mink, as well as reptiles including alligators call coastal wetlands and estuaries home.

Storm surge protection

Wetlands have an incredible value for people, too. One acre of wetlands has the capacity to hold up to 1 million gallons of water during a flood! On average, damaging storm surges are reduced by one foot for every 2.7 miles of wetlands, reducing wave energy and protecting levees and other critical infrastructure from these destructive forces of nature. The value of community protection for a one-mile strip of wetlands is valued at $5.7 million.

Water filtration

Wetlands also help improve water quality by filtering and retaining residential, agricultural and urban wastes. Reconnection of the Mississippi River to surrounding wetlands would help filter out nutrients that are contribute to a harmful low oxygen area in the Gulf of Mexico dubbed the "dead zone." The shallow waters of coastal wetlands are good habitat for submerged aquatic vegetation, which can utilise the extra nutrients and potentially reduce the Gulf of Mexico dead zone as well as increasing water clarity.

Restoring Louisiana's coastal wetlands

Louisiana holds 40 percent of the coastal wetlands in the continental US and is currently experiencing around 80 percent of all coastal wetland loss in the US. Work is underway to restore and rebuild wetlands in the Mississippi River Delta through projects in the state's Coastal Master Plan, including sediment diversions and marsh creation. The reintroduction of Mississippi River water and sediment to its delta plain allows new wetlands to build and flourish, providing habitat for wildlife, clean water, places to recreate, and protection for storm surge.

**Richie Blink**, National Wildlife Federation

# Illegal killing, taking and trade of migratory birds

Each year an estimated 50 billion migratory birds travel thousands of kilometers.

On their migratory routes the birds have to overcome enormous obstacles. One is illegal killing. Many wild birds are illegally taken or killed due to hunting for subsistence, recreational activities and traditional practice.

This year's World Migratory Bird Day was celebrating the natural miracle of bird migration and is calling for action to end the illegal killing and trade of birds. Illegal hunting leads not only to drastic declines of bird populations, but it also harms society in general, our very existence and our natural resources.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands has since its inception in 1971, paid particular attention to migratory birds. Of the current 2,240 Ramsar Sites (covering over 215 million hectares of wetlands worldwide) 1,103 (49 percent of all Sites) have been specifically designated as key sites for migratory waterbirds.

The Ramsar Convention collaborates closely with many international organisations that actively and successfully protect migratory birds across continents.

In Asia, the Ramsar Convention is a partner to the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, one of the world's great flyways encompassing 22 countries, extending from Alaska and Arctic Russia down to East Asia and New Zealand. This migration route comprises a network of 124 wetlands, 78 of which are Ramsar Sites. These include Poyang Lake Ramsar Site in China which supports nearly the entire wintering population of Siberian crane. Poyang Lake is also critical for swan goose and other wildfowl and crane species. Mai Po Ramsar Site in Hong Kong is another vital wetland for wintering black-faced spoonbills.

Illegal hunting has recently become a high profile issue within the East Asian-Australasian Flyway especially along the coast of East Asia where a lot of illegal mist nets are being spread. To reduce this trend the Flyway Partnership carries out awareness-raising campaigns and works with local communities. In Southern Asia, local patrolling by forestry offices has brought positive results; there is a big reduction of illegal mist netting.

Spike Millington, East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Chief Executive speaks about threats birds face today and encourages us to take part in bird conservation.

In Europe the Ramsar Convention collaborates with the charitable foundation Euronatur based in Germany and its Adriatic Flyway project. The Adriatic Flyway runs across the Balkan Peninsula down to the African continent. Twice a year millions of birds migrate between their


wintering and their breeding grounds on this route.

The most important resting areas and wetlands (Ramsar Sites) along the Adriatic Flyway include: the transboundary Neretva Delta Ramsar Site in Croatia and Hutovo Blato Ramsar Site in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Skadarsko Jezero Ramsar Site in Montenegro and the neighbouring Lake Shkodra and River Buna in Albania; the karst plain Livansko Polje Ramsar Site in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slano Kopovo Ramsar Site in Serbia.

Particularly during migration periods bird populations are dramatically depleted by bird crime in the western Balkans. Illegal bird hunters make the Eastern Adriatic coast a death trap for migratory birds. 55 percent of migratory wader populations along the Adriatic Flyway are in decline. Law enforcement and control is missing; however in some areas nature conservation NGOs, local communities and administrations are successfully managing important bird areas.

Another European project related to migratory birds is taking place in Greece. Responding to the need to safeguard the rarest waterbird in Europe, in September 2011, the Hellenic Ornithological Society (BirdLife Greece), took on the coordination of an ambitious multi-stakeholder flyway conservation project. Conservation actions span the entire range of the lesser white-fronted goose in Europe, from its breeding grounds in Scandinavia to its wintering sites in Greece. Hunting and illegal killing are recognised as major threats and patrolling units in Greece were formed to ensure that Kerkini Lake and Evros Delta, both designated Ramsar Sites, remain safe for these geese. In Africa the Ramsar Convention collaborates with African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). AEWA brings together countries and the wider international conservation community in an effort to establish coordinated conservation and management of migratory water birds throughout their entire migratory range.

The most important resting areas and wetlands (Ramsar Sites), which are critical for some AEWA species in Africa are the Chad portion of the Lake Chad; Parc national du Banc d'Arguin in Mauritania, where over two million birds winter each year; Parc National du Diawling in Mauritania; Delta du Saloum in Senegal; one of the largest tropical wetlands in the world - the Sudd in Southern Sudan; and finally the Okavango Delta in Botswana.

AEWA and CMS (Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals), have undertaken some key actions to end illegal killing of birds in Africa. One of them is a development of a multi-stakeholder Plan of Action to address bird trapping along the Mediterranean coasts of Egypt and Libya. An International Task Force was established in November 2013 in Bonn, Germany, to implement the Plan of Action and to ensure that in future, bird trapping activities in Egypt and Libya will be legal and sustainable.

By joining forces and starting dialogues between all social groups and decision makers involved we can make migratory bird flyways safer places and preserve a healthy and rich environment for humans as well.

**Bird traps:** Nets for bird trapping are common along the Mediterranean coasts of Egypt and Libya.

# Full time job for wetlands enthusiast


**Employer:** Victoria University of Wellington

**Location:** Wellington, New Zealand

**Discipline:** Ecology, Human and Physical Geography

**Position Type:** Full Time

**Job Type:** Postdoctoral Fellowship 3 year fixed term

**Salary:** NZ$ 71,806 –82,500, depending on experience.

**Closes:** 1 October 2016

**Reference:** 1142

**Description of the project**

**Wetlands for people and place.**

Wetlands are among the most valuable ecosystems in the world. Hotspots for endemic biodiversity, water purification and carbon sequestration as well as places of significant cultural and recreational value, wetlands provide up to 40% of global renewable ecosystem services. Sadly, they are in peril globally.

The Centre for Biodiversity and Restoration Ecology seeks a qualified and highly motivated individual who will play a pivotal role in generating a ground-breaking case study to identify synergies and opportunities to enhance biodiversity, water quality, carbon sequestration and cultural and recreational benefits within a multi-use wetland ecosystem. The multi-disciplinary project will serve as a model for future ecological restoration projects within New Zealand and worldwide. The successful applicant will productively engage with government agencies, community groups and local land users and will help supervise postgraduate and undergraduate students in a programme of related research projects.

**Qualifications**

Candidates will have completed a PhD in Ecology, Geography, Environmental Sciences, or a related discipline, in a topic relevant to conservation biology, restoration ecology, ecosystems service modelling, or public participatory processes. He or she will be comfortable in the use of Geographic Information Systems and have a demonstrated track record of public engagement. Excellent verbal and written English language skills are essential. Knowledge of Te Aro Maori is considered an asset. Publications in international, peer-reviewed journals, with a leading role (i.e. first-author, and/or corresponding author) are an important merit.

**Contact Details for Vacancy:**

Dr. Julie Deslippe, School of Biological Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington.

Julie.Deslippe@vuw.ac.nz

Please do not send references to this email.

## 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 165, Featherston, Wairarapa, 5740,

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.....

Address.....

POSTCODE.....

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

E-mail.....

DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC.

For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

All subscriptions include GST. Membership is available in eight categories:
Junior (under 16) ☐ $10 Contributor ☐ $60 Family ☐ $70 Business ☐ $110 Life (one payment) ☐ $3000
Note: Bronze, silver and gold sponsorships, which can be changed annually, include the membership fee of $60, For the balance, sponsors will receive a receipt as proof of a tax deductible donation.
Bronze Sponsor ☐ $90 Silver Sponsor ☐ $160 Gold Sponsor ☐ $310
My Donation of $ ..... is enclosed. Please find my cheque attached.
Please charge my VISA/MASTERCARD No: .....
Expires: ..... Signature: .....
Please renew my membership each year and charge my credit card ..... YES/NO

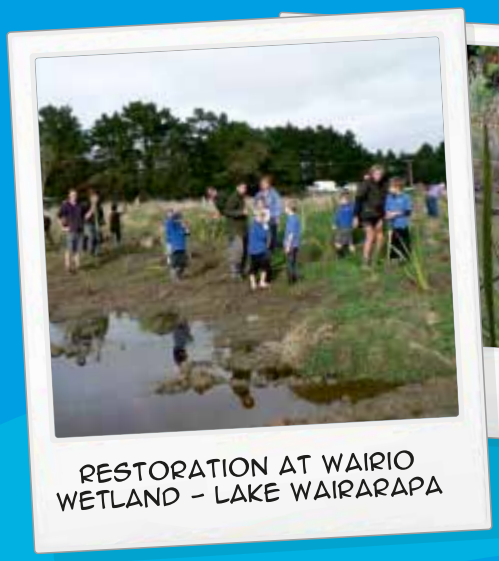
**Ducks Unlimited, PO Box 165, Featherston, Wairarapa, 5740.**

**ALL DONATIONS TO DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE.**

WETLAND CARE'S

# QUACK CLUB

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



RESTORATION AT WAIRIO WETLAND - LAKE WAIRARAPA

## WETLAND COMPETITIONS

### PHOTOGRAPHY

TAKE A CAMERA ALONG ON YOUR TREASURE HUNT & SNAP SOME PHOTOS WE'LL PUBLISH A FEW IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!

### COLOURING PAGE

DOWNLOAD THE COLOURING IN PAGE FROM OUR WEBSITE AND BE IN TO WIN!

WE WILL FIND A LITTLE TREASURE FOR THE EDITORS PICK! SEND TO CONTACT BELOW.

# QuackClub Magazines!

FREE MAGAZINE*

Our Magazine is full of fun activities, fascinating facts and great puzzles & stuff to do. We now have 6 issues available for you to order. They make great resources and teaching aids.

# Join Our Club Today!

FREE MEMBERSHIP

Join WetlandCare's Kids Club and not only will you be helping to save NZ wetlands but you will receive a cool welcome pack and have access to competitions, events and lots of online fun.

Application form on our Website!
or contact - info@quackclub.co.nz
PO BOX 12204, AHURIRI, NAPIER 4110

**Members Receive:**

- MEMBER CLUB CARD
- MEMBER CERTIFICATE
- WELCOME GIFT
- CLUB NEWSLETTERS
- ACCESS TO INTERNET FUN FACTS & MUCH MORE!


FREEBIES, FUN, CRAFTS, COMPETITIONS DOWNLOADS ...

DUCKS UNLIMITED
WETLANDCARE

QUACK CLUB IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
Wetland Care & Ducks Unlimited NZ
www.ducks.org.nz | info@ducks.org.nz

DESIGNED & PRODUCED BY:
www.artemis.net.nz | info@artemis.net.nz

'Quack Club' is on facebook
quackclub.co.nz