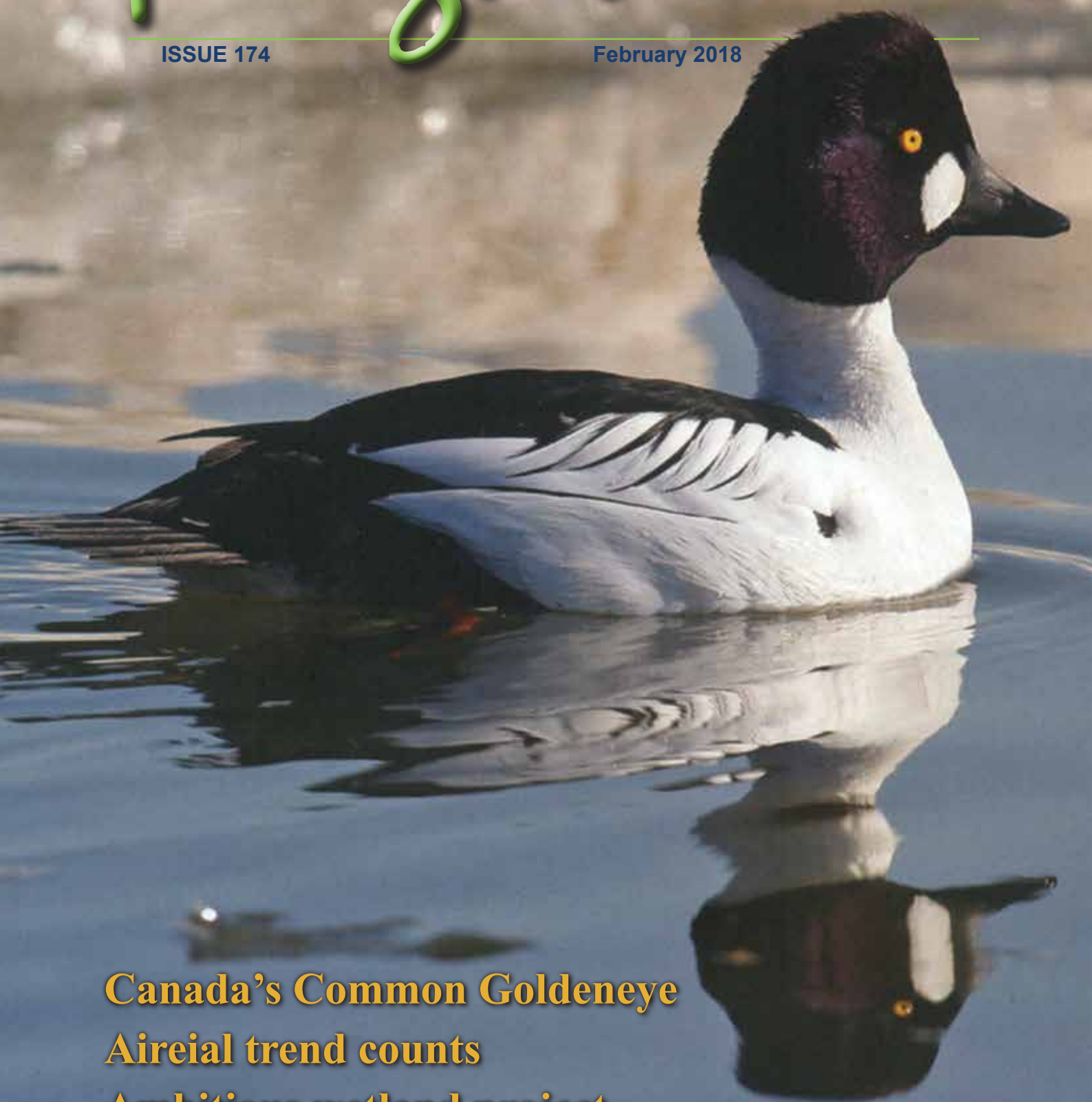


Flight

ISSUE 174

February 2018



Canada's Common Goldeneye
Aireial trend counts
Ambitious wetland project

from the PRESIDENT

Best wishes to members and supporters for 2018.

While DU has achieved many great things over the last three decades there are always challenges that need to be addressed. Organisations like DU are dependent on members so declining membership is a concern and one which is a priority for Directors over the year ahead. Some new initiatives in this area are being considered.

Spring and summer is a great time around wetlands with plants, insects, frogs and birds becoming a lot more active and obvious. I was at Wairarapa Moana recently and the DU Wairio wetland project was a real standout with over 2,000 waterfowl present. Ducklings, cygnets, shoveler courtship flights, booming bittern and even a single white swan were observed. The 100 hectare sheltered shallow Wairio wetland complements the larger open areas of adjacent water provided by Wairarapa Moana, Boggy Pond and Matthews Lagoon and is a project that DU NZ can be really proud of. Wairio is maturing as a wetland and water bird use is increasing accordingly. This is flagship project is one that DU NZ can justifiably be very proud of.

The role of wetlands in helping to address climate change issues is becoming more widely acknowledged. Hopefully the statutory agencies (Central and Regional Government) will start to recognise this by developing more robust policies and providing additional funding to help protect what wetlands remain and also recreate some which have been destroyed.

This year's AGM will be held in the Waikato and more detail will be provided in the next issue of Flight.

2018 will be a challenging year and we look forward to your ongoing support.

John Cheyne



Alan Jervis Wilks

DU has lost another of our long time members, Alan Wilks, born in February 1930, and sadly died October 2017.

One of our stalwart members, willing to help, and always cheerful and pleased to have a chat. In recent years Alan had made it his special occupation to organise and distribute Flight magazine to DU members and some institutions.

Alan was a resolute bloke and will be sadly missed.

See page 5.

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.

Publication months are February, May, August & November.

Deadline for copy for Flight 175 May 2018, please send copy early, early April (14th at the latest).

Ring me, or email if you have a problem. Number below.

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

February 2018 Issue 174

Takaha EGG Mt Bruce	3
Pond birds	4
Alan Jervis Wilks	5
Aerial trends	6 & 7
Kahutara School award	8
Kahutara School digging in	9
Wetlands in NZ	10
Licensed firearms	11

Board of Directors

Patrons:

Jim Campbell Wairarapa

Diane Pritt Ohakune

President:

John Cheyne Waipukurau 06 858 9506

Chairman:

Ross Cottle Masterton 06 378 7408

Treasurer:

John Bishop Cambridge 07 823 7070

Directors:

William Abel Levin 06 362 6675

Neil Candy Woodville 06 376 4448

John Dermer Feilding 06 328 9740

Jim Law Wairarapa 06 307 7855

Dan Steele Whakahoro 07 895 6276

Gill Lundie Greytown 06 304 9485

Cover photo: From Canada, the Common Goldeneye. DUCanada conserves wetlands and natural spaces for waterfowl, wildlife and people.

Photo: From Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Takahe – a very special bird

First takahe egg in 20 years

Pukaha Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre staff were quite amazed last year when after more than 20 years of no takahe laying eggs in the lower North Island wildlife centre, staff were surprised to find the mother sitting on an egg. Two eggs were finally laid in October last year.

The mother takahe was believed to be past breeding age, but she was sitting on an egg.

A ranger at Pukaha Mt Bruce at the wildlife centre found the mother, 13-year-old Fomi, who was believed to be past breeding age was sitting on an egg. In fact two eggs but sadly they proved to be infertile. The staff had all been hoping the eggs would produce two chicks.

Todd Jenkinson said there are now 347 takahe around the country. They are endangered native birds

and include 100 breeding pairs.

The Takahe were originally confined to Fiordland west of Lake Te Anau. They have a head and neck of iridescent indigo blue with back and tail olive green, with white under the tail, scarlet and pink beak, red legs and feet. You will know one if you ever see one.

Takahe are endangered native birds with a population of only 327, including 100 breeding pairs.

Even though the Pukaha staff had assumed the 13-year-old Fomi would not have any more offspring, they were hoping the egg would produce a chick. The team were keeping a close eye on development and hoping the egg would produce a chick.

If the chick had hatched at the centre it would be the first Takahe chick hatched there in two decades.

Duck banding



Teaching the young ones.



Duck banding zoo helpers

Duck banding, see more and read more on pages 6 and 7.

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 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.

Canada Geese at home on Stock Pond



Ian Jensen's pond birds

"The two clutches used this 'Stock Pond' as home for some weeks, often sharing it with my Labs. The Labs use it as a cool off spot during our morning walk.

One clutch was there until they were fully fledged."

Ian says he really enjoys Flight when it arrives, and he almost always fully reads it that day.

A suggestion from Ian is that it would be a

good idea if an email was flicked out to all members from DU, about a couple of weeks before deadline. That would be a help.

As one of the 'hanging in there members, others may be the same', unless as the by chance of me sending you a funny, I would have missed the deadline, always best intentions but am embroiled in so much, and time races by. That also could be the same for others.

Ian also suggests if an email was flicked out to all members from DU, say a couple of weeks before deadline, that would be a help, as always we need to harness the 'modern technology' for the best use if at all possible.

From the Ed.

So there we are – if you have ideas, photos, and/or stories, send them to the editor, you will find the address and/or email at the bottom of page 2.

Birds of a different feather

Here are a couple of birds most of us have heard of. Many of us have seen them, and their colours and in some cases, their secrecy make them very interesting.

There is the Pukeko or Swamphen, you often see them running in the long grass at the side of the road as you drive by, and sometimes you might see one looking very squashed right there on the road.

There are plenty of them, but it is still a good idea to avoid them. Squashed Pukeko is not a good thing to see.

Then there is the Takahe or *Notornis mantelli*. These birds are more rare, very rare in fact, mostly found in Foirldland west of Lake Te Anau. Their head is indigo blue. Its back and upper tail are olive green, and under the tail is a white patch. It also has a scarlet and pink beak, and red legs and feet.

You will know one if you are ever fortunate enough to actually see one.

So these are two birds to keep a look out for during your travels.



Takahe (*Notornis mantelli*)

Pukeko (*Swamphen*)

Ducks Unlimited stalwart, and Greytown screen actor Alan Wilks remembered

A variety of impressive performances in ground breaking roles spanning over three decades is how most people will remember Greytown actor Alan Jervis Wilks, who died last November 2017.

Alan will be remembered by most Ducks Unlimited members. He was a long time stalwart of DUNZ and right until a few months before his death he continued to be the person who ensured that the Flight magazine was delivered to DU members.

In earlier years, working under the screen name Alan Jervis, 'Hang on a Minute mate!' and the 1970's film 'Skin Deep' are just two of the well-known performances he acted in.

His son David Wilks said the most memorable performance for him was his father's role as Charles Kane in "The Killing of Kane", where he won an award for best performance.

David Wilks said his father was a bit reluctant to attend the awards

ceremony as he always believed all his peers were equal.

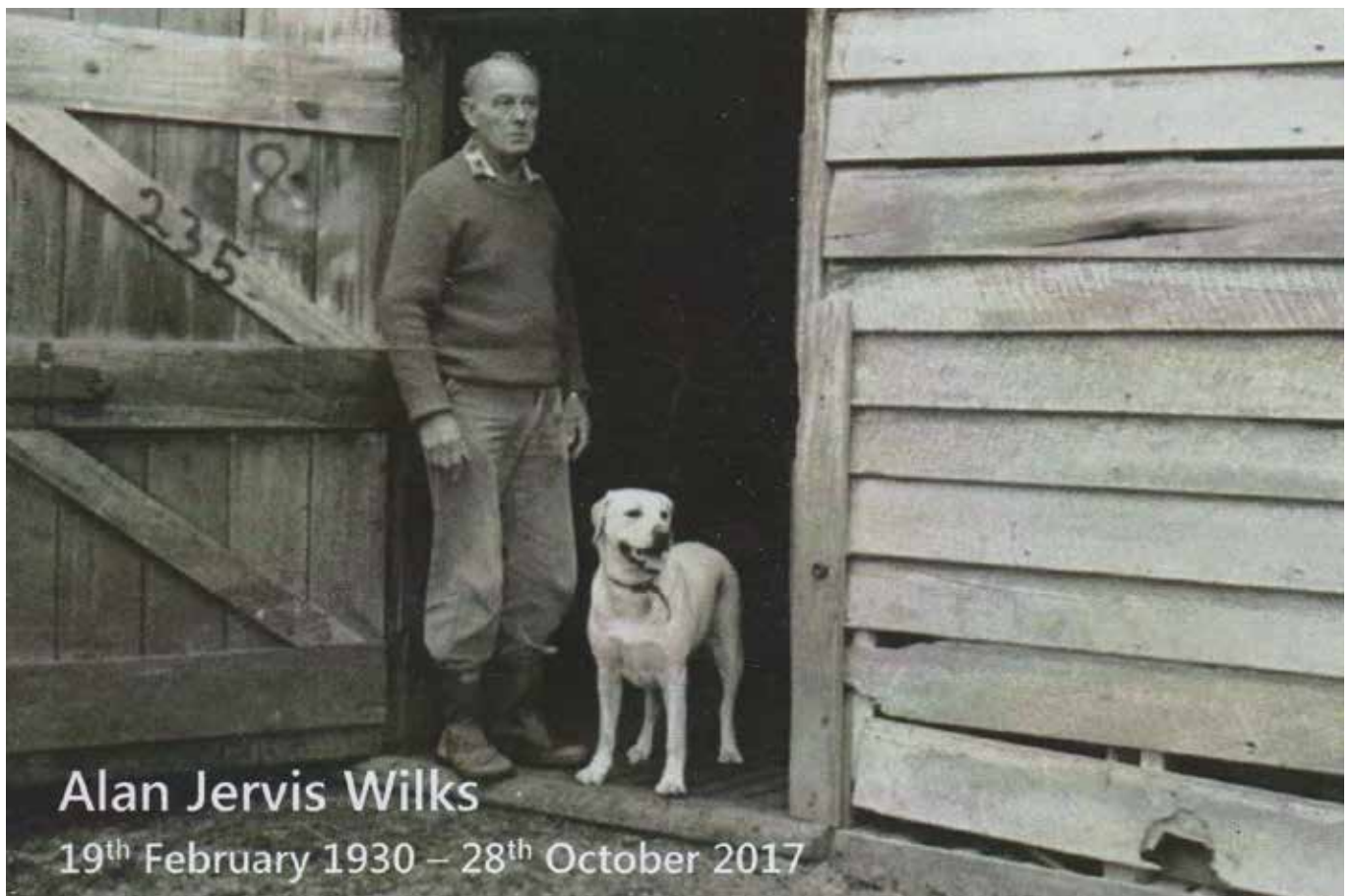
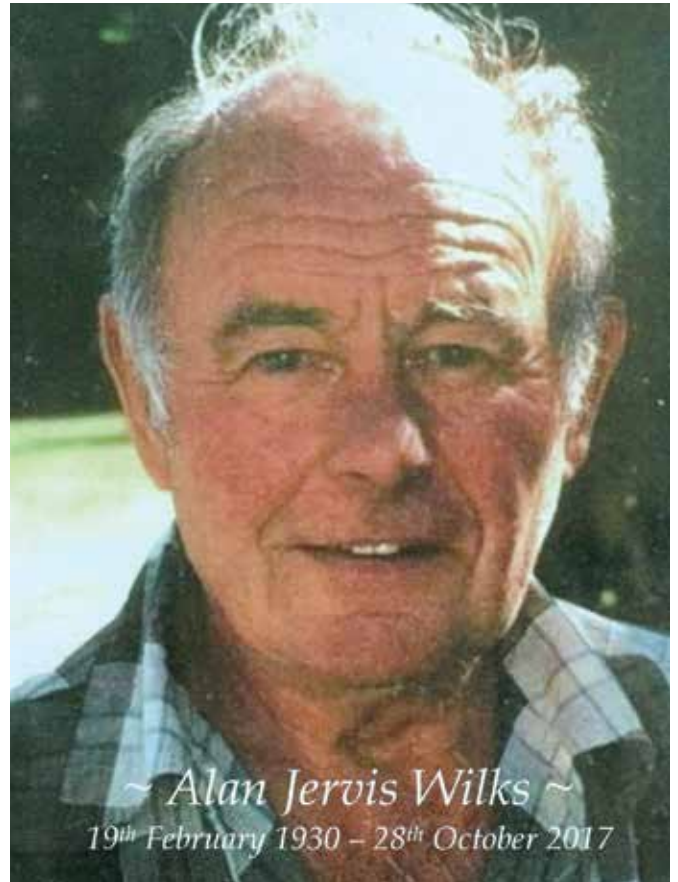
"He thought all actors were the same, there aren't any better or worse actors".

Mr Wilks said his father's career was successful because of his versatility as an actor. His refusal to be typecast meant he always had constant work even in difficult times.

Despite his on-screen success, one of the things his family will remember him for is always having a Labrador dog by his side and his passion for vegetable gardening, or which there were many grateful recipients of his produce in the Greytown area.

He also had a great love of the outdoors and conservation, which was reflected in a request for donations to Wetland conservation, Ducks Unlimited, in lieu of flowers at his funeral last year.

Alan Wilks was 87. He was an early member of Ducks Unlimited NZ.



Starling and myna birds caught interfering with duck nesting

By John Dyer, Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game Council

Two “roof cams”, one on a ‘selfie-stick’ beside, and another built inside an extended grey teal nest box lid showed a myna bird carefully checking the coast was clear, then repeatedly over several weeks trying to add paper, plastic and other litter to cover up the resident grey teals eggs as the duck deposited them each day. The myna also frequently pulled nesting material from below over the teal eggs to try to bury them so it could take over the box for itself. Once the teal began sitting on the eggs full-time to incubate them, the myna gave up and the teal eventually successfully hatched the whole clutch. Game cameras have invisible infra-red capability and this can tell us what is happening at any hour of the day or night at times and places we could previously only speculate about.

This same problem also exists in the US where wood duck nest box complexes can get taken over by introduced starlings. Researchers have tried all manner of deterrents including mirrors inside the nest boxes and even flashing lights. Neither seems to dissuade the starlings from displacing the wood ducks. Starlings cover up duck eggs with fine grass and similar material. However starlings like to nest in a dark corner of the box. Cutting a 100x100mm hole in the lid and adding a diffuser skylight that transmits 80-89% of light thwarted this desire by lighting up the nest box corners too. The wood ducks however don’t seem to mind this new accessory. This is now being trialled in NZ to see if myna birds are similarly deterred and grey teal not.

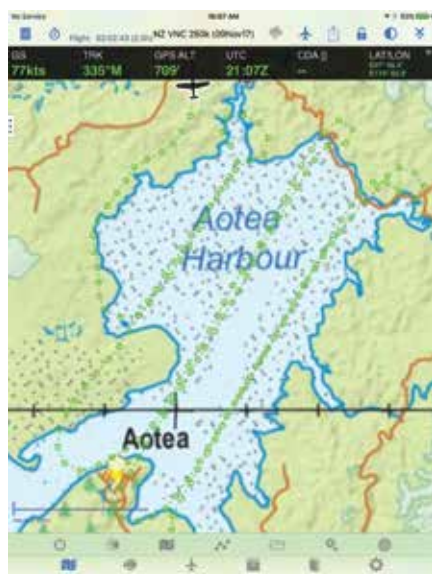
When starlings adopt a wood duck nest box, they intimidate and even attack the resident



Counting: Going beyond, John Dyer left, with blue F&G folder. Pilot Tony Petch on the right.



Trend count: View of Aotea Harbour and the King Country Shelducks.



Map guide: King country Shelduck trend count map.

wood duck trying to get back in. Another successful ruse used to defeat the starlings is to use their own biology to best advantage. Starlings that are nesting will defend the immediate area around them from other starlings. So US researchers placed a smaller and more desirable, (to starlings), starling nest box onto the larger wood duck nest box. The starlings chose this in preference then kept away other starlings from the wood duck nest box too, but not the wood ducks themselves. This has also been trialled in NZ with native

grey teal and our own introduced starlings. Lacking a proper study it might be premature to call it a success, but starlings have certainly used the smaller starling boxes and when they do they have not been found inside the larger teal box. However on one occasion the two species shared the same plain nest box and, a bit like cats trying to avoid fight perhaps, they each looked and faced the other way as they incubated side by side, the starling in the corner, the teal in the middle.

Roof cam

The “roof cam” inside the afore mentioned teal box took no less than 7,587 photos of a wriggly restless grey teal which suggests that the myna bird may have left more than just rubbish. Both mynas and starlings are host to bird mites. As many as 5000 of these can infest a nest box and come out at night to suck the birds blood. Pulling back the nesting material will reveal a grey mass of eggs in corners and the mites themselves will live in creaks in the structure. The latter can be avoided at box building time by putting PVA glue in all the joints. About \$30 worth of quaternary ammonia will make up 32-litres and this actually dissolves the mites if any are present. So this might be a useful thing to do when servicing nest boxes, (they need old nesting material removed and new added each year. (This also, incidentally, stops parasite build up in the nest). However the extent to which mites are a problem to box nesting ducks remains to be seen. One simple technique used for establishing if mites were present in a NZ study of starling nest box use was to leave a hand on the nest for 5 seconds and then inspect - and then brush them off smartly if there were!

Starling nest boxes with entry holes 42mm in



On guard: Staunch Starling deters other Starling from using teal box.



Native Grey Teal: Tight squeeze inside the nest box.



Native Grey Teal: Tight squeeze inside the nest box.

diameter will let in starlings but not mynas. Myna birds need a 70mm diameter entrance hole. So it would be easy enough to study the effects of added nest boxes for either species, comparing the adjoining grey teal nest box use with and without. Likewise testing skylights. Sounds like a great MSc study to me as grey teal do not readily desert nests so obtaining data should be straight forward.

When grey teal nest boxes are serviced each year in March/April, the sheer amount of

rubbish left in them by mynas and to a lesser extent starlings is hard to credit and often more than one clutch of grey teal eggs lies buried somewhere in the middle. So sorting out starling and myna problems can potentially make grey teal nest box complexes even more productive than currently.

A new article on best practice for grey teal nest box construction and maintenance has recently been added to the NZ Fish & Game website.

Kahutara School's Ambitious Wetlands project



Kahutara project: Ross Cottle (DUNZ chair) left, presents a cheque to Hamish McRae on behalf of Ducks Unlimited NZ to assist in developing the Kahutara School Wetlands project. Ross and Hamish are accompanied by senior pupils from Kahutara School.

Featherston farmers Fraser and Margaret Donald have set aside an area of their property and made it available to Kahutara School to use for developing a wetland. This initiative will give students the opportunity to watch first hand, as their efforts turn a swampy piece of paddock next to their school, into a thriving habitat for wetland flora and fauna.

Ducks Unlimited NZ, South Wairarapa Rotary, and Featherston's Own Charity are all generously supporting the project. Don Bell provided advice on conservation wetland design and methodology. He and members of South Wairarapa Rotary and Ducks Unlimited oversaw the students' initial planting of over 700 important trees of various species

Though out his tenure, Hamish McCrae, a teacher at Kahutara School, has encouraged students to help Ducks Unlimited NZ with tree planting at the very successful Wairio Wetland development. The 150 Ha wetland project is beginning to attract many of the country's endangered species and provide them a safe haven. This initiative, coupled with Whio breeding and bittern studies is making a positive impact on endangered waterfowl species.

Paul Mason



Protection: Don Bell hands out plenty of advice and commonsense. Plus teaching students how to use the protection sleeves he designed. More photos page 9.

The Art of Digging

Photos: Mary Mason



Duck banding: How it is done.



Everybody hard at work: Learning to dig and plant.



Mini peninsular: Surrounded by water creates reflection.



Students planting: These youngsters may turn out to be excellent gardeners or farmers.

Wetlands of New Zealand

Ready to explore New Zealand – here are a few ideas of places that might interest you – especially the wild life.

Before human settlement (from around 1250-1300 AD), freshwater wetlands covered about 670,000 hectares of New Zealand. Now it is reduced to 89,000 ha – a loss of 90 percent. Fertile lowland swamps have been lost in greater number than those that were infertile or at high altitudes.

Wetland importance is often under-rated. Groups like our own DU Wetland Care and the national wetlands Trust are working towards reversing this trend. There is a great diversity of wildlife in our wetlands with more native birds, fish, invertebrates and plants than most other habitats, yet many wetland species are threatened with extinction. Wetlands have high recreational values, and perform vital ecosystem services such as improving water quality and reducing flood risks. They have a big role in managing climate change. Healthy peat bogs are year-round sinks of 2–5 tonnes of carbon per hectare – locking it up in their soil indefinitely.

Wetlands are of cultural and spiritual significance to Maori. They provided Maori with food (particularly wildfowl, eels and other freshwater fish), taro cultivation, harakeke (flax) for weaving and other materials for medicinal, food, building, and craft use.

A plethora of wetland to visit

Farwell Spit – at the northern most tip of the South Island is one of New Zealand's most important wetland areas. Part of the spit forms a Ramsar Wetland site of significance and is an important staging area for migratory shorebirds on the East Asia – Australasia path. Farewell spit is just two hours from Nelson. The area has been a wildlife sanctuary since the 1930s and its dunes are a haven for over 90 bird species.

Whangamarino

Whangamarino – 62km south of Auckland is the second largest bog and swamp complex in the North Island – another Ramsar site.

Managed by DOC, the 5,923ha of peat bog, swampland, mesotrophic lags, open water and river systems, is an important habitat for threatened species like Australasian bittern, grey teal, spotless crane, the North Island fernbird and black mudfish.

Firth of Thames

South of Auckland at the base of Coromandel Peninsula, the Firth of Thames has 8500ha of wide inter-tidal flats which attract thousands of migratory wading birds. Some make the arduous 10,000km journey south for the Arctic in spring and fly north again in the autumn; others fly 1,000km north from the braided river systems of the South Island in the autumn and return in the spring.

Wairarapa Moana Wetlands Park

Lake Wairarapa, Lake Onoke and their associated wetlands make up the largest wetland complex in the southern North Island, supporting native plants and animals of national and international importance.

The diverse habitats within Wairarapa Moana attract a wide range of wetland birds – about 100 species including international migratory birds. The area is also a national importance to fisheries. Among 10 native species, which migrate between the sea and fresh water, are long-finned and short-finned eel, brown mudfish and giant kokopu.

Lower Kaituna Wildlife reserve

Northeast of Te Puke, western Bay of Plenty, Kaituna is a reminder of how the country used to be with an abundance of cabbage trees and flax, pukeko prowling through raupo, numerous ducks, shags and pied stilts foraging for food in the waterways.

West Coast wetlands

The South island's West coast has a variety of large and valuable wetlands, including

lakes, swamps, fens, bogs, marshes, lagoons, estuaries and pakihi/poorly drained, infertile land. Most are fully protected and are important breeding grounds for rare species. The only kouku/white heron breeding colony in New Zealand is located on the Waitangiroti River close to Okarito Lagoon – north of Franz Josef glacier. The region is one of the last strongholds of the Australasian bittern and a large part of the habitat is suitable for cranes – a rarely seen shy bird.

O Tu Wharekai wetland

O Tu Wharekai, covering the Ashburton lakes and Upper Rangitata River in Canterbury, is an unspoiled, intact, intermontane wetland system and is nationally important for wildlife.

Otago wetlands

Lake Waipori, Lake Waihora and their associated wetlands are the most significant waterfowl habitat in Otago, on the Taieri Plain, 40km south of Dunedin. The lakes are shallow and drain through an extensive swamp into the Waipori River and then the Taieri River. Over 60 species of bird live in, or regularly visit the wetland. It is now privately owned by Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu and protected by a Queen Elizabeth II National Trust Open Space Covenant.

Southland wetlands

The waters, mudflats and marginal vegetation of Southland's large tidal estuaries and coastal lagoons – Jacobs River Estuary, New River Estuary, Bluff Harbour and Awarua Bay, Waituna Lagoon and Toetoes Harbour – make up the most important bird habitat areas in Southland. More than 80 bird species have been sighted in the area, 65 of which are dependent on the estuarine environment. Southland's estuaries rank alongside Farewell Spit and Lake Ellesmere as the top three wading bird habitats in the South Island.



Photo: Melissa Gordon

Good news for good shots

A DUNZ member has provided the following information.

From a recent The Council of Licensed Firearm Owners (COLFO) newsletter. Please circulate and if you are not a member of COLFO and Sporting Shooters Association of New Zealand please consider joining, the bar stewards are not going to give up trying to take our hobby, sport and interests away from us:

A Win for Auckland Shooting Club and all NZ Shooting Ranges with financial assistance from Pistol New Zealand and COLFO, we are pleased to report that the Auckland Shooting Club has won its legal Battle with Auckland City Council to have its certificate of Compliance reinstated. Auckland Council had revoked the C of C on the grounds of perceived lead contamination discharges to land and water. If the Council stance had been upheld it could have heralded the end of shooting ranges in New Zealand.

This information has been provided by a DUNZ member.



Neal Hayes at Government House in November 2017.

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.



We have an eye for colour ...



- ▶ Offset Printing
- ▶ Digital Printing
- ▶ Graphic Design
- ▶ Large Prints
- ▶ Banners
- ▶ Canvases
- ▶ Labels
- ▶ Books & Magazines

THE
Printing &
Design
Specialists

Lamb-Peters
~Print & Graphics~

106A Main Street Greytown

P: 06 304 9245

E: lambpeters.print@xtra.co.nz