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## **“FLIGHT”**

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DECEMBER 1978

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## DU News

### FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM MINISTRY OF RECREATION & SPORT

Following an application prepared by director Neil Hayes, we were delighted to learn that the Ministry of Recreation & Sport has granted Ducks Unlimited \$ 500 towards the construction of Grey Teal nesting boxes. The Ministry makes appropriate grants to organisations from time to time to assist with administrative and other costs of operation. The funds will enable DU to spend at least \$ 1,000 on Operation Gretel during the current financial year.

### WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW DU MEMBERS

David G. Anderson	(F)	B. Dunkley	(S)
J.E. Bryant	(S)	L.T. Evans	(F)
David Blakiston	(F)	K.M. Gibson	(S)
R.J. Barnett	(S)	D.J. Gibson	(S)
M.J. Bourke	(T)	Mrs G. Jennings	(F)
Peter Brownbridge	(F)	Brian W. Kirfoot	(F)
Mrs F.M. Campbell	(S)	T. Margolin	(F)
S.W. Coe	(S)	Shane Riley	(S)

note: (S) denotes supporter membership  
(F) " full "  
(T) " trade "



### ROTARACT SUPPORT

The Rotaract Club of Wanganui are convening a Game Fair and Craft Exhibition at the Putiki Rifle Range, Airport Road, Wanganui on 3rd/4th March 1979 and DU is to benefit from the profits made. Outdoor conservation clubs in the district have shown enthusiastic support. DU will be participating with a display of waterfowl, slide presentation etc. It is hoped the exposition will generate interest for DU and new members will be gained. Any support from members is welcomed.

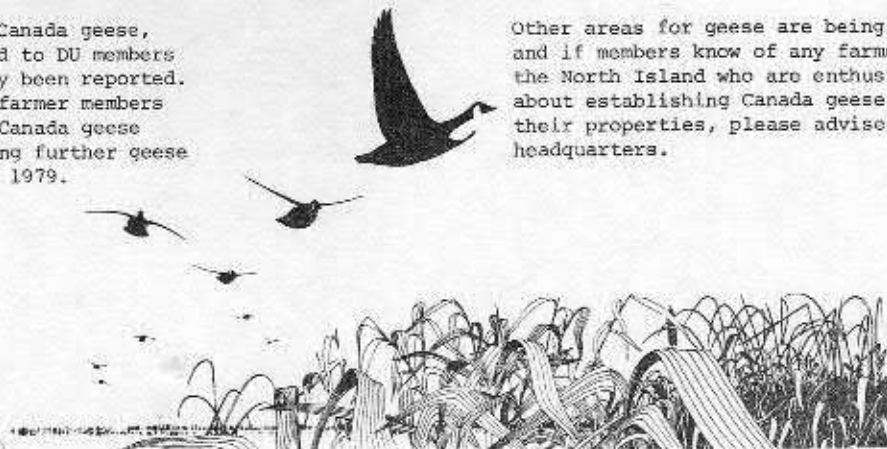
### THEFT LEAVES BROWN TEAL DUCKLINGS ORPHANED

Operation Pateke (for the Brown Teal) has taken a major setback in as much as Neil Hayes has recently lost his most prolific 'egg laying machine'. Vandals carefully cut a hole in the wire of Neil's Brown Teal enclosure and his Brown Teal female, who was in the process of rearing five young, has not been seen since. Fortunately, the young birds and the adult male survived. Neil thinks it unlikely that he will ever be able to replace the adult female who, in four seasons, had reared twenty nine birds herself and produced other fertile eggs from which another four Brown Teal were reared. From a wild-caught pair, we feel that this record is quite remarkable and the loss is a tragedy for the Pateke programme.

### OPERATION BRANTA

Breeding successes from several Canada geese, transferred from the South Island to DU members in the North Island have recently been reported. We still have a long list of DU farmer members wishing to establish a flock of Canada geese and we are hopeful of transferring further geese from the South Island in January 1979.

Other areas for geese are being sought and if members know of any farmers in the North Island who are enthusiastic about establishing Canada geese on their properties, please advise DU headquarters.



REPORT ON DU'S SUBMISSION FOR A MOBIL ENVIRONMENTAL GRANT

What we considered to be a very comprehensive and well presented application for a Mobil Environmental Grant was submitted earlier this year. The application, prepared by Neil Hayes of Wellington, was centered on Operation Pateke and we hoped that a grant would enable DU to hold a seminar for the DU members participating in this very important project. Very little has been written about the aviculture of the New Zealand Brown Teal and the seminar we envisaged would cover such topics as:

1. A close study of the various facilities members use for holding Brown Teal - comparison of successful and non-successful facilities.
2. A study of the diet needed for the Brown Teal, with special emphasis on protein, water availability, the use of chemicals, grit availability and so on.
3. A study of the successful methods of rearing Brown Teal: this would cover
  - (a) Incubation of the egg by:
    - (i) the mother duck - and the facilities required
    - (ii) bantams - and the facilities required
    - (iii) incubators - and the facilities
    - (iv) other waterfowl - and the facilities etc.
  - (b) The recommended design and size of holding pens.
  - (c) Plants and cover to use in the holding pens
  - (d) Cleanliness
4. How to keep the adult birds stimulated, active and in good condition throughout the year.
5. Prime consideration of the Brown Teal's incompatibility with other species of waterfowl.
6. Establishing pair bonds.
7. As an integral part of the management of Brown Teal, we would show on film, slides, and with illustrations, visits etc
  - (a) How similar overseas organisations rear waterfowl in captivity
  - (b) How to sex juvenile Brown Teal
  - (c) How to transfer and freight birds within New Zealand
  - (d) How to pinion Brown Teal in the most successful manner.
8. DU would also invite the Wildlife Service scientists to address and discuss with the gathering the most suitable sites for the liberation of Brown Teal, and the most suitable time of year for liberating birds into the wild.
9. Visits to view the rearing facilities of at least three holders of Brown Teal would take place during the seminar.

As a result of the seminar, which we expected would be held over three days, a paper covering the proceedings would be published. Such a paper would be of immense value towards the preservation of the Brown Teal. The outcome of such a seminar would also result in all members holding Brown Teal having a far greater in-depth knowledge of Brown Teal aviculture. Such knowledge could mean the difference between extinction and survival of the Brown Teal. Only by careful and well planned management programmes can we hope to slow down and perhaps, in some cases, reverse the rapid decline of our native waterfowl.

Unfortunately, Mobil did not agree our submission on this occasion was as worthy as others which were submitted by other groups for financial support, and no grant was made to DU. However, the DU Board is giving consideration to organising a seminar such as that outlined above without external financial assistance.

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## OPERATION PATEKE - PROGRESS

Early reports for this year's breeding of Brown Teal indicate that we could see our best season to date. Indications are that a figure of 75 birds reared could be reached, which will mean that a number will be available to the Wildlife Service for liberation. At the time of publication, a further 4 Brown Teal have been presented to the Department by DU for liberation at Mt Bruce. Several successful breeders have now taken extra pairs of birds and the project is gradually showing promising signs. The Wildlife Service's own efforts are also looking good with over 40 eggs being incubated at the time of writing. The planned liberation of 100 Brown Teal per year is now appearing to be more realistic, and this figure could possibly be achieved in the next couple of seasons.

OPERATION PATEKE EXTENDED: In a concerted attempt to ensure that all our eggs are "not in one basket", DU is extending the Brown Teal project by sending a clutch of eggs to the Wildfowl Trust in the United Kingdom. The Wildfowl Trust, established in 1947 by Sir Peter Scott, son of Robert Falcon Scott of Antarctic fame, is the world's leading waterfowl organisation with an impressive record for having saved several endangered species of waterfowl from extinction - notably the Hawaiian goose, Laysan Teal, White-winged wood duck, and the Hawaiian Duck. The Wildfowl Trust has agreed to participate in DU's Operation Pateke, to maintain records of birds reared and to return birds to New Zealand should the need arise.

Ducks Unlimited's Operation Pateke calls for the handrearing and subsequent liberation of 1,000 Brown Teal into carefully selected areas of New Zealand. The project is presently in its fourth season and, so far, a total of over 60 birds have been reared by members. The full programme calls for 50 pairs of birds to be held by members. At present 30 pairs are held. The Brown Teal is endemic to New Zealand (i.e. it is found only in New Zealand) and was, until the 1920's, widespread throughout the country and in good numbers. Since then its numbers have been drastically reduced, through habitat destruction and predation by introduced animals, to a stage where it is in imminent danger of extinction with less than 1,000 birds surviving. The New Zealand Wildlife Service has overall responsibility for DU's Operation Pateke and has approved the export of the eggs to the Wildfowl Trust.

Air New Zealand Limited have agreed to assist in any way possible with the transportation of eggs, and it is hoped that flight staff will be able to carry the eggs to London in a special incubator which the Wildfowl Trust is sending to New Zealand. From London, the eggs will be taken to the Wildfowl Trust's headquarters at Slimbridge in Gloucestershire for final incubation.

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Below: Brown Teal photographed at Neil Hayes' aviary.

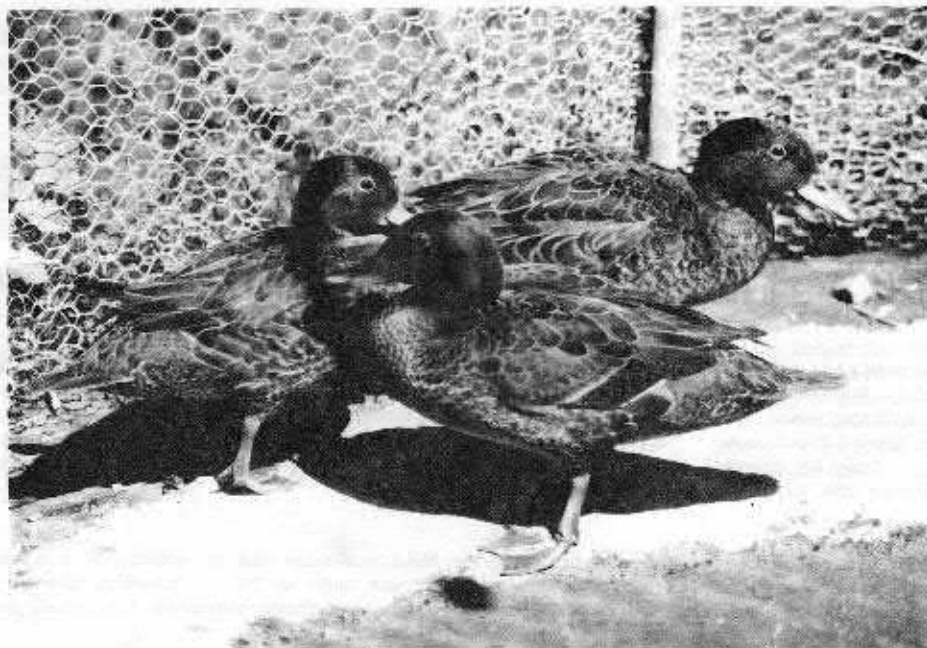


Fig 1



Fig 2



### OPERATION GRETEL - SUCCESSFUL HATCHINGS AT BARTON'S LAGOON

As reported briefly in the last issue of FLIGHT, an initial inspection of the 25 nesting boxes at Barton's Lagoon, Martinborough on 24 September revealed three nests with 10, 8 and 7 eggs respectively. On the second inspection, which took place on 29 October, it was found that the 10 eggs had all hatched; the 8 eggs had all hatched, but the nest with 7 eggs (found to be 8 on the second inspection) had been deserted - the eggs being infertile. No additional Grey Teal nests were found, but 6 starling nests and 2 rat nests were seen (rats have not previously been a problem). This early success at Barton's is very encouraging.

It now seems likely that DU will be co-operating with the Wellington Acclimatisation Society to erect many more boxes in the Wairarapa and in the Manawatu areas.

Photograph captions this page are:

Fig 1  
A new inspection technique! Christopher Hayes perched on Dad's shoulders.

Fig 3  
Box with tell-tale down indicating definite usage by waterfowl. This Box contained 6 eggs which all hatched.

Fig 2  
This is what Christopher saw. To the delight of everyone, all 10 eggs eventually hatched. (photograph: Christopher Hayes, aged 8)

Fig 4  
A much easier method of inspection. Barry O'Neale inspects the inside, ably assisted by Graham Adams (Wildlife Service)

FURTHER REPORTS - OVER PAGE . . .

Fig 3 . . . Fig 4

## OPERATION GRETEL - WAIKATO RESULTS

Director Dudley Bell forwards the following resume of results at the "Hellaby" property at Ngaruawahia.

16. 7.78 22 boxes erected and 8 Grey Teal seen.

5. 8.78 No boxes used and no Teal seen.

9. 8.78 1 male Grey Teal seen, on arrival and later a pursuit party of 1 female and 2 males.  
Box 7: 9 eggs with female incubating.

24. 9.78 1 pr Grey Teal seen on arrival. Box 7: the 9 eggs hatched and all ducklings left the nest. Box 17: 8 eggs, down covered.

Dudley prepared the diagram below of the Waikato nest box site:

x = nest box locations

⊗ = direction nest box opening faces



## AUCKLAND AND DUNEDIN:

Final inspection at Pokeno takes place in mid December and a full report will be given in the March issue of FLIGHT. DU has forwarded a sample box and funds to Dunedin to enable the construction of 25 boxes at Mr Horace Sinclair's property at Outram - member Harvey Perkins and local members are providing assistance. Further funds will be forwarded from the Recreation & Sport grant recently made to DU for the Dunedin project. These funds will enable the construction of 50 boxes at the Outram site. FURTHER REPORTS IN MARCH "FLIGHT"!

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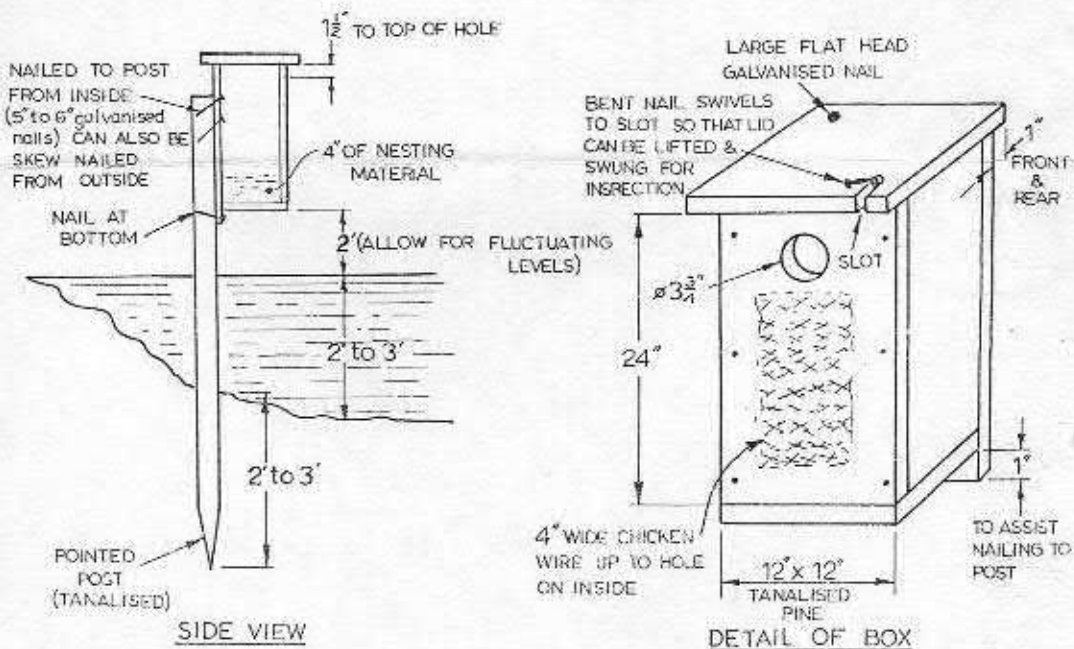
## OPERATION GRETEL - NEST BOX DETAILS

Notes on Grey Teal nest box construction follow - prepared by Neil Hayes. This is the standard box construction used for the project and is the box design most favoured by the Grey Teal.



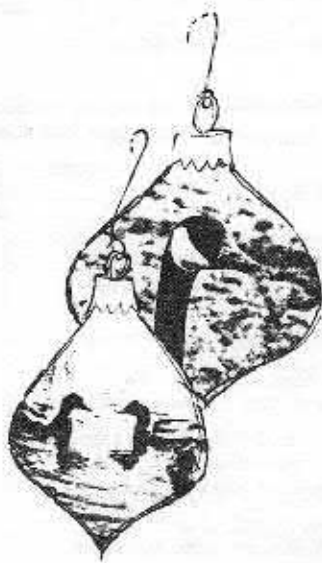
1. Boxes are made of 12" x 1" tanalised pine. Must be tanalised.
2. The depth of the box (height) has been finalised at 24".
3. The hole diameter is 3 3/4" (must be no more than 4", otherwise mallards will attempt to use the box)
4. Lid must be easily removable for inspection, and replacement of nest material.
5. Nest material - straw, hay, wood chips, or similar - is placed in the bottom of the box to a depth of about 4".
6. 3/4" or 1" chicken wire is stapled on the inside of the box, up to the hole, so that chicks can climb out.
7. Ideally, the bottom of the box should be about 2' above the water. This seems just right for the ducks and for inspection and maintenance. Rising water levels must be taken into account.
8. The box should be positioned on the pond in an area most commonly used by the Teal.
9. The box should face out over the water so that the birds have easy access. So far, the birds have not shown any preference as to which direction of the compass the boxes are faced.
10. The boxes should be nailed to 4" x 4" tanalised posts 8' to 10' long, or 3" diameter tanalised orchard poles, or 6" diameter half round tanalised posts, whichever is the cheapest. These posts need to be pointed before being rammed in, either by a post rammer or sledge hammer. The post should be about 2' into the pond bottom.
11. The boxes are held together by galvanised 3" nails. Galvanised nails should also be used for nailing the box to the post.
12. A few breather/drain holes should be drilled in the bottom of the box.

The following sketches provide further details:



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