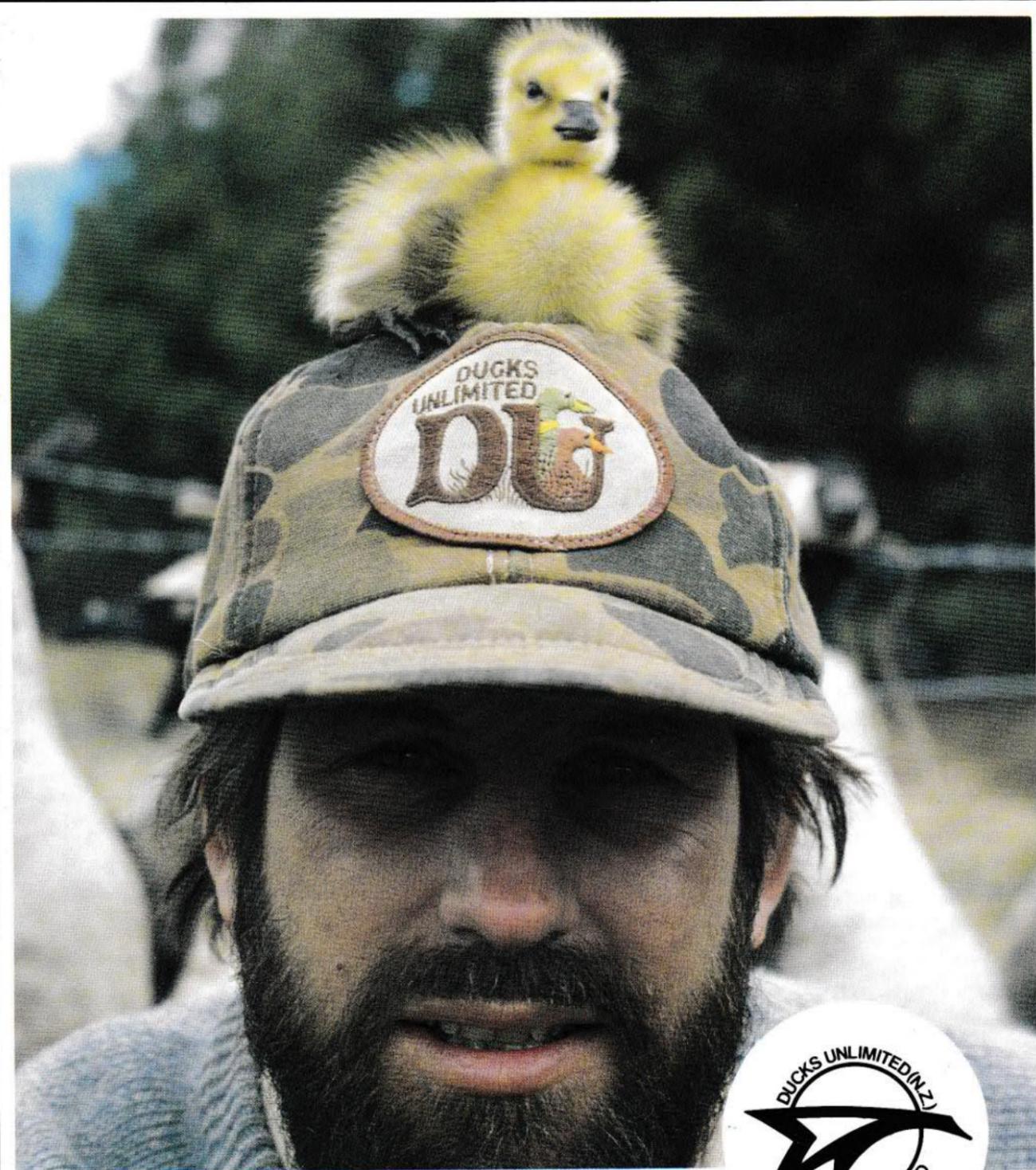


Flight

No. 4/84 — ISSUE 42 — DEC 1984

NEW ZEALAND REGISTERED MAGAZINE

DUCKS UNLIMITED'S
QUARTERLY
WATERFOWL JOURNAL



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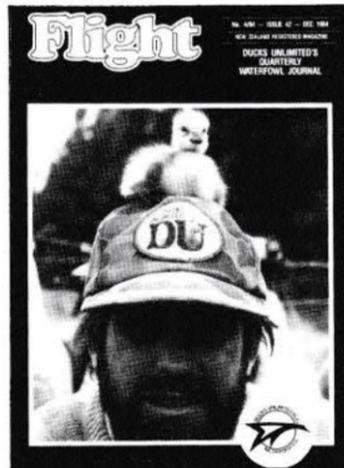
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COVER PICTURE:

Canada gosling with its adopted parent — Tom Kroos. Tom, a keen DU (NZ) member, is Senior Fisheries Officer with the Wellington Acclimatisation Society. A super shot.

Photography: Neil Hayes, Tom Kroos DU (USA).



Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated is a private, non-profit membership organisation dedicated to the preservation, restoration and maintenance of wetlands habitat in New Zealand and to the propagation of the country's rare waterfowl as a valuable natural resource. The organisation was founded in May 1974 by a group of far-sighted conservationists and incorporated by them in June 1975 at Wellington, New Zealand. The national headquarters mailing address is **PO Box 44-176, Lower Hutt**. "Flight" is the official quarterly publication of Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated reaching 1500 devoted members and friends concerned with waterfowl conservation. DU membership begins at \$5.00 pa for Junior to \$15.00 for full membership with provision for trade and life members. Membership of Ducks Unlimited carries with it subscription to this publication. To assure prompt delivery, members who move are urged to forward their new address along with current membership details to national headquarters. Letters and contributed manuscripts and photographs should be addressed to the "Flight" Editor. Views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily constitute those of Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated.

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D.U. NEWS

SINCLAIR WETLANDS

Horrie Sinclair's great announcement at the 1984 annual meeting, superbly reported by Cheryl Pirani in the September 'Flight', has been acclaimed throughout the country. Members obviously read the report of Horrie's talk to the annual meeting and his letter to the editor, with great interest and enthusiasm.

The sale and purchase agreement between Horrie and D.U. for the gifting of the Sinclair Wetlands is being drafted. In the meantime the property has been left to D.U. in Horrie's 'Last Will and Testament'.

Since the great announcement various management and fund raising committees have been formed and Horrie and D.U. have agreed in principle to the placing of a QEII National Trust Open Space Covenant on the Sinclair Wetlands — to protect the property in perpetuity — and to have the National Trust and the Wildlife Service involved in management plan discussions.

Further details will be given in the March 'Flight'.

NEW VIDEO TAPE AVAILABLE

D.U. has just purchased VHS copies of the 1978 TV1 'Hidden Places' programme featuring HORRIE SINCLAIR'S SWAMP. This 20 minute video covers some of the points discussed by Horrie at the annual meeting and shows many fine views of the Sinclair Wetlands.

These tapes, as well as the D.U./Country Calendar tape, are available to D.U. members on loan from Box 44-176 Lower Hutt. \$5 should be included to cover postage.

1985 ANNUAL MEETING

As announced in the last 'Flight', the 1985 Annual Meeting will be held at THC Tokaanu on Saturday, July 13. A reservation form is

enclosed with this issue of 'Flight' and Diane Pritt, Smiths Road, Ohakune, is again coordinating the bookings. The enclosed form must be sent direct to Diane. Please do this pronto as seats for the Annual Dinner will be limited to 150.

2ND NATIONAL CLAY BIRD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2nd D.U. National Clay Bird Championships will be held at the Taumarunui Gun Club on Friday, July 12, 1985 — the full programme will appear in the March 'Flight'. Please use the enclosed form to also indicate your attendance at the championships.

MEMBERSHIP

Horrie Sinclair's aim membership-wise was to personally enrol 100 members for D.U. in two years. In late October, he had reached 96 in 1½ years — a fantastic achievement. As Horrie said at the annual meeting, if everyone enrolled at least one member per year, we would see an even more impressive growth rate. So what about making an effort to enrol a new member? Renewal forms were sent recently to the members who have not yet renewed for the 1984-1985 period.

The growth of membership this year has meant that we now have to print 1500 copies of each 'Flight' to meet the demand.

Two new members to join recently were the Hon. J. Falloon and Mrs Falloon.

Donations Over the last couple of months very generous donations have been received from A. Elliott, G. Sanderson, Dr M. J. Williams, R. Wills and Mr & Mrs T. M. Kennedy.

1984 Auction Items Sig and June Bronger were inadvertently left off the list of auction item contributors. Sig and June generously donated a large quantity of Kiwi fruit, which proved extremely popular.

D.U. (NZ) INC would also like to thank Reloaders Supplies Ltd of Auckland for their generous support.

U.K. CHURCHILL FELLOW

Rod Hall, who came to N.Z. last year in search of Blue duck eggs to take to the Wildfowl Trust in the U.K., as part of his Churchill Fellowship, will not be returning this year to continue the project. The conservation of Blue ducks in New Zealand is currently under review by the Wildlife Service, and at this stage the review does not allow for involvement by the Wildfowl Trust. We are hopeful, however, that Rod will be able to complete his Fellowship in 1985.

CAROLINA WOOD DUCK IN NEW ZEALAND

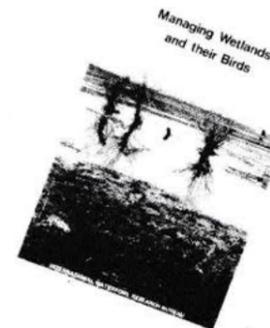
A comprehensive 10-page report on the Carolina Wood Duck in N.Z. has been prepared by the Wildlife Service. The report is currently being studied by D.U. Directors, and by the executive of acclimatisation societies. Copies of the report are available from box 44-176 Lower Hutt for \$4/copy.

Many D.U. members now have Carolina's in captivity and those with large open ponds are keen to see some birds left fully flighted. But at the moment, the possibility of being allowed to do this legally is remote. (However, it is reported that two full-winged Carolina's were shot in the Waikato during last duck season!!!) Further information will be given in the March 'Flight'.

WAIRARAPA POLDER SCHEME SCRAPPED

At the October meeting of the Wairarapa Catchment Board, the board decided to scrap its plans to erect polders along the eastern edge of Lake Wairarapa. The proposed scheme would have removed sever-

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al thousand acres of irreplaceable wildlife habitat.

Immediately the catchment board decision was announced the acclimatisation society movement applied for a National Conservation Order to be placed on Lake Wairarapa. Hopes are high that the application, which will provide permanent protection for the lake, will be successful.

PROPERTY PURCHASED BY WELLINGTON ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY

Simonds Lagoon and its environs, totalling 57ha, on the edge of Lake Wairarapa, have been purchased by the Wellington Acclimatisation Society. This outstanding wildlife habitat borders the edge of the large Donald block, another fine wetlands area which is owned by the Crown and administered by W.A.S.

The purchase price for the Simonds Lagoon area was something over \$80,000, of which \$70,000 was granted by the North Island Council of Acclimatisation Societies from its habitat purchase fund.

D.U. congratulates the Wellington Acclimatisation Society and the N.I.C. on this purchase.

ANOTHER RECORD YEAR FOR D.U. (U.S.A.)

The 1983-1984 period for D.U. (U.S.A.) was another era of outstanding success. Income reached a record high of nearly \$40 million — \$3 million up on the previous year. Membership also reached a new high and is now very close to 600,000 (you can be a member for as little as \$US10). Seventy-five per cent of income was spent on conservation projects and only 3.7% was spent on administration.

And for the first time in its history, D.U. (U.S.A.) has spent money on habitat projects in the United States. Previously, habitat work had only been carried out in Canada, where most North American waterfowl breed.

D.U. (U.S.A.), which is mainly a hunter-financed organisation, is now by far the world's largest conservation group.

SHOTGUN GIFTED TO D.U.

To help raise funds for habitat in New Zealand, D.U. (U.S.A.) has very generously sent us a magnificent B80, semi-auto shotgun. Entitled the 'Plains' model, this limited edition F. N. Browning has a superb stock of French walnut and is ornately engraved and inlaid. The Hamilton Chapter has volunteered to look at the best possible way of raising the most money for this quality firearm and elsewhere in this issue you will find details on how this is being done.

It is difficult to find words to adequately express our sincere appreciation to D.U. (U.S.A.) whose assistance to D.U. (N.Z.) over the last 10 years has been outstanding.

'RIVER IN QUESTION'

D.U. Treasurer, Garry Girvan, represented D.U. at the recent Wellington premiere of the film 'River in Question'. The film, which screened on TV1 in November, was made by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and provides an in-depth look at the now famous river, the Manganui-a-te-Ao. Many D.U. members will remember signing the Petition to Parliament, calling for the river, which is one of the few remaining unmodified central plateau rivers, to be protected from hydro development. The petition resulted in a minimum flow being established for a five-year



Ravines and rapids characterise the upper reaches of the Manganui-a-te-Ao.

period; thus giving protection for that period.

The MAF film does much to promote the outstanding values of the Manganui-a-te-Ao and it should also do much to ensure that the river will eventually be permanently protected. From the Blue ducks point of view, such protection is essential, as over 60 are known to live on the river. Congratulations to MAF for such an outstanding contribution to conservation.

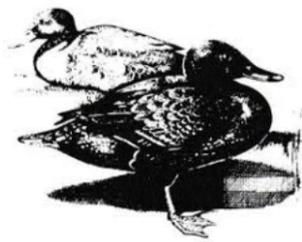
(Many D.U. members will also remember supporting the Blue duck study, carried out in 1980 by American scientist Jan Eldridge. A study did much to publicise the fact that the Manganui is vital Blue duck habitat).

TEN-YEAR BADGES

The D.U. Board decided at its last meeting that because of the large number of ten-year members — around 130 — D.U. could not afford to present them free-of-charge, other than to those ten-year members attending an annual meeting. Any ten-year member who does not anticipate attending an annual meeting, is welcome to purchase a ten-year badge for \$5, from Box 44-176, Lower Hutt.

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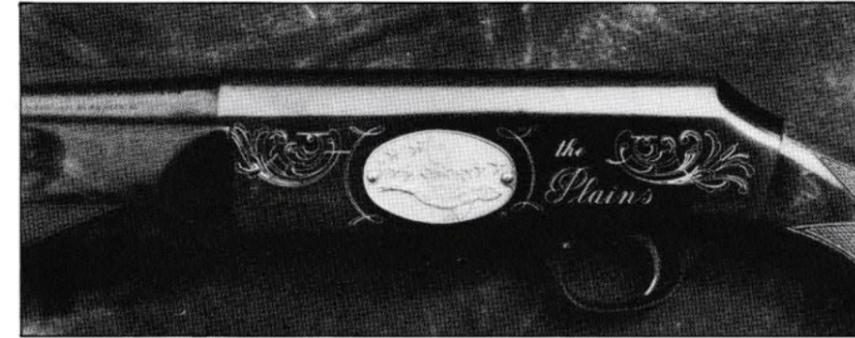
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(OF 3000). This gun was specially manufactured to acknowledge the importance of the North American Central Flyway.

This shotgun is engraved with gold inlay and has two gold medallions attached. It was presented to D.U. (N.Z.) by D.U. (U.S.A.) to raise funds for waterfowl habitat in New Zealand.

The gun can be viewed at Waikato Gunsmiths and Sports Centre, 70 Ward St, Hamilton, and at the NZCTA National championships in Hamilton, during March 1985.

Tenders close on March 31, 1985, with C. Worth, 40 Horne Street, Hamilton. (Highest tender not necessarily accepted).

PROJECT REPORTS

1983-1984 Breeding results As mentioned at the annual meeting, an impressive new record was established last season for the number of Brown Teal reared by D.U. members in a season.

Successful breeders were as follows:

W. Clinton-Baker	2
R. & M. Dench	23
J. Gill	25
S. J. Goodwin	1
J. Glover	7
F. N. Hayes	13
Hilldale Zoo	11
R. Munro	20
Otorohanga Zoo	24
L. Piper	2
I. Pirani	13
J. Parris	4
W. Wright	2

TOTAL	147

An outstanding effort by all involved. The 1984-1985 season is now well underway and some good broods are being reported. David Brenkley of Masterton, Jim Glover of Pautahanui and Wellington Zoo, being the first to get the season going.

We have several newcomers to the project for the new season — Wesley Sanderson of Taumarunui has four pairs installed in his impressive new aviary, Mary Atkinson of Hammer Springs, Melvin Pike of Carterton, Charlie Money of Dargaville and the Queen Elizabeth Park, Masterton, have also joined the project. So interest in the project remains very high.

Brown Teal Research The D.U./Wildlife Service supported Brown Teal research project being carried out by Craig Dumbell on Great Barrier Island, is well underway and a colour banding scheme commenced in August. It is feasible for some Brown Teal from Great Barrier to move to the Coromandel and to Northland and any D.U. members sighting teal with coloured leg bands should report the sightings to Grant, at the Zoology Department, University of Auckland, Private Bag, Auckland. The information required by Craig should include: the colour banding information, location, time and date, and some idea of the birds activity. Name and address should also be included.

Record Release of Captive Reared Brown Teal The first ever release of captive reared Brown Teal in Northland took place in early August, when 54 birds were released at the Matapouri Estuary and 42 were released at the Mimiwhangata Farm Park. The 96 birds released is three times larger than any previous release. The bulk of the birds were uplifted from the Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre on August 3 by Jim Campbell, Allan Elliott and Neil Hayes. On route, more birds were uplifted from Hilldale Zoo and the party camped overnight at the home of President, Paul Pirani, at Albany. From there, the first of the release sites — Mimiwhangata — was reached early Saturday morning.

Thanks to the size of Jim Campbell's Chevy truck, we were able to place three birds

to a box, instead of the usual four. This, plus first class care at Mt Bruce, resulted in all birds arriving at their release areas in excellent condition; after some 30-odd hours in the boxes.

Outstanding work had been carried out by the Wildlife Service in erecting a pre-release pen at each site — see photo. The idea of the pre-release pen is to allow birds to settle into their new environment and to be fed and watered at the same time. After a week or so, birds are dribbled out, a dozen or so at a time, and are encouraged to return to the release area for feeding, which is carried out for about one month. This worked extremely well at Mimiwhangata, but at Matapouri the majority of birds were released a little prematurely — see Dr Murray Williams' notes, elsewhere in this issue.

Dr Williams took charge of the birds at Matapouri and Wildlife Officer, Gerrard Carlin, took charge of the birds at Mimiwhangata.

Matapouri is the site where D.U. financed the fencing of the old Brown Teal roost site, and Mimiwhangata is where some excellent ponding work, plus fencing, has been organised by the Wildlife Service, with financial assistance from the Northland Federation of Acclimatisation Societies and Lion Breweries.

The reports received to date, indicate that the captive reared birds have adapted extremely well to their new environment.

We are certainly indebted to many people who helped make this new chapter for

operation 'Pateke' so successful, particularly — Dick Anderson, Murray Williams and Gerrard Carlin of the Wildlife Service; John Cheyne and his staff at Mt Bruce who looked after the Brown Teal for many months; all D.U. participants (particularly the breeders); Noel Birchall, President of the Bay of Islands Acclimatisation Society, and of course, the Manager of the Mimiwhangata Farm Park, Dick Travers, and the owner of the Matapouri site.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find a detailed report on the post-release behaviour of Brown Teal at the Matapouri site.

OPERATION 'GRETEL'

Grey Teal Census Results of the Grey Teal population census taken in March shows that there has been a considerable increase in the population since the last census in March 1974.

Using the same method which determined a population of 20,000 in 1974, the 1984 figures show that the population is now around 40,000. Of course, D.U. has been saying for some time that a large increase in the population was inevitable, after the dramatic usage of nest boxes by Grey Teal.

A move was recently made by one acclimatisation society to have Grey Teal placed on the game licence, but rightly so, this move was rejected by the majority of societies. A population of at least 100,000 would really be needed before Grey Teal could seriously be considered for inclusion

as a game bird.

1984-1985 Breeding Season According to all reports, another excellent breeding season is underway in D.U. nest boxes. Several new areas are producing good numbers of Teal for the first time.

In the **Waikato**, Grey Teal have, as usual, been queuing up to use the boxes at Pokeno and at Ngaruawahia, and a record season at both sites looks likely. The earthworks at Pokeno (financially supported by D.U.) have experienced some teething problems with one area of the stopbank collapsing, but Tony Flexman, the property owner, is confident that the problem has now been rectified.

At **Pikes Lagoon**, (Gladstone — 10 boxes), we saw what must surely be the fastest usage of nest boxes on record. Five weeks after a D.U. working party erected the 10 boxes — in September — two boxes were full of Grey Teal eggs, both clutches hatched successfully and a third clutch has since been laid.

At **Barton's Lagoon** (20 boxes), 12 nests were recorded early in the season, including one of 18 eggs, all of which hatched successfully.

At **Matthew's Lagoon** (Wairarapa — 25 boxes), an area which was slow to get going, six successful nests were recorded in late October — a 50% increase on last season.

At the **Sinclair Wetlands** (Dunedin — 50 boxes), we have not seen quite the usage that we hoped for, but it should equal last

year's figures of 10 successful broods hatched in Horrie's boxes.

OPERATION 'BRANTA'

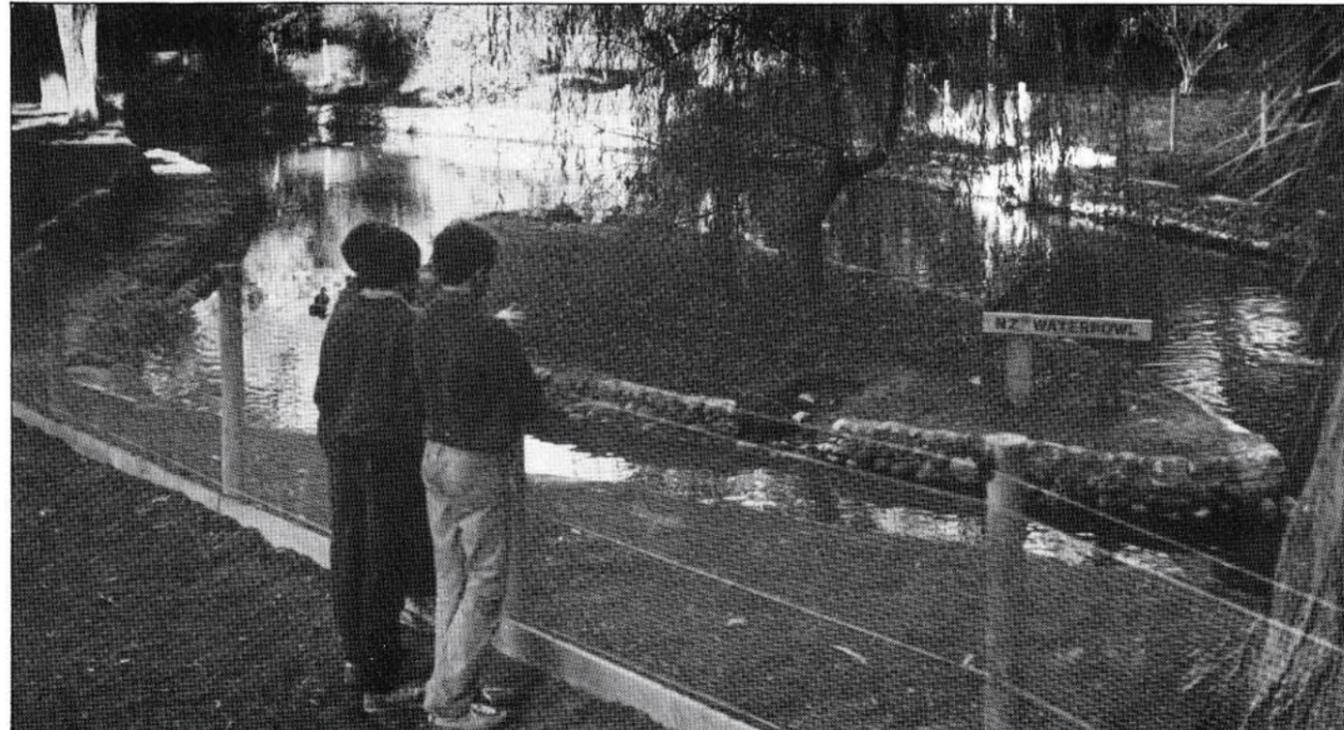
Another excellent breeding season is reported in many areas of the North Island and after this season, the need to transfer geese from the South Island, will likely not be necessary. In the meantime, however, D.U. has applied to transfer a small number of geese from the South Island, and if the application is successful and birds are available, these will arrive in February.

JOINT WILDLIFE SERVICE/ DU PROJECT AT RATHKEALE COLLEGE

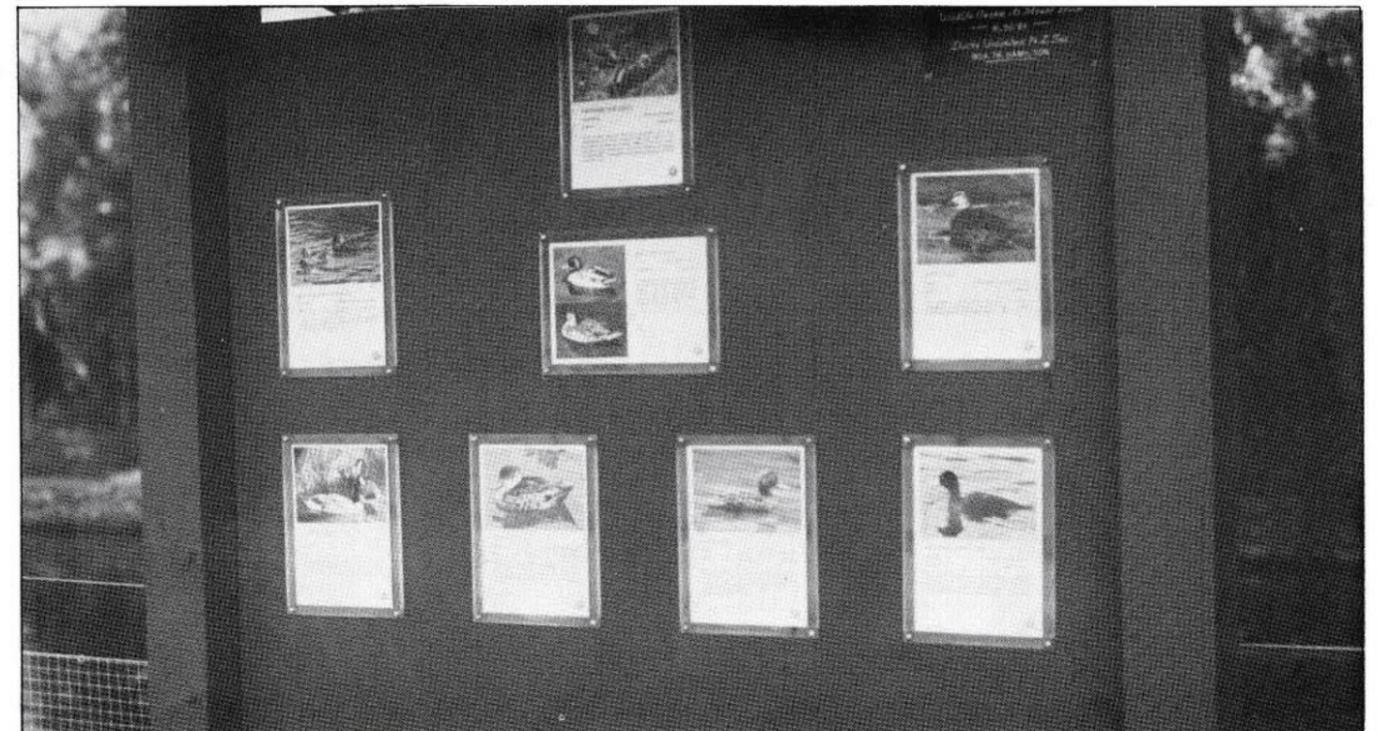
A combined Wildlife Service/D.U. project was recently completed at Rathkeale College, near Masterton, when Brown Teal, Scaup, Grey ducks, Grey Teal, Shoveler, Canada geese, Paradise Shelduck and Carolina's were released on to the Rathkeale College pond. The accompanying photographs show the impressive setup at Rathkeale. (Mallards soon introduced themselves to the collection!!)

The aim of the project is to encourage interest in waterfowl conservation among the Rathkeale students — the majority of whom come from farming families.

Bill Clinton-Baker was the instigator of the project and we thank Bill and the management at Rathkeale for providing the opportunity for such an excellent project. ●



The Rathkeale College waterfowl pond.



Closeup of the display board.

CRAIG DUMBELL'S INITIAL BROWN TEAL RESEARCH REPORT

GREAT BARRIER ISLAND BROWN TEAL RESEARCH

The first six months of the research, which began on May 1, 1984, have seen the field programme firmly established and much of the background work completed.

An initial three-day trip to Great Barrier Island was made in July with Dick Veitch and Keith Owen of the New Zealand Wildlife Service. The purpose of this trip was to see the main centres of Brown Teal concentration on the island, meet some of the island's residents, including landowners, and arrange some field accommodation. A very comfortable and convenient field base has been provided through the generosity of Mr and Mrs A. Gray of Port Fitzroy.

The fieldwork proper began in earnest on August 28. Since then, I have made two 14-day trips to the island. The initial emphasis is on building up a population of marked individuals. Three streams are currently being used as trap sites. These are located on the island's east coast in the northern, central and southern areas. Cage traps were designed and pre-fabricated before shipping to Port Fitzroy. They have subsequently been modified and are proving very successful at catching birds with minimal disturbance. The cages are not baited, so as to minimise the impact of trapping on the bird's behaviour.

Up until November 7, 90 birds have been banded, using a system that allows their banding site to be recognised through colour bands by day, and by reflecting tape and spot-lighting at night. Two of these birds had previously been banded, as juveniles, in October, 1976, giving an indication of their longevity in the wild.

Also prefabricated, shipped and erected as a 5.7m observation hide. This is located

in the main study area of the Awana Stream and overlooks one of the major Brown Teal roosts. It is hoped to use this, along with a portable hide, to gain an insight in to the birds daily and seasonal ranges available on the island.

The background to fieldwork has been provided by a visit to Wellington, to discuss the project with Dr Murray Williams, who is an advisor to the research. An afternoon was also spent at Mt Bruce where experience was gained in handling birds, and a visit to Whangarei allowed me to discuss the whole Brown Teal question with Richard Anderson who kindly showed me some of the Northland Teal habitat. Brown Teal were also discussed at the Northland Wildlife Seminar in July, which I attended.

The largest amount of time has been spent making an exhaustive search of all the literature concerning Brown Teal from 1844 up to the present. This has been considerably speeded by the use of the San Francisco based, "Biosis", computerised literature databank. A New Zealand-wide search of museums has been undertaken to locate as much Brown Teal material as possible, and it is hoped to extend this search to overseas museums and collections in the new year.

Fieldwork will be continuing over the summer period, along with the other facets of the project mentioned above.

(Craig has kindly offered to provide reports for 'Flight' at regular intervals - Editor.) ●



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ANGLERS AND CONSERVATION

That heart-stopping instant when the first run of an unseen adversary strips metres of line from a screeching reel is a moment savoured and revered by anglers the world over. To a trout fisherman, that is what the game is all about. Landing the fish, or its eventual condition factor, are of secondary importance.

Make no bones about it. New Zealand is blessed with the best trout fisheries in the world. We also have some of the cleanest and most productive trout waters found anywhere. But, in a number of regions, our priceless lakes and rivers are under serious threat.

Wildlife is a product of the land, just like kiwifruit or cows, silage or sheep. Just as there are finite limits to crop yields or livestock production on a given parcel of land, there are also limits to the numbers and kinds of wildlife that can be supported in a given area.

Increasing demands on our land and waterways to provide for the needs of a growing population are being met — often at wildlife's expense. When a wetland is drained to provide additional farmland, the majority of wildlife species can't move elsewhere, they die.

And so it is with fish. Increasing demands for water, for irrigation, for power generation, and other requirements of a consumer society, can devour the essential ingredients of our sport. Reduced water flows and manmade barriers effectively destroy fish habitats. But, the relentless development, in the name of progress, continues.

The Wildlife Service is proud of its successes in securing and preserving wildlife habitats, be they forest, wetland or river. We are also grateful for the continuing vigilance and support we get from Acclimatisation Societies, clubs and individual anglers throughout New Zealand. With such help we can effectively work towards protecting our priceless fishing heritage, for now and always. To us, the fundamental issue is very clear. No water, no fish!



NEW ZEALAND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington

WORKING FOR YOUR SPORT

POST-RELEASE BEHAVIOUR OF BROWN TEAL AT MATAPOURI ESTUARY

by DR MURRAY WILLIAMS - WILDLIFE SERVICE

Fifty-four Brown Teal were released into a holding pen at Matapouri Estuary near Whangarei, on the afternoon of August 4, 1984. It was intended that the birds should be held in this pen over several days, a small number released daily, and held in the immediate area by the attraction of the birds still penned, and by supplementary feeding. However, the pen proved insecure and within four hours of their release into the pen, 35 birds had escaped and by the following morning, all but three birds were outside of the pen. The final three were released on the morning of August 6.

Supplementary feed in the form of wheat was provided each morning on the bank, and in the water immediately alongside the pen — this was maintained until August 8, at which time my observations ceased; feeding at more widely spaced intervals continued for a further two weeks.

The 51 birds free by the morning of August 5 had formed two flocks, the smaller flock of 20 birds remaining about the pen site, the larger flock establishing itself about 100m further upstream. Both groups chose roost sites at deep pools where streamside

manuka provided overhead cover and where logs projecting from the bank into the water provided a hauling-out platform. These flocks remained separate until the evening of August 5-6, when they found each other, and thereafter remained as a single flock exploring the lower reaches of the stream and roosting at the pen site.

Within minutes of release, and during all times thereafter, the birds demonstrated the typical social aggression characteristic of established roosts of wild birds — pairing behaviour with its associated displays and chases was a constant feature of the flock's behaviour. It was clear that some pairings had been established prior to the birds being transported to Matapouri, for pair maintenance, behaviour and copulations occurred within an hour of release.

FEEDING

All birds were quick to commence feeding in the stream. Indeed, they showed a preference for stream feeding over feeding on the wheat provided. Every stick, log or other object in the water, and the exposed stream banks, were nibbled at as the birds scraped

the diatomous and dirt film. At the mud banks, bills were poked into every crevice and intense filtering of the mud followed. The birds demonstrated a particular liking for the soft mud on the stream bed, spending considerable time working it when the low tide left it exposed.

On the evening of August 6, some ducks left the water to forage on the banks, but none appeared to wander more than about 5m from the stream. They proved more adventurous the following evening, poking into the tangled bases of the *Carex* clumps, nibbling the seed heads and probing the muddy ground up to 20m from the water. Although most of the flock birds commenced foraging on the land, several pairs separated from the flock and commenced feeding in the stream at widely dispersed areas along the stream. I suspect this is the development of some form of site attachment and it wouldn't be surprising if, within a week or so, some territories were established along the stream.

HABITAT USE

Over the initial four days after release, the



Recording band numbers.



Arrival at Mimiwhangata.



Wildlife management at work: the pre-release pen at Mimiwhangata.

Teal confined themselves to about 150m-200m of stream. They showed no tendency to disperse further down the estuary — one small foray which I forced by chasing the birds, pushed them about 200m down the estuary — but the birds, very promptly returned to the more familiar water.

At low tide and during the day, the birds rested on any exposed object or on the banks. All these localities lacked overhead cover but were in full sunlight — the birds preening rigorously and then sleeping. At high tide during the day, the birds roosted among tall kikuyu grass on the bank and on the exposed bank near the original pen site. Both these sites were also bathed in full sunlight. However, evening roosts were always beneath overhead cover and adjacent to deep pools on which most of the now-resting birds displayed or swam.

PREDATORS

No predators were seen lurking about the area, although rats were present (two individuals and rat droppings were seen).

GENERAL COMMENTS

The birds appeared to settle in extremely quickly and demonstrated within hours, all the behaviour I consider characteristic of wild roosting flocks. They have held together as a flock very well but in this respect the supplementary feeding may be important; once it ceases the flock may fragment.

Immediate post-release survival has been excellent. By August 7, a minimum of 49 birds were still in the flock (they were extremely difficult to count and one or two more may have been present), and none looked obviously unwell. Again, the supplementary feeding may be helpful here, propping some birds up while they "learn" to exploit their new environment. The crucial time could well be 7-10 days after the release when the supplementary feeding ceases and the birds begin to sort out their territories and partners. Nevertheless, their high survival to the 5th day is very encouraging.

Although the planned method of release was not followed, I don't think this was a disadvantage, the fear of mass releases is that birds disperse quickly and widely and this

clearly hasn't happened. The feeding plus the well-established flocking behaviour (a consequent of their long period at Mt Bruce) has probably helped a lot in this regard.

To assess the success of this first liberation into Matapouri Estuary will require constant visits to the area and regular assessments of numbers present. There is a lot of habitat to which birds can disperse — but the success of the liberation will be readily measured by the extent to which birds use the roost site. I would strongly urge that one of the Whangarei Wildlife Service staff keep a close eye on these birds and regularly document the numbers of birds seen at Matapouri.

(We really appreciate the permission of the Director of the Wildlife Service in allowing us to publish Dr Williams' invaluable report. From what D.U. Directors' have seen in Northland, with excellent habit restoration and creation work being carried out, and with a regular influx of captive reared Brown Teal, they are very confident that a stable Brown Teal population can be achieved. Ed.)



Allan Elliott and Jim Campbell uplifting the Brown Teal from Mt Bruce — ably assisted by Jane Elliott.

MEXICO 1984

By IAN PIRANI

In April this year, three D.U. (N.Z.) Directors — Ian Pirani, Diane Pritt, Mark Timms, plus life-member Dawn Pirani — attended the D.U. (U.S.A.) Annual Conference in Acapulco, Mexico. Ian Pirani's article below records some of the highlights of the conference and details some of the excellent work being carried out by D.U. (Mexico) who hosted the conference.

It was 9pm Friday, May 4, 1984 at Ducks Unlimited's 47th convention banquet. We were sitting poolside at the Hyatt, Acapulco, recently. Our hosts were Don Alejandro, Garza Laguera, President of Dumac and his charming wife, Dr Eric Gustafson, Vice-President Dumac with Mina, his wife, and Alejandro's mother and father-in-law.

It was the culmination of a week of hectic activity, filled with all sorts of meetings and social occasions.

It was a time that my wife and I had renewed old acquaintances and met many new people.

Eric and I were having a casual conversation when he asked me what Dawn and I were doing for the next week. When I told him we had no firm plans until we attended the International Mohair Conference in Kerrville, Texas, on May 13, Eric then suggested we join, with Herb Cowburn, immediate past president of D.U. (Canada), and Bert Tetreault, director-general (Canadian Wildlife Service), who were scheduled to spend a week looking at some of Dumac's projects.

After a quick consultation with Dawn, we said yes, thank you.

Immediately Eric's tremendously efficient staff took over cancelling flights and arranging new ones; all this at 10 o'clock at night.

Duck's Unlimited, Mexico, has much in common with Duck's Unlimited, New Zealand Inc.

We both celebrate our 10th birthday this year and their projects are similar to ours, including providing nest boxes for species of waterfowl, fund raising and active volunteers working through chapters.

That banquet night was an outstanding success. We had a tremendous meal. Thirteen hundred people were fed by the efficient hotel staff. A fireworks display that defies description. Then, an auction where thousands of dollars changed hands on some magnificent items. The culmination of the evening was when somebody paid \$10,000 for Peter Coor's D.U. Inc's newly-elected president to jump clothed into the pool. He did. This was matched by another \$10,000 for Eric to go in. And so it went on. Herb went in on a chair as did Omer Long.

It was then demanded that it became truly international by a Kiwi jumping in, and Mark

Timms, after a little persuasion did the honours.

Dianne Pritt was busy trading our lapel pins and Mark did an admirable job, including lighting a string of fireworks which has not gone off.

I am not sure how much money was raised for the ducks by the poolside hijinks, but it must have been considerable.

Next day, we said farewell to our many friends and headed for the airport to fly to Mexico city where we were to rendezvous with Bert, Herb and Emelio Rangel Woodyard, Dumac's director of construction and conservation, Eric's right-hand man.

After an uneventful flight on Areomexico, we arrived in Merida, to be met by a group of Dumac volunteers: Esteban, Augustin, Hector, Enrique and the local press.

After picking up our bags and giving a brief press interview, we were driven to our hotel where, after a few drinks, we got to know our hosts better; also met other local dignitaries.

We were taken for a magnificent meal that night and supplied some Mexican wine which we found to be very good.

Next day we were picked up bright and early by Esteban and Augustin and taken to look at two of their projects.

Elestun is a large coastal lagoon that was becoming stagnant, due to the sea outlet becoming blocked by a bridge and silting occurring. This had a major effect on the local crab and shrimp fishery and of course, on the waterfowl in the region. Dumac dredged the channel and the effect has been amazing. Local people were so grateful that they donated a piece of land to Dumac for the establishment of an ecological investigation centre.

This area is very important for the migrating waterfowl and also the thousands of Flamingo which inhabit the area.

What a magnificent sight seen at close quarters from a boat.

Esteban bought his canoe and a motor with him, but our major form of transport was a local fibreglass fishing boat, driven by a large outboard motor. We towed the canoe as it was a long trip, through the fairly shallow water to the Flamingo's.

They were like a pink haze across the water.

After lots of photos were taken, we went on to look at an island where thousands of Ibis, Egrets, Roseate Spoonbills, Frigate Birds, large Blue Herons and so on lived. The mangroves were full of nests, with both eggs and young birds. Young, flightless birds clambered all over the ground and trees.

Except for boa constrictors, the island was predator-free.

We had ample supplies of liquid refreshments kept in a large chilly bin. The Mexi-

cans have a very handy sized beer bottle, only a few mouth fulls, and this of course prevented the beer ever getting warm in the extreme heat.

About halfway back, I noticed our fisherman-boat operator tilting the petrol tank. Then changed back to a tank we had already used, and tilted this also. He ended up tipping the drops into the outboard motor cover and sucking this up.

Finally, a few coughs and the Evinrude died.

Some distance from our destination, Esteban called for a sober volunteer to sit in the front of the canoe. Dawn was unanimously selected, as a bottle of black label had steadily disappeared. Thank goodness we had towed that canoe, for the roll was now reversed and we made slow progress back to our landing point.

After we had landed and loaded up our gear, we headed off to a local town for a late lunch. We had this under a thatched roof, next to the surf of the Pacific ocean.

Our tables were made from old Coke fridge tops. We had a complete sea food lunch: shrimps, crab meat, raw fish and raw conch. Truly an experience.

We then wended our way back to Merida and another pleasant social evening.

Next day, away with Hector and Willie to look at progress — another Dumac project. By the simple installation of a floodgate, salt water was prevented flowing back into thousands of acres of mangrove swamp — another success story. The swamp is coming back to life.

After a quick stop at Hector's yacht club, we went on to Joaquin Roche's, the regional vice president's home for lunch. There we were met by his charming wife and some of his family and other guests.

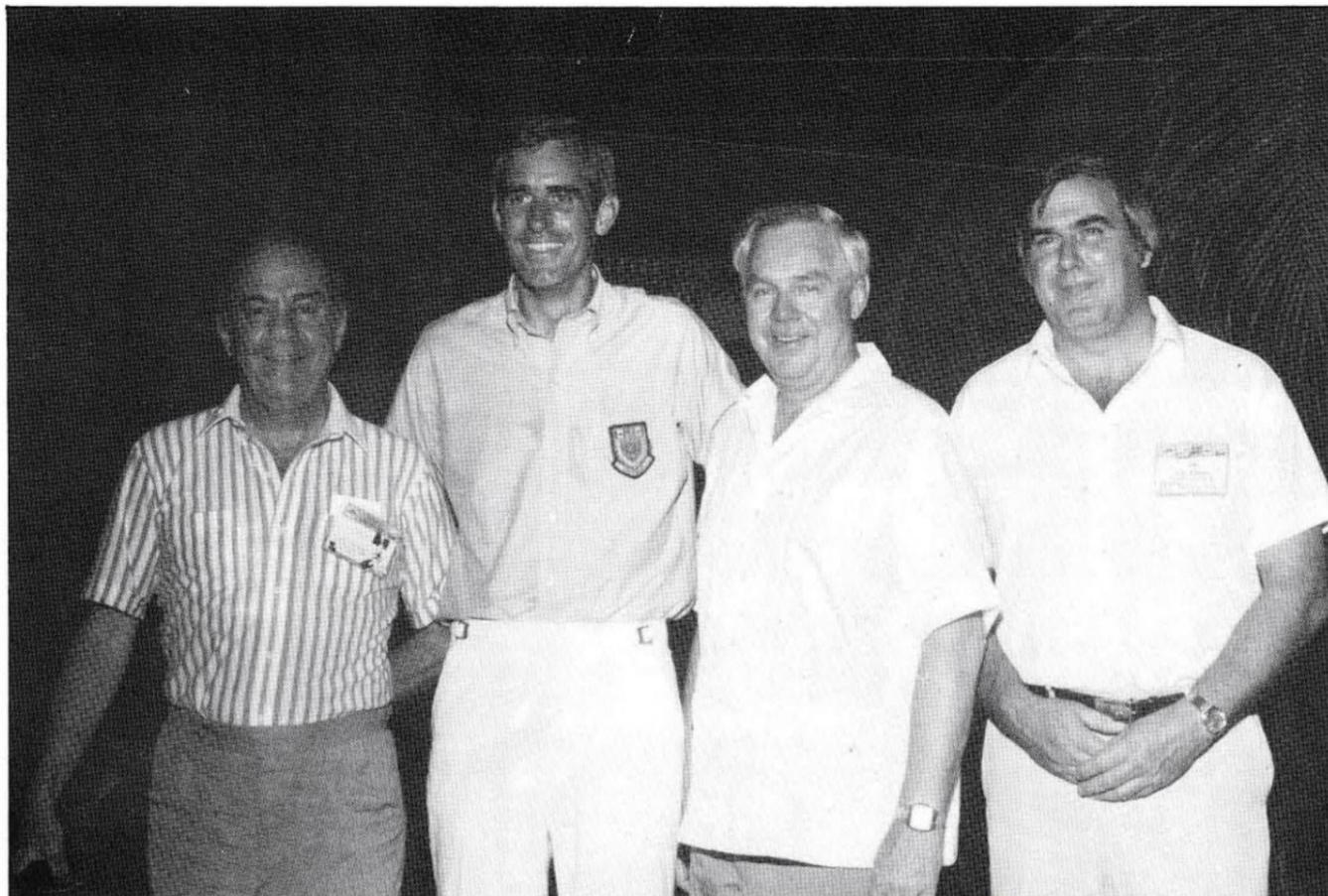
It was very stimulating conversation over lunch; we learnt how Joaquin, despite considerable opposition, was able to save the Flamingo population from human predation, and stabilising the flock numbers. We also heard from his son, some of the land problems which the Mexicans faced.

Our meal was delightful, a tribute to Mrs Roches skill. Later that afternoon we had time for a little shopping. Skilfully guided by the son of a local Dumac member.

That evening Enrique drove us some 60 miles to Uxmal.

This classic mayan architectural site has buildings of unbelievable work and beauty. Much of it was built in the sixth and seventh centuries. Each evening at 9pm there is a sound and light show which outlines the history of this site. One left with a strange feeling after seeing a civilisation that existed centuries before Christ, and that were able to build huge structures within the technology of modern engineers, and yet are still standing as a tribute to them.

D.U SALES DEPT



Left to right: Peter Coors, president D.U. (U.S.A.), Alejandro Garza, president D.U. (Mexico), Jack McKeag, president D.U. (Canada), Ian Pirani, immediate past president D.U. (N.Z.).

I wonder how many of our modern skyscrapers will be standing in 1000 years?

The real mystery is what happened to this race of people who just vanished?

Emilio had left us earlier that evening for a few days in Chicago at D.U. Inc. headquarters. Next morning we left our Cancun, a modern miracle here on the beautiful Caribbean.

Man had, in the last 10 years, created a tourist resort.

This town was planned and did not just grow like topsy.

Emilio had given us fairly firm guidelines which included hiring a car and driving to various points of interest.

Bert, being a very keen driver, wished to visit various marine parks; the fish life was amazing; the water was so brilliantly clear that we could see many metres down.

After two enjoyable days, which included a visit to the Isla Mujeres (Island of Women), we left for Monterrey that night, and after delays in our flights and running between connecting flights, we made it to Monterrey about 10pm.

We were met by Lurdus and Federico. Megias, who we called Federico 1, is responsible to Emilio for the various projects.

Next morning, Eric and Federico arrived with Federico 2 - Federico their biologist. We spent a day looking at various projects completed and being constructed, without going into details of each one, suffice it to

say that they were well planned and well constructed work which involves moving thousands of cubic yards of dry swamp soil. Islands feature in all constructions and plantings of various food and shelter trees.

One highlight of this trip was a visit by a six-foot long black snake which decided to get into the jeep Dawn was in. After an hour's effort and a number of bottles of beer and Coke being squirted on it, and the efforts of the bulldozer contractor, it was extracted from the Chasis, and a very subdued snake was let go in the scrub.

That night we met briefly with Alejandro at Eric's home before having a meal with Eric and the two Federico's - another enjoyable occasion.

Next day we flew over the projects we had visited, then headed to Pieoras Negras on the Rio Grande river, in an Aztec twin turbo prop plane.

Rio Grande Rancho is a property owned by Rudolfo De Los Sabtos and the site of another large Dumac project, El Gato lake. This is in the middle of the central flyway and had gradually silted up over the years and was made totally dry.

Here again Dumac is using large crawler tractors to excavate the large bed and to build islands with Rudolfo and Charles Wilson, who is responsible for all the hunting and fishing on Rudolfo's ranches.

Charles indicated a desire to sample some of New Zealand's hunting and fishing. We

had a very interesting conversation.

After an exciting takeoff, we returned to Monterrey.

On our return, we went on a sightseeing trip, which included a visit to Federico's home where we met his family and some friends. Another delightful evening.

Next morning, after a meeting with Eric, Federico 2 took us to the airport for our flight to San Antonio, and the next stage of our trip. But that is another story.

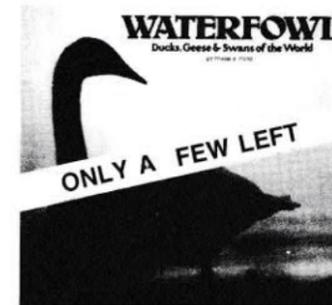
Our two weeks' in Mexico will remain in our memories as one of the highlights of our trip. The Dumac organisation and its staff inspired Dawn and I. Their professional approach, dedication, enthusiasm and management must serve as a goal to any conservation organisation.

Our travelling companions, Herb and Bert, were good company and a stimulating influence which included Herb's bottomless well of jokes and an amazing card story which astonished everyone that night.

We will be forever indebted to Alejandro and Eric, for their invitation to do the trip and to their staff for making it so informative and pleasant.

We have extended an open invitation to any member of Duck's Unlimited (Mexico) to visit New Zealand.

There is every possibility that they will have representatives at our 1985 conference. We hope they will be there.



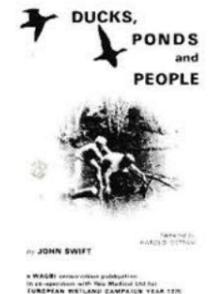
Waterfowl: Ducks, Geese & Swans of the World by Frank Todd. This is the ultimate in waterfowl books and a must for all DU members. 400 pages covering the status of the world's waterfowl, their aviculture and general management. Also contains excellent chapters on photography and on hunting and conservation attitudes. Price \$49.50.



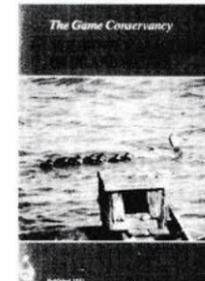
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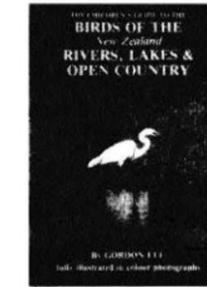
A Coloured Key to the Waterfowl of the World by Sir Peter Scott. 96 pages with coloured plates and notes detailing the status of the waterfowl of the world. Price \$8.50.



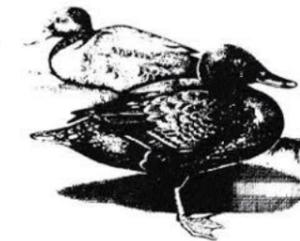
Ducks, Ponds & People by John Swift of B.A.S.C. 112 pages provide a guide to the management of small lakes and ponds for waterfowl. (DU's best selling book.) Price \$7.50.



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Ducks Unlimited membership badges, sized 5/8" diameter, featuring the corporate symbol in gold/white/blue are available from DU Headquarters, PO Box 74, Hamilton. Price \$5 each.



Gamebird Hunting by Tom Caihness. 96 pages covering problems, questions and answers on gamebird hunting in N.Z. Price \$7.00 incl p&p.



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