

Flight

DUCKS UNLIMITED
QUARTERLY
WATERFOWL JOURNAL

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— FOR WATERFOWL AND WETLANDS —
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Cover picture: Canada Geese photographed by Bud Jones. Other photographs by Gary Girvan, Jim Campbell, Jim Glover.

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Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated is a private, non-profit membership organisation dedicated to the preservation, restoration, creation 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 44176, Lower Hutt. "Flight" is the official quarterly publication of Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Incorporated reaching 2000 devoted members and friends concerned with waterfowl conservation. DU memberships beings at \$5.50 pa for Junior to \$16.50 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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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

DU President, Jim Campbell, has had a busy schedule in the last two months as can be seen from the following account of his activities.

I have been encouraged to receive the many requests for advice on pond planting or whether an area is suitable for the creation of another wetland. Public awareness of the importance of wetlands seems to be growing, and DU must pursue every opportunity in this respect, for every new acre of habitat created or restored is of vital importance for our waterfowl.

I recently have had the pleasure of hosting Herb Moulding and his wife Rita. Herb has been an engineer with DU Canada for some 30 years and is visiting New Zealand on his retirement. To be in the middle of a swamp with Herb and to be able to absorb some of his vast reservoir of knowledge is certainly an enlightening experience. Herb has been able to make valuable comments on many of DU's wetland projects as he has travelled around the country. I was sad to see them leave the Wairarapa to head south to Horrie Sinclair's wetlands as I felt we had only just touched on a lifetime of valuable experience.

I hope that some members of DU NZ will be able to travel to Canada to join in DU Canada's 50th celebrations and renew some of the many valued acquaintances we have had with our Canadian friends.

In December, I spent a very pleasant and inspiring week on Great Barrier Island in company with Grant Dumbell and a young Canadian, Louis Drainville, who comes from Quebec. Louis works for DU Canada as a biologist and was very interested in Grant's survey work on Brown Teal. Grant treated us both to a tour of the island, incorporating his usual roost site counts. We then helped to move Grant's observation hide and trapped birds the rest of the week.

DU are indebted to Sue and Alan Gray for allowing Grant and his team the use of their home whilst on this project.

As voluntary helpers, we were well rewarded with the peace and tranquility of the Awana Valley and the crystal-clear warm surf in the bay. Where else can you see Kakas flying overhead or observe 100 or more Pateke sunning themselves on the bend of a stream?

I shall return to Great Barrier, for one week was all too brief a time to spend with such hospitable people on such a mighty island.

However, duty called me back to Masterton to attend the opening of the new waterfowl area at Masterton Intermediate School. This project is sure to generate a great deal of interest in water fowl and to create an attractive environment within the school grounds for all pupils' enjoyment. This is the second of DU's school projects in the Masterton area, the other being at Rathkeale

College. An initial grant for conservation by A.C.I. Glass, some assistance from DU, the Wildlife Centre and Mitre 10, plus Lawson Campbell's initiative and the support of many involved at the school has created an ideal area.

Thanks to Bill Clinton-Baker, Melvin Pike, and the National Wildlife Centre for providing waterfowl for the display area.

In December, the DU board appointed four new Honorary Members. Sir Neil and Lady Isaacs of Peacock Springs, Christchurch were the initiators of the Royal Swan project and will continue with the supply of some 20 cygnets this season. They have generously offered DU the opportunity of an Open Day at the Isaac Wildlife Trust, an opportunity which we will take up next year. Tony Flexman from Pokeno has created massive wetlands on his property and is upgrading even more. Lawrence Piper from Christchurch has been a key figure in Operation Branta and has assisted DU in so many ways.

I am pleased to report that the Sinclair Wetlands building project is now close to commencement and I urge all members to donate to this fund if they haven't already done so. I feel that we owe it to Horrie to provide him with a cosy home overlooking his wetland this winter and at the same time provide a facility which will be of great benefit to the many public visitors.

Jim C. Campbell



Brown Teal roost site within sight of the farmhouse belonging to the Chairman of the Great Barrier Island County Council.

DU NEWS

IMPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT GRANT TOWARDS SINCLAIR WETLANDS

In October last year Ducks Unlimited submitted a detailed application to the Minister of Tourism for financial support towards D.U.'s work at the Sinclair Wetlands. In early December the Minister of Tourism, Mike Moore, wrote awarding D.U. \$45,000 under the Community and Public Sector Grants Scheme. The money is to be used to

- Create captive waterfowl display ponds and public walkways around the ponds, and to create walkways to hides overlooking the wild area (\$30,000).
- Construct observation hides (\$10,000) and
- Improve picnic facilities (\$5,000).

This is a magnificent contribution from the Government and it will mean that D.U. will be in a position to complete all its plans for the

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Sinclair Wetlands within a relatively short period of time.

We certainly thank and applaud the Minister of Tourism and his Department for such an impressive allocation of funds. Such support will certainly provide a prominent tourist attraction for the Otago region and at the same time provide D.U. with the ideal method of educating the public to a greater appreciation of waterfowl and wetlands.

NEW HONORARY MEMBERS

At its December meeting D.U. Directors decided to award Honorary Membership to four people who have, over many years, made outstanding contributions to the aims and objectives of Ducks Unlimited. The four are:

Sir Neil and Lady Diana Isaac, who have created a magnificent series of waterfowl lagoons at Peacock Springs near Christchurch and who have been the source and inspiration for D.U.'s 'Royal Swan' project. Sir Neil was knighted for his services to conservation and we believe that this was the first time a New Zealander's work for conservation had been so well recognised.

Tony Flexman of Pokeno, South Auckland, has been vital to D.U.'s operation 'Gretel' for it was on Tony's property that 'Gretel' started in 1975. Thanks to his efforts and support many thousand Grey Teal have hatched in the 120 boxes present. Farming adjacent to the Whangamarino Swamp, Tony has also restored several hundred acres of wetlands and his work is an inspiration to all conservationists.

Lawrence Piper, Manager of the North Canterbury Acclimatisation Society's game bird farm, and a D.U. member since 1974, is the fourth recipient of Honorary Membership. For ten years Lawrence was the vital force in operation 'Branta' and without his efforts the project would never have succeeded.

SINCLAIR WETLANDS BUILDING PROGRESS

An objection to D.U.'s plans to erect a building complex at the Sinclair Wetlands resulted in a hearing being called by the Bruce County Council. The hearing took place in

early December and D.U. was fortunate to be well represented by lawyer Jim Guthrie, Bill McLay and Horrie. The Wildlife Service also gave evidence which strongly supported D.U. plans for the wetlands. The planning consultants employed by the Bruce County Council also supported the D.U. proposals, and in a reserved decision the Council found in D.U.'s favour and a building permit was issued in late January, the only additional requirement by the Council being that the paint on the building must be such that it tones in with the countryside.

Revised building cost estimates are now being prepared and construction should commence in March. D.U. thanks Jim Guthrie, Bill McLay, Horrie, the Wildlife Service, and the Bruce County Council for their support.

Unfortunately we are still around \$45,000 short of making the project a freehold operation and the fund raising programme will stay open for some considerable time.

1987 ANNUAL MEETING

Don't forget to fill in the AGM Registration form printed in this issue. The annual meeting date is July 11th and the venue THC Wairakei. Let's see if we can beat last years all time record of 172 for the annual dinner.

Don't forget also that the annual clay target championships will again be held at the Taupo Gun Club — on Friday 10th July commencing at 8.30am.

Two other events are planned in conjunction with the AGM. Fred Bailey is organising a fishing competition, the details of which are printed in the entry form to be found in this issue. Director Mark Timms plans to organise a golf tournament at Wairakei on Friday 10th July, and any member wishing to participate should contact him at 9 Millward St, Wanganui for details.

1987 NATIONAL RAFFLE

Plans are well in hand to run another D.U. National Raffle. For first prize D.U. has commissioned New Zealand's leading wildlife artist, Janet Marshall, to paint a pair of N.Z. Scaup. Value of the first prize will be \$2,500 and all members will again be given the opportunity to buy tickets, with all profits again going to wetland habitat.

NEW POSTAGE STAMPS

It's great to see Brown Teal and Blue ducks featuring on the new postage stamps. The publicity resulting from the new stamps, which were painted by Janet Marshall, has further highlighted the endangered status of these species.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

DOC gets off the ground on April 1st. At this stage we do not know what the department's philosophy will be in respect of rare waterfowl, but we are hopeful that D.U. will be working closely with the department — in the same successful way that we have worked with the Wildlife Service.

VIDEO TAPES

A reminder that DU has the following VHS tapes available on loan to members, for a maximum of two weeks and \$10 to cover postage:

1. Hidden Places/Sinclair Wetlands
2. Country Calendar/Ducks Unlimited
3. Country Calendar/Horrie Sinclair
4. River in Question
5. Wildfowl Trust

MASTERTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

Ducks Unlimited and the Wildlife Service have assisted in the creation of an impressive waterfowl area at the Masterton Intermediate School — very similar to the one created at Rathkeale College a couple of years ago. But in addition to a large collection of waterfowl on a totally vermin proof open pond, a number of aviaries have been erected to accommodate pairs of brown teal and other rare species. A newspaper account of this features elsewhere in this issue.

MEMBERSHIP AND DONATIONS

Sponsor members. Falkner Ford Parts of Wellington and Warren Lewis of Dunedin have recently become sponsor members. A.K.M. Elliott has renewed his sponsor membership.

Subscriptions. Sub renewal notices will be sent out in April and in spite of the recent massive postal charge increases, subs will remain the same. But to assist D.U. maintain its vital role in the habitat creation field you

might well consider Sponsor membership at \$55 per year.

Sinclair Wetlands donations. Lyal Nash of Dunedin has recently made a substantial donation to the building fund, as have Gerard Booth, Graham Gurr, Myles White, Mrs G. Radford, the Otago branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Society, and the Simmers/Rockford partnership. Dunedin Teachers College also made a donation following a visit to the Wetlands by their Science trainees.

WILDLIFE RESEARCH STUDY AWARD

D.U. Directors have recently finalised details to establish the Ducks Unlimited Wildlife Research Study Award, in which D.U. will make available \$3,000 per year to assist university based wildlife research projects.

For some years now D.U. has financially assisted a number of waterfowl research projects; the largest being \$6,500 towards brown teal research on Great Barrier Island. This research ends this year and has been so successful that D.U. is keen to support similar waterfowl research. After all very little is known about brown teal in Northland; the N.Z. Scaup; the mallard in New Zealand; the N.Z. Shoveler; the N.Z. Grey duck, many aspects of Blue duck ecology; the Mute Swan in New Zealand; the wildlife values of artificially created wetlands; the requirements of a quality wetland habitat, etc. etc. The new award therefore aims to assist university students in serious wildlife research. Quite naturally the award will favour waterfowl and wetlands research, but all wildlife research fund applications will be considered.

Applications for a Ducks Unlimited Wildlife Research Study Award will close in October each year and applications will need to include details of the full study proposal, a copy of the applicant's academic record and be supported by the applicant's Head of Department.

GRASS WHISTLERS

Bill Clinton-Baker reports that after 5 years his Eyton's Tree Ducks (Grass Whistlers) have nested and that he has four juveniles. Bill is keen to locate any other breeders who have Tree Ducks so that they might ex-

change birds and make up unrelated pairs. Bill can be contacted at Tupurupuru, Masterton, R.D.4. Telephone 27-801.



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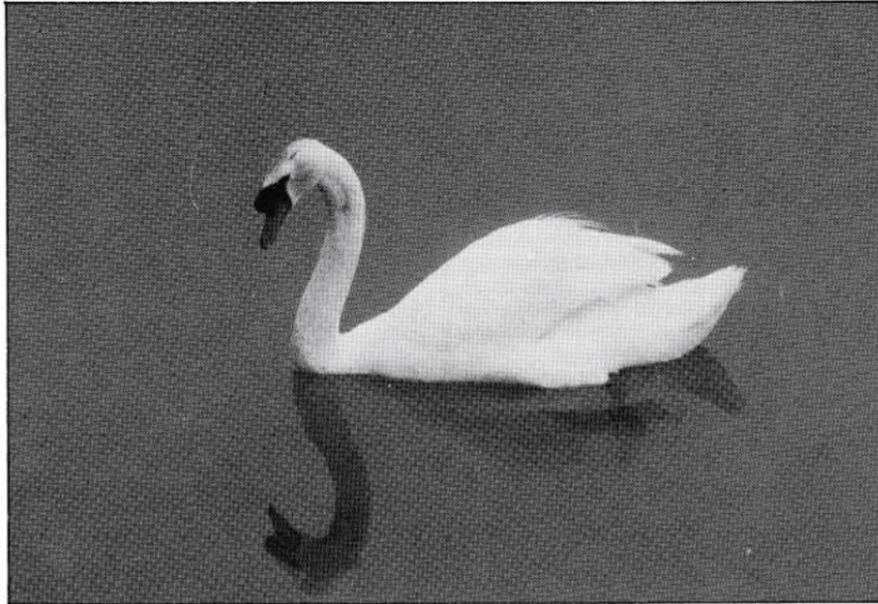
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PROJECT REPORTS



OPERATION 'BRANTA'

With the Canada goose being added to the game licence for the 1987 game season, D.U. Directors have decided not to continue with the transfer of geese from the South Island. Since 1976 D.U. has transferred nearly 500 geese, with the majority going to farmers in the Wairarapa. Canadas are now well established in the Wairarapa and throughout many areas of the North Island and D.U.'s aim to establish them permanently in the North Island has been a complete success.

The hunting of Canadas in the Wairarapa will certainly be an interesting exercise, but the number actually killed will be almost entirely in the hands of private landowners. Thanks to the Wellington Zoo.

North Island D.U. members were able to obtain Canada geese, when 11 geese, plus five black swans, were given to D.U. by the zoo in December. These transfers from the zoo have been taking place for a number of years and are very much appreciated.

OPERATION 'ROYAL SWAN'

The list of members keen to join the Mute Swan recovery programme grows every week and it is very unlikely that swans will be available for all those interested. Plans are underway to transfer swans from Sir Neil and Lady Diana Isaac's Peacock Springs in April and those on top of the list, providing the facilities are suitable, will be given first preference.

OPERATION 'WETLANDS'

By the time you read this, further extensive work will have taken place at Home Lagoon in the Wairarapa. The work, which is being carried out by D.U. and property owner Denis Handyside involves stop-banking work, raupo clearance and island creation. Our valve, which will permit an impressive flow of water from the nearby Ruamahanga River will be opened as soon as the earthworks have consolidated.

OPERATION 'PATEKE'

The following report from Neil Hayes clearly shows that while the release of brown teal in

Northland has met with some success, far more work is needed before any real progress is made in our efforts to maintain a stable brown teal population in Northland.

While holidaying in the far North during January I was able to spend some time looking for Brown Teal, particularly those with bands on their legs.

My tour around the various sites followed closely on the heels of Grant Dumbell who was in Northland for one week prior to my arrival. Grant counted 253 birds at 13 sites and he will also be completing a report.

As I was mainly looking for banded birds, I did not visit Parekura Bay which has two prominent roost sites, and at which Grant had counted around 110 birds.

While I have always attempted to promote a positive and optimistic view on the future of Brown Teal on the mainland I am now pretty despondent about the whole programme and unless there is far more input from both the Government and D.U. I feel that the Brown Teal has no future in Northland. From my observations in Northland over the last five years it is apparent that Brown Teal numbers are declining quite rapidly and it is a sad fact that our releases at Matapouri and Takou Bay have failed to assist the Northland population in any way.

A summary of my observations is set out below (Figures in brackets show number released):

Date	Place	No. seen
7.1.87	MATAPOURI (84)	0
Spent 3-4 hours with 2 dogs.		

Date	Place	No. seen
7.1.87	WHANANAKI EAST	29
This is the fenced roost site on Jeff Carson's property and it was pleasing to see such a good number. Spent 2 hours here and was able to view the legs of 11 birds. No bands were seen. This was very disappointing as the site is only a short distance from Matapouri.		

Date	Place	No. seen
7.1.87	WHANANAKI WEST River roost site.	11

Date	Place	No. seen
9.1.87	KAEO ROOST (21)	0
21 captive reared birds were released here last July. Dogs used again. 6 mallards seen.		

Date	Place	No. seen
9.1.87	TAKOU BAY (45)	0
Leo Moslin who owns the roost site said that D.U. birds were present for 2½ months before disappearing. He said that some had moved onto farm ponds near Kaeo, but have not yet followed this up. Leo says that when he moved to Takou Bay many years ago there were hundreds of brown teal.		

Date	Place	No. seen
11.1.87	MOKAU QUARRY	1 male
This is a site near the Helena Bay roost and could be used for the release of small numbers. It is also a site which is well suited to the creation of a whole series of ponds.		

Date	Place	No. seen
11.1.87	TEAL BAY	38
Viewed nearly all legs. No bands seen; very disappointing as Mimiwhangata is only just round the corner.		

Date	Place	No. seen
11.1.87	MIMIWHANGATA FARM PARK — TOP POND (132)	31

Viewed the legs of 21 birds. 18 banded. 4 with stainless band only, 13 with green and stainless, one with green and no stainless. Two unbanded males paired with banded females.

Date	Place	No. seen
11.1.87	MIMIWHANGATA BOTTOM POND	10+

No accurate count done. Many birds in raupo. Farm Ranger estimates that well over 90 birds are surviving at the farm.

It can be seen from my chart that all is not gloom and doom, as our birds are doing well at Mimiwhangata and I am now more convinced than ever that large lagoons like those at Mimiwhangata hold the key to the successful release of brown teal in Northland. Good news also in this direction is that Jeff Carson is keen to put in two good sized ponds for brown teal.

I now also believe that in the short term we should be releasing small numbers of captive reared birds at existing brown teal roost sites, i.e. we should be releasing birds at Parekura Bay, Teal Bay and Whananaki (the only areas left where teal survive in reasonable numbers). If the idea of releasing wild caught Great Barrier birds with captive reared birds ever got off the ground then the Kaeo and Takou Bay sites would be well worth trying again. Matapouri on the other hand is a complete write-off at this time, as there is far too much human activity at the roost site — bullet holes in the two signs at the roost, campers at the end of the roost, numerous vehicles passing within a few yards of the roost, etc. The idea that we try to establish populations of captive reared birds at river roost sites has failed and we should now be looking at supplementing the wild population directly. ■

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Sparrows (15)	7.00	2.70	2.00	11.70	
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Place: Lake Taupo & surrounding Rivers

Rules: As per current N.Z. Fishing Regulations.

Weigh in: Wairakei Hotel from 5.00pm Friday. Fred Bailey supervising.

Entries: \$10.00 per Registered D.U. member.

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Every Fish weighed receives a prize.

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Age

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NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

AUCKLAND CHAPTER

Perfect summery weather, gracious hosts, good food and plenty of liquid refreshment, combined with a large number of waterfowl enthusiasts made Sunday 19 October 1986 a memorable day. Tony and Elizabeth Flexman of Windermere Farm, Pokeno, hosted an open day on their 1,200 acre farm property for members of Ducks Unlimited, the Auckland Acclimatisation Society, the Wildlife Service, Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society, Ornithological Society, the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust and other interested parties. The purpose of the open day was for the Flexmans to show what had been done by way of wetland restoration, preservation and re-creation — specifically 18 separate areas ranging in size from a half acre to 60 acres.

Some 150 DU members and others, among them many children, were treated to a barbecue luncheon on the lawns hosted by Elizabeth and Tony who had an efficient team of helpers including the family manning 6 barbecues and bars.

Following lunch, and utilising tractors and farm trailers Tony led his guests on a full inspection of the wetlands — this was a very pleasant 3½ hours of easy walking, with some driving, over gently undulating countryside; assorted cars followed trailers and four wheel drive vehicles in a relaxed convoy. Visitors were delighted to view swan with young on newly created water plus an abundance of wetland inhabitants.

Ralph Adams, Director of the N.Z. Wildlife Service took time out to attend, together with other leaders of various conservation groups including past and present directors of DU, well-known author Ronald Lockley who later penned a fascinating account of the day in *The Sunday Star*; and Piers Hayman, artist/writer, to mention just a few.

But for Tony's dedication to the task, many of the areas viewed would probably now be growing grass!

As a continuation of DU's involvement with Tony and Elizabeth — first in the erection of Grey Teal nest boxes and latterly with funds towards the cost of creating further wet areas, — DU Immediate Past President, Paul Pirani presented the couple with a cheque for future development. He reinforced DU's continuing support for wetland preservation with a few words — the key issue being that often-repeated statement 'without habitat, you don't have wildlife!'

WELLINGTON CHAPTER

Our previous events, the simulated field shoot and Wairarapa field trip, were very successful.

The next major event is the annual dinner, AGM and auction which will be held at the Shaw Savill Lodge on Saturday 21 March. At the time of writing, costs are still being finalised but dinner will be about \$25.00 per head. The usual collection of quality items will feature during the main auction with silent auctions and some sales items available. If you want to attend or wish to donate an auction item, please contact Chris Hooon on 859-166 (bus) or 780.421 (pvt).

The Wellington Chapter Committee has been working very closely with Lindale Farm



One of Lindale Farm's ponds, site of a Wellington Chapter project.

on establishing a waterfowl display area. Lindale Farm is situated on State Highway 1 just north of Paraparaumu and is a display/model farm featuring all New Zealand sheep and cattle breeds with goats, deer etc. There is a coffee shop, excellent cheese bar and souvenir shop with plans for further development. The Wellington Chapter are able to report that a waterfowl display pond is available and currently being fenced prior to building an observation hide and placing loafing platforms near the hide. Plantings will be done around the area to provide additional cover. DU are providing brown and great teal, Canada geese, black swan, scaup and hopefully Carolina wood duck, mute swan and NZ Shoveller for the display.

We will certainly keep you informed of progress and plan a field day at Lindale to show you the work when finished. We are hoping the work will be completed before the end of April.

EKETAHUNA CHAPTER

During the Wellington Anniversary Weekend, the Chapter held a "walk-about" looking at local wetlands. Members met at Jim Campbell's woolshed at Miki Miki and were treated to a conducted tour of his many ponds. First to be seen were the mute swans and then we arrived at his largest pond to

view 350 Paradise Shelducks. These birds were using the pond for moulting before pairing up and dispersing around the district. We saw numerous Canada Goose families, products of DU's project to introduce these magnificent birds from the South Island.

We met up with Herb and Rita Moulding from DU Canada and after lunch the group visited Francis Murray-Aynsley's pond. This is a fairly new pond with a large area of water and it is hoped that this and other local projects will help to keep ducks in the district.

The group moved on to the National Wildlife Centre at Mount Bruce for a look around and enjoyed a Barbeque there in the evening. Herb Moulding entertained with slides showing the work of DU Canada. Norman Marsh and Dave and Ann Johnstone came all the way from Taupo to join us in this enjoyable evening.

On Sunday a simulated field shoot was held at the Eketahuna Gun Club where top scorers were E. Campbell 44/60 G. Girvan 39/60, J. Willems 39/60.

The Eketahuna Chapter Simulated Field Championships will be held at the Eketahuna Gun Club on 29th March, starting at 11 a.m. BYO lunch. Hope to see plenty of DU shooters there.

— Glenys Hansen

Endangered birds to be bred in new facility MASTERTON INTERMEDIATE PUPILS TO STUDY WATERFOWL

By Gavin Tanguay

The following article and photographs were published in the Wairarapa Times-Age of December 12, 1986, and are reproduced here with their kind permission.

Masterton Intermediate school students will benefit from a waterfowl breeding centre at the school to be opened on Monday.

The centre, built by periodic detention workers, will be used for housing and breeding endangered birds.

School science teacher, Mr Lawson Campbell, says it will be of great value to children, and will be used in conjunction with the school's trout hatchery as part of the science syllabus.

It is important that children have practical experience as part of their lesson, not just the orthodox pencil, paper and blackboard, he says.

Mr Campbell, the main organiser and designer of the centre, says it will be used for conservation work, to assist Ducks Unlimited in breeding teal and for the education of young children.

The centre will be opened next Monday. Guest speakers will be Ian Bryant of Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre; John McDonald, a past principal of the school; and Jim Campbell, the national president of Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc.

The centre will be open to the general public, and the school is hoping to attract many visitors to the breeding ground.

The building of the project began in May and the majority of it was completed during the August school holidays with pupils involved in the planning out of the grounds.

"All we are waiting for now is wire netting so as the birds can be let out of the breeding cages, but can't escape," Mr Campbell said.

A small enclosed lake has been dammed off in front of the cages so birds can be let out from time to time mainly for display purposes.

The whole centre is enclosed with an electric fence, powered by a water wheel. The wheel is situated between two small lakes in front of the breeding cages.

An information kiosk has been built alongside the breeding ground and contains photos and facts about all the birds in the centre, and information about the trout hatchery and the school in general.

The main birds to be housed in the centre will be brown teal. They are endangered birds, with only about 1500 alive in the world. Two pairs and one pair of grey teal and some Californian quail are at the centre, Mr Campbell says.

The Californian quails arrived at Labour Weekend and have already laid over 30 eggs. The normal amount for one bird is 10-14 and the children are studying the progress day by day.

Twelve eggs have been put in an incubator. "To work out which is the oldest egg is good practical experience for the children," he said.

A team of pupils will be responsible for feeding the birds.



The designer of the project, science teacher Lawson Campbell, enters the cage to have a closer look at the ducks.



The new water fowl breeding centre at Masterton Intermediate. The centre has three separate breeding cages and two small lakes where the birds can be let out from time to time, mainly for display purposes.

GREAT BARRIER ISLAND BROWN TEAL RESEARCH

By Grant Dumbell

This is the fifth six monthly report on the Great Barrier Island Brown Teal research, and covers the winter and spring period from May until November 1986. This period has included intensive fieldwork to cover the full breeding season and now over two years data are in hand. The main emphasis during the winter was to obtain as many observations as possible on the breeding behaviour of the birds and to compare the success of this

Activity	1985	1986
Hours Search Time (1hr)	25.0	13.5
Total Captures	26.0	18.0
Captures Per Hour	1.0	1.3
Total Nests Found	17.0	5.0
Hours Per Nest	1.5	2.7
Captures Per Nest	1.5	3.6

Table 1: A comparison of the 1985 and 1986 nest searching results

breeding season with the results from last year.

In agreement with the results from 1985, the numbers of birds using roost sites declined from the late summer peak and at the same time the number of birds holding pair bonds increased. However, this year the decline was not as rapid and in July, when nest searching began, it was clear that the breeding season wasn't as advanced as at the same time last year. Again this year Tony Roxburgh and Nell, a curly coat retriever, provided nest search expertise. Although Nell was working more efficiently this year, in that she captured more birds for every hour spent searching (Table 1), she only detected one third as many nests, and each nest took nearly twice as long to find. These data were interpreted to mean that the breeding season was later this year than last year and this conclusion is supported by two further observations:

- the number of birds using roosts did not reach its minimum value until early September, some six weeks later than last year
- while all (100%) of last years nests were complete clutches when found, only four (80%) of the five were complete when found at the same time this year.

However, the nest searching did provide an adequate sample of nests to compare with last year and the average clutch size (Table 2) was the same in both years. Although it appears that the hatching success was much lower this year it is mainly due to the small sample size, and may also be partially due

Nest Statistic	1985	1986	1985/86
Average Clutch Size	5.42	5.40	5.42
Average Hatch Per Clutch	3.50	3.25	3.45
Hatching Success	65%	54%	63%

Table 2: A comparison of the 1985 and 1986 nest results

to nest searching early in the season. This bias is well known in nesting studies.

While females were incubating, observations on the behaviour of the male were made. Throughout the incubation period the male remains close to the nest site and actively defends the area around it. He also communicates with his mate, joins her immediately she leaves the eggs and will stay with her until she returns to the nest. Females don't appear to have a typical pattern of incubation but rather will come off the nest for short periods throughout the day or night. The incubation period was 30 days, from when the last egg had been laid, for the one incomplete clutch, and this is the upper limit of incubation periods quoted in the literature.

Once the nests had hatched, effort was concentrated on following the development of broods. Broods that are accompanied by one parent only are constantly smaller than broods that are accompanied by both parents, but, by the end of the brood-rearing phase 50% of broods were with one parent, whereas, only 27% were with one parent immediately after hatching. This probably accounts for the marked increase in males at the roost towards the end of winter.

By late October the birds had begun their annual wing moult, and the numbers on the roosts were markedly increasing. Over the summer the banding programme will continue and the roost habitat will be investigated more thoroughly. Hopefully two Ducks Unlimited directors will also visit the study area to see the work first hand.

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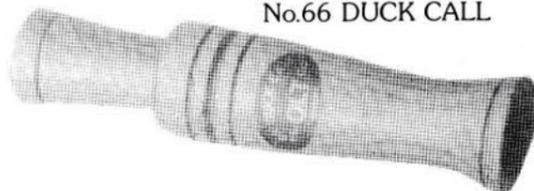
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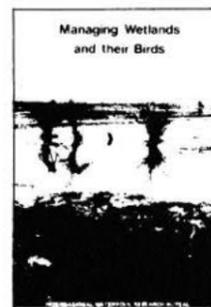


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