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A peaceful lagoon at Te Pohue, on the Napier-Taupo Road - Photo: Alan Feilding



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FLIGHT

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DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC. in association with Ducks Unlimited Canada, USA, Australia and Mexico



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DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC.,

PO BOX 9795 AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

OUR MISSION

We are a voluntary membership based society dedicated to the conservation of New Zealand wetlands through:

- wetland restoration and development
- breeding programmes for threatened waterfowl
- advocacy and education of wetland values

By these means we seek to ensure the ethical and sustainable use of wetland resources by all existing and future users.

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COVER PHOTO: Task Force Green leading hand, Andrew Morton tests the stability of a floating island on Hokowhitu Lagoon, Palmerston North.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

David Smith, President

With the completion of our second decade it is appropriate that we look at the path DU is to take over the next ten years. As a result the Board has adopted a ten year plan. Its goals will, of course, be reviewed periodically but the important figures to understand are our intention to increase membership during that period to 7,000 and to complete at least 165 wetland projects. A copy of the ten year plan is available to any members who would like to write in for it.

Our membership recruitment is entirely dependent on the members of DU telling New Zealand who and what we are. Hence we need to increase our profile. We have started to address this in a practical way by the manufacture of large banners for use at shows and displays. They have already been used at Masterton, Dargaville and Hamilton over the summer. We have prepared advertisements to appear in magazines throughout New Zealand. The higher our profile the more members, more

projects and more likely success of our strategic objectives. I have written personally to all past members asking them to support us again and to date that letter has been well received.

Our chapters are of course crucial for our development. The Board at its last meeting decided to hold a chapter development workshop in April. All chapters, will through their chairman, be requested to attend. That is not to exclude those who are not members of a local chapter. Anyone who is interested in becoming involved in a chapter or starting a chapter or being involved with DU in its work is welcome to attend. Please feel free to contact the Executive Director on (09) 625 9002 for more information.

In the meantime our work carries on. We have commenced work on Home Lagoon again after many years to improve

the water supply to the project ensuring a larger area of land is constantly under water. In February two further projects in the Manawatu were approved. Last weekend some of the directors investigated sites in the Hawkes Bay with a view to a project taking place there in the near future. Many of these projects can take place without a huge amount of input of money but more by coordination and collaboration by our members, the applicants and, in some cases, their machinery. We prefer that projects be done by way of collaboration as opposed to a straight cheque writing exercise as the rewards are far greater for all concerned on that basis.

As far as I am concerned Autumn is the best season of the year. I hope you will enjoy it as much as I will. Autumn also means that our Annual Conference plans are well advanced. This year we will meet in Hamilton and I look forward to meeting everybody who is able to attend our Annual Conference.



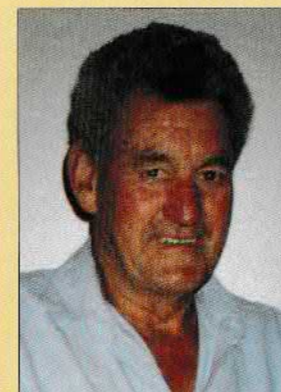
GRAHAM GURR

Graham has been a member of Ducks Unlimited for at least five years, a director for three. He is currently the Secretary, co-ordinates the National Raffle and Art and also represents Ducks Unlimited on the Game Bird Habitat Trust Board.

He belongs to a number of hunting organisations and has travelled to Australia, Africa and New Caledonia in search of the elusive trophy, and is a keen fisherman.

Graham is the Managing Director of Halcyon Press, New Zealand's only dedicated outdoor pursuits publishing house (a wee plug there Graham!) and is part owner of "The Swamp", a 125 acre 'swamp'.

Graham, when he's not hunting, and his partner Christine have two sons and live in Takapuna, Auckland.



DAVID JOHNSTON

David has been a member of Ducks Unlimited for ten years, a director for seven years and is the Royal Swan (Mute Swan) Project Supervisor.

David and his wife Ann, own Broadlands, a dairy farm situated at Reporoa, north of Taupo. His interest in wetlands and waterfowl began in Waikato where he spent much of his youth and saw the flood plains of the Piako, Waitoa and Waihou rivers drained and lost to all waterfowl. In conjunction with Norman Marsh (DUNZ co-patron) 35 ha of wetland has been created or enhanced on part of the farm. This area is known as the Broadlands Wild Fowl Trust and some success has been had in rearing rare and endangered waterfowl including two blue ducklings. The area is also protected with a QEII Open Space Covenant.

A BOX OF FLUFFY DUCKS?!

**Jeff Ainge, Senior Conservation Officer (Education and Interpretation)
Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre**

This past year has been very busy for staff (and birds) at the Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre. Developments in the visitor centre, and installation of new displays and audiovisual programme, give our 40,000+ visitors access to a lot of up to date information. Interactive displays offer people the chance to try their hand at some animal husbandry tasks, or to see tools of the trade in action. Many of the displays are focused at school children. Over 85 school groups visited the centre in 1994 (almost 4000 children) and we expect 1995 to be busier. Education is an important part of conservation work at the centre.

Exploring science concepts and learning about human involvement in the environment are key elements in the new

school science curriculum. Class visits here help teachers and children see science and conservation management at work.

The realignment of State Highway 2 caused some disruptions to traffic, however we were able to get some of the noisy work rescheduled to offer nesting birds solace.

And what of the breeding birds? ... Of most interest to Flight readers is surely the Campbell Island teal. Further to Jeannie Preddey's article in Issue 82 (January 1995) the reported courtship behaviour between the second ranked pair did not produce a nest. However, after the ducklings were separated from their parents at five weeks of age, the parents nested again! This time a clutch of four eggs, two of which were infertile. The proud parents of November

became even prouder in January when two ducklings emerged bringing the total captive population to 13. The first ducklings have been sexed - one male and one female.

Staying with water birds, the New Zealand shore plover have had another good breeding season. These small waders were once found throughout the New Zealand mainland coastline. Rats, cats and other predators have reduced the species to a single population of approximately 150 on Rangatira (South East) Island in the Chatham group.

A trial release of eight captive bred birds onto Motuara Island in the Hauraki Gulf took place in August 1994. Harriers and moreporks killed at least five of the birds



Kokako female and juveniles in nest

within 10 days. We were not able to easily locate the remaining three after 18 days due to the short battery life of the tiny transmitters fitted to them. The released birds did adjust well to feeding in the open, foraging in the seaweed and using the rock platforms and sandy beaches for roosting. This gives us hope that carefully chosen predator free island sites will support resident populations of shore plover.

Incidentally, two of the released birds have been spotted individually by keen observers on the mainland. One has been seen at Omaha Spit (east of Auckland) and a male was living with Godwits in the Kaipara Harbour.

Of the eight pairs of shore plover held at the National Wildlife Centre this season, six pairs laid a total of 25 fertile eggs. All but one clutch of eggs were incubated by the parent bird. Nineteen chicks have survived to fledge - a 75% successful hatch rate.

The forest bird priority species have also had a good season. The North Island kokako clutch of three eggs hatched and became instant TV stars. A video camera set up close to the nest relayed nest action to a television located a short distance from the aviary. This "nest-cam" technology became a focal point for visitors and staff offering unique views of three growing chicks. Sadly one of the birds died at three weeks of age. The remaining two have fledged and look set to join the small introduced population on Kapiti Island.

Stitchbirds are "honey eaters" similar in size to bellbirds. There is one main population left - about 1200 birds on Little Barrier Island. We were into the breeding season with high hopes of the seven adults held here (3 male, 4 female) but illness, death and an unwillingness to accept mates soon reduced the viable breeders to one male and two females. The two females

were new to captivity having been transferred from Little Barrier Island in August (at the same time as other stitchbirds were transferred from there to Mokoia Island in Lake Rotorua to set up a new population). These two settled in so well that both quickly mated with the solo male in their enclosure. This menage produced three clutches of eggs; two of the clutches hatching and surviving. The six offspring will be very carefully monitored as juvenile mortality has been high in the past.

The North Island saddleback have had a mixed season. Both pairs laid infertile clutches early in the season. The older pair did have success with their second nest and their chick fledged in mid January. The captive bred birds initially laid three clutches of infertile eggs but now appear to have formed a strong pair bond. Hopes are high

that their current clutch (of three eggs) will be fertile. Any offspring from this pair will be a first for captive bred saddleback.

And what of the coming year ... Campbell Island teal studies continue with the expectation that other pairings of the captive birds will breed. New Zealand shore plover will be released onto a predator free island as part of the long term plan to establish new populations. Re-pairings of the adult stitchbirds and monitoring of the Kapiti Island kokako population will be priorities. We anticipate a growing number of visitors enjoying the display area and looking through our window into conservation in action. Visitors service areas are constantly being developed and improved; we hope you can call in when you are next in the neighbourhood.

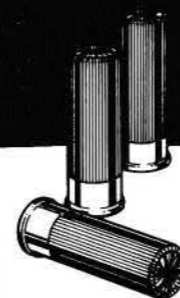


A visitor to Mt Bruce trying her hand at the feeding station

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SPREADING THE DU MESSAGE

Over the past two or three years, members have heard a lot about the restructuring of DU. With the passing of 1994, this reorganisation phase has largely drawn to a close and from now on, members will hear more about the growth of DU. The expansion of all aspects of our organisation is the only way we can strive to address our stated mission.

Growth is already being seen as we benefit from operating efficiencies. We had an increase in membership last year, our Annual Conference fundraising increased sharply, while our operating costs fell significantly. These benefits have led to at least six new wetland projects, and more are on the way.

Last year DU developed and approved a ten year plan, and members will be able to read the details of this in coming issues of "Flight". The thrust of this is to greatly

By Grant Dumbell Executive Director

expand our wetland conservation efforts while continuing with our traditional involvement with threatened waterfowl. To achieve this we have to concentrate on expanding our membership to allow the growth of our fundraising efforts.

Increasing membership relies on a higher profile and this has received much of our attention recently. With the help of DowElanco we have introduced a full colour membership information pamphlet and a gift membership programme. Both of these initiatives put membership recruitment tools into the hands of our members, who have responded by spreading the Ducks Unlimited message.

We have to do more, so we have had

our display units at three shows this summer. To attract greater attention we now have large flags and display banners in operation. We have also designed advertisements in magazines and are planning to erect roadside signs as well. The redesign of "Flight" has upgraded our main communication vehicle and has led to the updating of our booklet "An introduction to Ducks Unlimited" and the completion of a promotional flyer "The Ducks Unlimited Story".

Following a letter from the President, many of our past members have renewed their support of DU and it is through our existing members that we will be able to gain the new members we need to achieve our goals. If any members are able to help us to spread the Ducks Unlimited message please contact us so we can give you the tools to do the job.

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A TROUT CASTING AND DUCK BLASTING TEAM TOURNAMENT
OHAI CHANNEL LODGE
MOUREA ROTORUA
JUNE 10 1995



WE'RE BRINGING THE CONFERENCE WEEKENDS TO YOU!

Over the next five years, the Annual Conference is to be held at different locations around the North Island. By doing this we hope to encourage members to attend who may have been put off attending because of the distance. Hamilton is the venue for 1995 so we would like to see members from Auckland attend. As this is a wee way from lower North Islanders to travel, although naturally we would love to see you there, the venue for 1996 is Masterton, Auckland in 1997, Hawkes Bay in 1998, the 25th conference will be in Wellington in 1999, and in 2000 the venue will be somewhere in the central North Island.

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DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC. Annual Conference 14 - 16 July 1995 at the Glenview Motor Hotel, Hamilton

Conference Registration

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Address

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ISLANDS IN THE SUN

For some time the Manawatu Chapter have kicked around ideas for building floating islands in Hokowhitu (or Centennial) Lagoon in Palmerston North. The objective being to improve the very poor breeding seasons brought about by disturbance from dogs, cats and, of course, people as the lagoon is surrounded by residential properties on one side and farms and trees on the other. The lagoon is an oxbow situated adjacent to the Manawatu River, and its area is approximately 8.5ha (to find it, turn off Fitzherbert Av just before the bridge on the way out to Massey University, on to Centennial Drive and follow the road round to your right).

The biggest hurdle to overcome was finance, so an approach was made to the Palmerston North City Council.

By Ken Cook

Subsequently, when submissions were invited for the Council's 1994 Annual Plan, we submitted costings and details for ten floating islands to be anchored at designated spots in the lagoon. We also proposed to build a blue duck and brown teal aviary adjacent to the existing aviaries in the Esplanade Gardens which is about two kilometres from the lagoon site. Total costings for all projects amounted to \$26,000 including signage to be erected indicating Ducks Unlimited's involvement.

Eventually, I was requested to present the proposal to the whole city council, and, after an interesting address and many questions from Councillors, the scheme was

endorsed and finance approved.

The nuts and bolts of the agreement was that labour would be supplied by the Manawatu Resource Centre comprising long term unemployed people (Task Force Green) and materials would be supplied by Palmerston North City Council, and full time supervision by myself.

FLOATING ISLAND CONSTRUCTION

This island construction commenced immediately early September 1994 so the breeding season was unfortunately well underway. The timber frame of the two metre square frames was H3 tanalised pine 100mm x 50mm nailed together with heavy duty galvanised nails. Both sides are lined with heavy cyclone netting after



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Bottom view of island frame

inserting polystyrene (as shown in the above photograph). Six 20 litre containers are then wired securely to the underside (See photo below).

The polystyrene is covered with polypropylene sacking (ie grain or fertiliser sacks) which retains the soil while allowing

some moisture to pass through. With the buoyancy provided by the polystyrene, it was found that we could load 16 to 20 knotted rushes, a few clumps of grass, four bags of topsoil and a little straw spread over the area on each island. The plants are planted in about 100 - 150 mm of soil and soon entwined the wire netting thus

securing them in place.

We found by adjusting the loading to the point where the top of the framing was at water level allowed best results for survival of the grass and rushes. The islands have been located about three to five metres from the edge of the lagoon to be away from the canoe course (the lagoon is used regularly by the local canoe club) and are wired to four warratahs driven into the lagoon bed.

HOME SWEET HOME

The first island position was used within a few days by a mallard hen with 14 young. The hen would go to the island towards dusk every day and call the brood to what she saw as a safe refuge.

To date this season we have had two islands used successfully by coots, two by black swan (one still sitting). All of the islands are frequently used by various waterfowl as resting areas.

We have the first Canada goose gosling bred on the Hokowhitu Lagoon. Six years ago DU released six Canadas and this is the first young. However we can't be certain whether this one was island bred or not.

We are now confident of the success of the islands, and with the wildfowl familiarity of these semi stable islands we look forward to next breeding season.



The island building team

TIDSFORDRIV? YOU MUST BE KIDDING

There were nineteen of them... grey geese grazing on the green grass gazing ... I remember that tongue-twister from way, way back. Actually these were Canadas, and once they'd grazed their fill they took off, heading north over the low hills.

"Probably heading back to report," said Wilks. I didn't need to ask who they might report to. The connected, island-encrusted ponds we were doing our own bit of gazing at, had been designed by Jim Campbell, whose Canada-haven lay just a few miles north at the foot of the Tararua Range.

Do a bit of a write-up for Flight, Wilks had said, bribing me with a carton full of impeccable tomatoes. So I'd come with him, armed with cheap note pad and give-away biro, up this back road heading west from Masterton, to a lovely area of rolling low hills in a district known as Matahiwi.

The waters were calm and whitefaced

By David Yerex

heron stalked stiff-legged along the far shore. In the distance the Tararua Range and its satellite foothills were innumerable shades of pale blue. It was very peaceful. Three scaup flotilla'd out from behind one of the islands, and a car came scrunching down the long driveway behind us.

"I thought it might help," said Glenys Hansen, "if I made a few notes". I sat on the grass and read them. Talk about feeling surplus to requirements. Here was the full story already written. And photographs? The Editor should skip the wordage and reproduce the pix. They were magnificent. However, I don't get paid in duck pellets for cribbing others' efforts.

Ted and Glenys Hansen farm at "Tidsfordriv", east of Eketahuna. That's Danish for something like "Waste of time" or

"A hobby to fill in time", and is therefore entirely unsuitable, since neither Ted nor Glenys has ever wasted, or filled in for that matter, time.

The farm was bought by Ted's grandfather back in 1930, but it was his son, Ted's father, who took over the Eketahuna property and developed it. Ted took over from him but the farm had one major failing as far as Ted and Glenys were concerned; there was no scope for developing a wetland.

Having been members of DU since the early 80s, Ted and Glenys developed an ambition to pursue their interest in wetlands and waterfowl on a smaller, semi-retirement property. Right through the late 80s and early 90s they scoured the Wairarapa, but during those years many others were taking up such properties to also develop wetlands.

The 64 acres they eventually decided on

THE EVOLUTION OF A POND ...



Firstly, decide where you want it ...



Then dig a hole ...

at Matahiwi was perfect, but needed a lot of work, so they reckoned on ten years to develop it before building a house and moving off the farm to the new property.

There was a stream running through the area and, more importantly perhaps, several

springs along the foot of the low hill bordering the eastern side. Ted had useful farm machinery to bring to the task of developing the wetland, but the major work was undertaken by Eketahuna contractor Ross Rowden, a friend of long-

standing and generous commitment.

While Ted and Ross did the landscaping under the direction of "wetland impresario" Jim Campbell, Glenys turned her attention to planting. Flo Wright of Carterton, Glenys's sister, added her weight along with



Now fill it with water

husband John, to the task of planting trees and creating gardens. Most of the trees, both native and exotic, have been raised by Glenys and Flo in the shade house back on the farm.

Glenys extends her enthusiasm not merely to waterfowl, but to all birds, which is a love that has grown since she began working at the National Wildlife Centre at Mt Bruce. Most of the trees, therefore, have been selected for the feed they will provide for birds, including oaks and crab apples for the waterfowl. The exception may be the row of golden elms, merely striplings as yet, which line the driveway and bring close to reality a dream which Glenys has long held...an avenue of golden elms.

There are, at present, two ponds completed. Paradise shelduck, grey teal,

mallards, Canada geese, black swan, scaup, dabchick, grey duck and little black shag, have already visited or taken up residence. A start has been made on stage three of the wetland development which will, in due course, create about five acres of open water studded with islands.

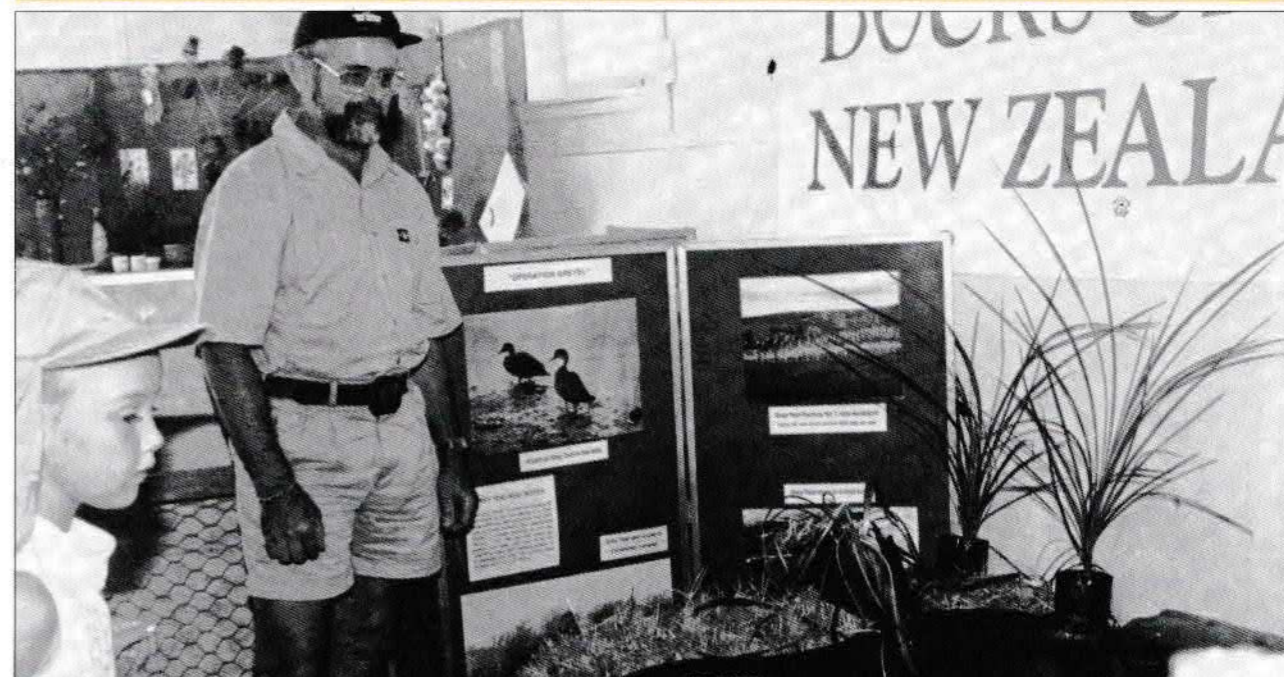
The final step will be the construction of the Hansen's new home. At present all that exists is a flat site at the north end of the skein of ponds. From the verandah there one can imagine the couple, and their friends, looking out over the lovely green hollow with its profusion of trees and the long line of ponds, with their resident waterfowl gleaming in the glorious colours of sun setting over the Tararua Range.

A dream, to be sure, created out of hard work over many years. When it will become

a reality, Glenys is not willing to say. A serious accident on the farm has slowed Ted down a little and the new home at Matahiwi looks more and more inviting as time goes by. He'll still be farming; the area has good rainfall and a reputation for early fat lambs. For her part Glenys is likely to find herself just as busy as ever, not only with continual development of garden areas, but also with the farm hosting which she has participated in for several years now.

No doubt she'll still find time as well for DU's affairs. One wonders why they plan to call the new property Tidsfordriv. Perhaps because you get the impression that Ted and Glenys regard hard work which they enjoy doing, not work at all.

EKETAHUNA CHAPTER



Howard Egan overlooks the pond at the Masterton A & P Show. Photo courtesy of Wairarapa Times-Age.

To lift the organisation's profile, and as a membership endeavour, Eketahuna Chapter held a display at the Masterton A & P Show during the weekend of 18 and 19 February.

DU is well set up now for activities of this type with top quality display boards describing our projects and our new DU banners - very eye catching.

A good sized pond was set up in the display and half a dozen live ducks (including grey duck, grey teal and scaup) proved to be good crowd pullers - everybody likes ducks. Contact was made

with a good number of potential members from the lower North Island region.

The display was built and manned by Howard Egan, Alan Jury and Melvin Pike.

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MANAWATU CHAPTER

MODIFICATION TO MAKERUA SWAMP

Thanks to Mother Nature, the stopbank at the Makerua Swamp has been improved - a flood in November last year eroded the stopbank on one side of the swamp. A new super-duper 'floodgate' with a flap

valve has been built to help retain the new stopbank and this has raised the overall water level over half a metre. Since then the breeding season has been and gone and large numbers of birds have been seen using the swamp during the breeding season, including Shoveler.

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE

STORIES

We want your contributions. "Flight" magazine is always keen to publish articles about wetlands and wildfowl, technical articles, experiences and projects that our members have been involved in or stories about your place or someone else's that you would like to share.

Please send neatly handwritten or typed stories to Ducks Unlimited, P O Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland. Please enclose photographs to support your story too. These will be returned if requested.

PROFILES

"Flight" would also like to know more about you, our member. You will have seen profiles of our board members in the last few

issues. Well now that we are almost through the rank and file, "Flight" wants to meet more members. Don't be shy, send a head and shoulders picture of yourself and jot down some information such as where you come from, your occupation, your interests etc and send to Ducks Unlimited, P O Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland.

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