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Chris & Carolyn Hooson's wetland 'Waiwhio' South Wairarapa.

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Flight

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1996

ISSUE 86



DUCKS UNLIMITED NEW ZEALAND INC.

For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

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INSIGHT

David Smith
President

As President, one of the routine tasks is writing an article for "Flight". This is my final report as my term ends on 31 March 1996. I have written about the events and issues we have faced, but would like to finish with some of the highlights, from my point of view.

Wetlands are the focus of DU, but people are its heart and soul and I am encouraged by those who willingly give of themselves for what we stand for. It is with regret we had to recently accept the resignation of Jim Campbell from the Board. Jim's service over many years is legend and I'm sure everyone who knows Jim will join with me in wishing him all the best for his return to full-time farming.

In my first column I wrote I wanted to end my term able to point to our progress with wetland conservation. Over the years, but more so over the last two, I've been closely involved with both the Sinclair and Pearce Wetlands and I take pride that we have completed our financial commitments to the Sinclair Wetlands and have freeholded and permanently protected the Pearce Wetlands. These are both huge projects for us and to see them advance to this stage is very satisfying. I now look forward to seeing DU undertake a greater range of smaller projects as these will give us a greater community profile.

Our 20th Anniversary was a major highlight and gave me the opportunity to meet many members. The representation that came from DU in North America and Australia reinforced our role in the international effort to conserve wetlands and gave us the courage to set some bold objectives for our third decade. I am quite certain that at our 30th Anniversary there will be a tick beside most of them.

By the time you receive this issue of "Flight" the festive season will be over. I hope you all enjoyed a Merry Christmas and are looking forward to 1996.

In closing I would like to thank each and every member for your valuable support. I also wish to give special thanks to our supporters and sponsors. With so much still to be done I wish my successor, Alan Wilks, all the best for a profitable and enjoyable two years at the helm.



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OUR MISSION

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- wetland restoration and development
- conservation 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.

Cover Photo: Blue Duck breeding pair and captive bred duckling at Russell Langdon's, Ashburton.

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MICHELLE MACKAY

Michelle has been a member of Ducks Unlimited for eight years and has been a member of the Auckland Chapter committee for four years. She is currently the Chapter Chairperson.

Her job of nine years as a Laboratory Analyst testing the chemical grade of steel at BHP New Zealand Steel gives Michelle something to do between weekends. She, and her husband Grant, own 14 acres near Waiuku south of Auckland, have three Labradors, two cats, 13 beef heifers and

an assorted array of waterfowl and wildlife on their four ponds. Michelle also keeps the books for Grant's building business.

In her spare time (!), Michelle enjoys hand crafts such as making padded photo albums and doing cross stitch.



CHRIS BINDON

Chris has been a member of DU for the past seven years and a member of the Auckland Chapter Committee for almost

all of that time. Born and raised in Warkworth, Chris now owns a 17 acre lifestyle block there, while living and working in Auckland. If your ute has a Fleetline canopy on it chances are Chris had a hand in its manufacture as he is now a woodworker for Fibre Reinforced Plastics Ltd.

Since leaving school, the outdoors have been dominant in Chris's life. He has worked in dairy farming, poultry farming, forestry and market gardening. His weekends are now spent planting food plants for birds on his block where he has also created a small wetland. In between, Chris is a member of no fewer than eight conservation organisations including the newly established Motuora Restoration Society which aims to replant and rehabilitate Motuora Island.

Chris lists his interests as bird watching, bush walking, gardening, animal pest control, music, reading and European and American motorcycles.

OBITUARY

Kris Fielding

On 17 July, Kris Fielding collapsed and died suddenly at the Manawatu Science Centre and Museum. The only son of Alan Fielding, it was Kris who originally 'found' DU for his father who has been active on the Manawatu Chapter for the past several years.

As an amateur ornithologist, Kris also joined O.S.N.Z. but continued to participate in DU activities, particularly planting programmes. With a tertiary qualification in Horticulture, Kris's knowledge was used on a number of DU projects at Makerua, 'Canada Flats', the

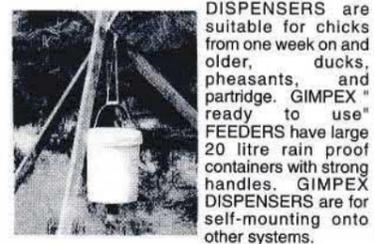
Manawatu 'Big Tree Digs' and especially at 'Nine Swans'.

A memorial Trust Fund has been set up between the Audrey Green Disability Information Centre and the PNCC Civil Defence organisation to complete the voluntary project Kris had begun for the computerisation of data for the disabled in the event of a major disaster. A pond, associated planting and an aviary will also be built for Kris at 'Nine Swans'. Kris loved the property and he worked hard on it with a passion that only DU people would understand. He was feeding waterfowl there the day before he passed into paradise.

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IN FLIGHT LOGOS

In this issue of "Flight" we introduce two new logos to identify articles of interest. Our "Conservation Project" logo will appear on articles which record our conservation work, be it a wetland restoration or creation, or a development with one of our waterfowl projects. These articles will help members stay up to date with the direct contribution we are making to the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl.



Our "Field file" logo will appear on articles which form part of our thrust to develop a greater strength with wetland education and advocacy. These will include tips and techniques for managing ponds and wetlands and give background on the plants and animals which make wetlands their home. We start by reproducing the very popular article on Grey Teal nest boxes which we regularly receive requests for.

DU ON THE GARDEN SHOW

During October, DU received a huge publicity boost when the Broadlands Wildfowl Trust of Dave Johnston and Norman Marsh featured on the Garden Show on TV One. This extended coverage was seen by almost 600,000 people and resulted in a huge number of enquiries about Ducks Unlimited and our conservation work. It was then followed up with an article in the NZ Women's Weekly which also gave our work coverage. We are indebted to Dave for his excellent portrayal of DU to probably the biggest audience we have ever had.



David Smith presents Steven Rice of Canadian Airlines with a Foundation Sponsor Award. Photo Grant Dumbell.

PRESENTATION TO CANADIAN AIRLINES

Each year for the past six years Canadian Airlines have sponsored air freight from Winnipeg to Auckland for the fundraising auction items which we source from DU Canada. This contribution is a huge boost to our fundraising at our Annual Conference and the various Chapter Dinners and we estimate Canadian Airlines sponsorship has now well and truly topped the \$10,000 mark.

During November, David Smith presented the New Zealand General Manager of Canadian Airlines, Steven Rice, with a Foundation Sponsor award in recognition of their outstanding contribution to Ducks Unlimited. This award included a hand carved Scaup, a Foundation Sponsor lapel pin and a certificate to recognise Canadian Airlines generous support. Ducks Unlimited is especially appreciative of Canadian Airlines support over such a long period of time in such a vital area of our operation.

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

DU was proud to be able to host Glyn Young from Gerald Durrell's Jersey Zoo in the Channel Islands during November. Glyn is involved with the conservation of the Madagascan Teal, a little known but very rare species which has similarities with both the Brown Teal and Grey Teal. DU was able to show Glyn our work with

Grey Teal nest boxes, Brown Teal captive management, courtesy of Shirley Jenkins, Hamilton Zoo and Otorohanga Kiwi House, and our successful introduction of Brown Teal to Tiritiri Matangi Island.

In January we will also host a visit from Andy Engilis from DU Inc. Andy is based in Sacramento from where he coordinates much of DU Inc's work in California and Hawaii. He will be in NZ as a guest of DOC to assist with an audit of the Black Stilt Recovery Programme.

1995 BROWN TEAL RELEASES

During October and November a further four releases of Brown Teal were undertaken. The first of these was at an Auckland Regional Park near Warkworth where four pairs were released carrying radio transmitters to allow their daily movements to be monitored.

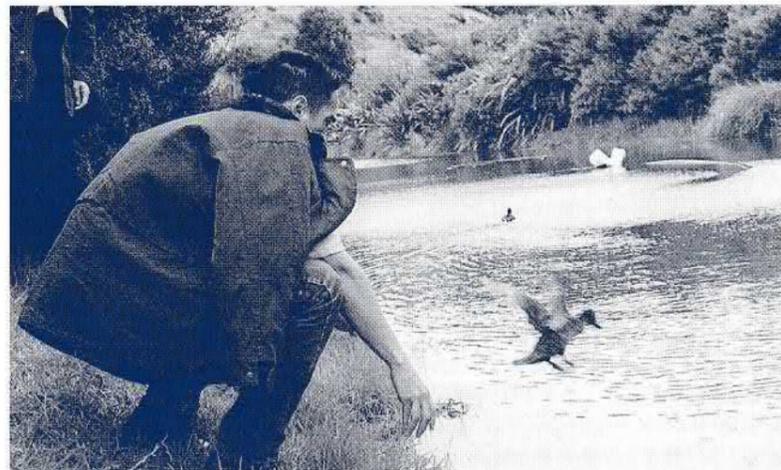
Alan Wilks transported a further 33 birds to Whangarei and passed them over to DOC for release at three sites in the north, one of which included the Whangaruru Farm Park where DOC recently undertook some ponding to create Brown Teal habitat. Other release sites included suitable areas where local caretakers are able to provide supplementary food for the birds following their release. We are waiting to hear the final outcome of these releases.

While in Northland, Alan attended the annual meeting of the Brown Teal Recovery Group, along with Grant Dumbell. This meeting finally agreed on the format of the Brown Teal Recovery Plan which we expect to be approved early next year. This will bring to a close a debate that has lasted for six years!

CANADA GEESE BANDING

Ducks Unlimited, in conjunction with the Taranaki Fish & Game Council, have banded Canada Geese in the Ohakune area for the past several years. Fish & Game have now decided they no longer require the information from the banding programme so will not band geese this summer.

Instead the birds will be counted and as many of their strongholds are known it will only take a few people to ensure reasonable accuracy. At this stage it is not known when these counts will occur. For further information call Greg Lydon at the Taranaki Fish & Game Council on 06-3454908.



Brown Teal being released at Tawheranui Regional Park near Warkworth. Photo Grant Dumbell.

SOUTH WAIRARAPA WETLAND FOR SALE

This 45 acre property has a natural, secluded, eight acre oxbow lagoon which holds water year round, along with stands of native bush, and is protected with a QEII National Trust Covenant. The 2000 sq ft colonial style house is situated on 2.5 acres, subdivided into five paddocks, and was built in the 1920's. It has a native

timber interior (except kitchen and bathroom), three large bedrooms and a study. It was recently repiled and features a solid fuel water heating system with radiator internal heating and an open fire. The property would be ideal for syndicate and is priced at \$185,000. Call Chris or Carolyn Hooson on 06-3078177.



The Booth

WETLAND

By Graeme Marshall



Before work commenced. Photo Graeme Marshall.

In the November/December issue of 'Rod & Rifle' magazine I reported on the birth of a sizable pond on the property of Peter and Margaret Booth in the beautiful Wangapeka Valley, about an hour's drive from Nelson. With the help of a \$500 grant from DU, earmarked specifically for digger hire time, we were able to rip out a great mass of ancient 'old man' willows choking a very promising looking watercourse. It was ironic that the watercourse had, at some time in the distant past, been created by draining a

swamp! Now we are simply trying to reverse the process.

Had we known just how much work was required we might have quietly put the scheme on the back-burner. Not really. Peter and Margaret's son Bill, who farms in partnership with them, has put a huge amount of time and effort into the project.

CLEARING THE DEBRIS

The first job was to clear the willow debris from the bog left after the digger had

departed. This proved to be no mean feat in a typically wet Wangapeka winter and spring. The farm tractors proved invaluable, and the pile of broken willows grew alarmingly. A combined Booth/Marshall family working bee one bright Sunday saw the smaller stuff removed before it had time to sprout and repeat the willow clogging process all over again.

Another Sunday and we had the posts in for the perimeter fence and some of the wires laid out and stapled on. The

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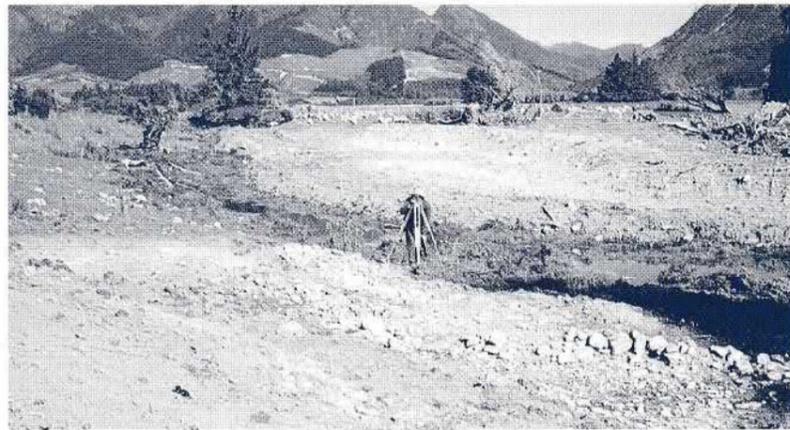
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expertise of Kiwi cockies staggers me when it comes to erecting fences. There are two kinds of fences it seems to me, the kind I make, which never strain up right and with gates that sag, and the proper kind, done by the professionals, which are genuine works of art.

DAM CONSTRUCTION

With the aid of a builders' level we quickly calculated the optimum height for the dam. As anticipated, it didn't need to be too high at all, but as we were determined that it would withstand the test of time and everything that nature could throw at it, we spent a great deal of effort



Bill Booth taking levels for the dam wall. Photo Graeme Marshall.

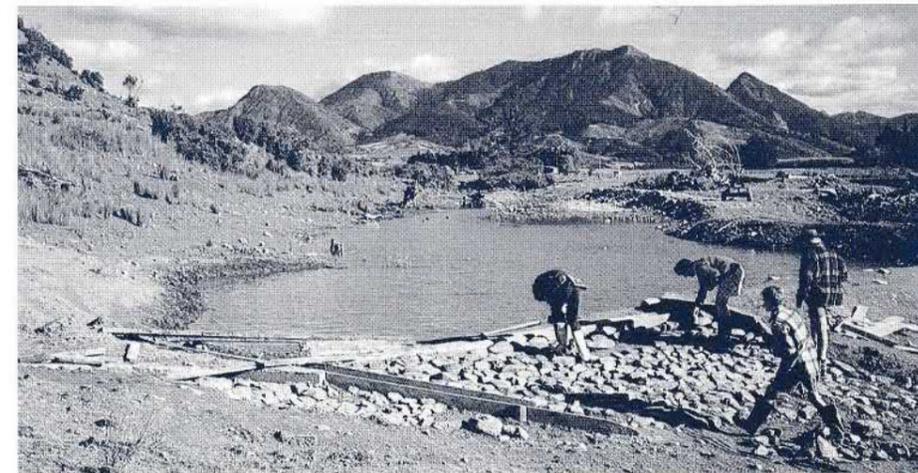
THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING

The big test, of course, was filling the dam with water. Bill fixed the drain plug in place and the pond began to fill. With a substantial volume of water flowing in year round, the filling took only a week or so.

It was thrilling to observe the avian visitors to the newly created body of water. One of the first was a majestic royal spoonbill, the first I had ever seen in the district. White faced herons weren't far behind, along with mallard, grey and paradise duck. The local pukeko

dozens of flaxes we planted last winter, they have mostly recovered.

As I write, we are planning to plant out a few dozen oaks and wild cherries before the planting season is over. While our wetland is tiny by comparison with many in the Wairarapa or Waikanae areas we are proud of our efforts. We have a long, narrow pond some 150 metres long that is starting to look as if it belongs. Now we are eying up the rest of the water course with a view to creating a string of ponds providing substantial habitat enhancement in the valley. Now if we



Many hands make light work on the dam as the pond begins to fill. Photo Graeme Marshall.

population certainly seemed to approve.

It's now three years since that great digger attacked the willows. The fencing is complete and the islands are being colonised by the rushes, flaxes and sedges. Even though the sheep got in accidentally and scooped some of the

can just afford a few more hours with that digger....

Thanks DU for giving us the initial funds and encouragement. Thanks too to Ken Cook who advised and enthused us all with his enthusiasm for wetlands.



THE SAD, SAD SAGA OF THE SEX-STARVED GOOSE

By David Yerex

A brief research programme carried out on Jim Campbell's property three years ago has revealed the Canada geese are not as adept at the side-step as Jonah Lomu.

The trials were carried out by a team of athletic DU members and resulted in a score-line of DU 9 : Canadas 0.

Two of the Canadas captured that day were subsequently set to work decorating the newly created wetland at the Carterton Golf Club, where they joined a pair of black swans, several grey teal, a pair of Australian coot and three scaup.

In this menage there was peace and tranquillity, but harmony was disrupted when a pair of mute swans was introduced. The following spring, one of the Canadas took to following the mutes everywhere they went, stationing itself firmly between the male and female.

The significance of this action was difficult to determine since the sex, if any, of the Canada was unknown. And it was not clear whether it was keeping the male mute away from the female for its own amorous purposes, or had desires on the male himself.

The result, however, was that the mutes did not breed that year, and the blame was laid squarely on the bent Canada. A fence was erected and the black swans and Canadas set behind it, allowing the mutes to set up home without disturbance. But the following spring the Canada made forced exit from incarceration and again took up sentry duty between the two baffled mutes.

Recaptured several times and returned to its corral, the Canada continued to break out and take up with the mutes, which

seemed quite incapable of handling the situation. It was time for drastic action.

In late winter Neil Richardson arrived with the YMCA Conservation Corps, a team of no-nonsense youngsters dedicated to ensuring that Nature's rules were observed.

The mutes and the Canada were in a pond with a large island in the centre and a bridge over the channel on one side. Herded into position the mutes were allowed to slip under the bridge while several hands reached for the Canada following them. It, however, took the overland route and escaped. Once more the trio were herded into position.

Instructions flew in all directions. "How deep is the water over there?" someone asked. Two of the team promptly fell in to provide evidence of its depth. In the ensuing chaos the Canada made good its escape a second time. It was time for strategy.

The team spaced themselves along the island and the bank and lobbed stones, sticks and ribald suggestions. The mutes, tiring of the entertainment, eventually left the water and ambled off down the fairway.

"Don't rush them."
"Don't let them get away."
"Close up behind them."
"Keep back."
"Do these things bite?"

It was all over in a few seconds. A Conservation Corp five-eighth made a flying tackle and the bemused Canada was hauled away.

It was not the end of the story. While peace and normality returned to the golf club's waterfowl reserve, the sex-starved Canada was released among a mob of his own kind some miles away on a DU member's property. And according to reports filtering back, the badly bent bird took one look at the company of its own kind and headed across country and found....two mute swans.

The solution appeared to lie with a Browning under and over, but latest report is that the mutes solved the problem

themselves. The male lured the Canada into the water and there grabbed it by the back of the neck and forced its head under water. Several repeat treatments were, we understand, sufficient to convince the Canada the mute swans were not, after all, suitable mating partners.

The performance put up by this capricious Canada created great interest, and considerable concern among the Carterton golfers. But there have been other occasions when the waterfowl have made their presence felt. Apart, that is, from the odd blot on a green.

A foursome recently playing up the fairway of the 18th saw ahead of them, on the edge of a deep drain that traversed the fairway, a mallard with a clutch of 10, only a few days old. What to do?

A soaring five wood shot would clear the family, even a really robust 6 iron. Confidence however, was not high. One of the four ambled down the side of the fairway with the object of herding the ducklings to safety, while his partner went back to the four following to explain the hold up.

The mallard mother, seeing the golfer approach, dived into the deep drain followed by her entire brood. Consternation. Clubs and trolleys and scorecards were forgotten. The golfer crept to the end of the drain and looked along it, only to see ducklings clambering up the precipitous sides and falling back into the water.

Off to find the greenkeeper. They needed, they said, a board about four feet long with piece tacked across so ducklings could climb out of the drain. No problem; drop everything. Netting on the board would be better though.

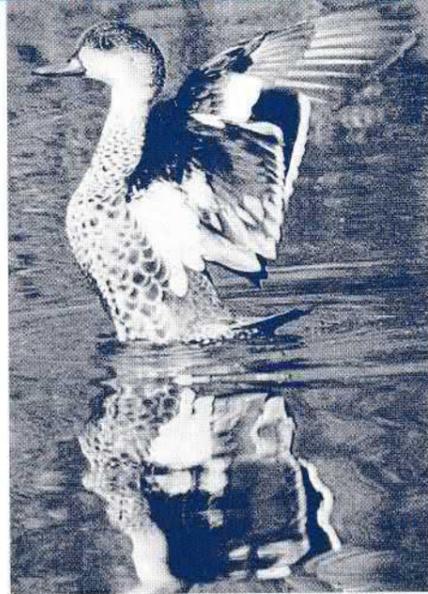
The board had been selected and a search begun for suitable netting, when one of the foursome left behind to keep other golfers away, arrived with the news that all 10 ducklings were out of the drain and marching resolutely behind mum straight down the 18th fairway.

We don't cry 'fore' at Carterton any more. Just 'duck'.



Building And Erecting Nest Boxes For Grey Teal

By Grant Dumbell



INTRODUCTION

Since 1974, Ducks Unlimited has advocated nest boxes as a way to increase the number of Grey Teal. DU alone has erected over 900 nest boxes in different parts of the country, while members and supporters have erected hundreds more on private wetlands.

In Australia, Grey Teal usually nest in holes, so there is a common belief that their numbers in New Zealand have been limited by a shortage of nest sites. Therefore, the provision of artificial nest sites, in the form of nest boxes, is an effective management technique to increase both the number and range of Grey Teal.

Probably the most successful example of the use of nest boxes is with Carolina Wood Duck in North America. Nest boxes are also used successfully for the management of other species in both North America and Europe.

The attached plans cover the construction, mounting and servicing of two different designs of Grey Teal nest box. The front entry nest box is most widely used, however, the alternative side entry nest box may be more weather and predator proof. Its main disadvantages are the extra material and cost to build it, and its more complicated fabrication.

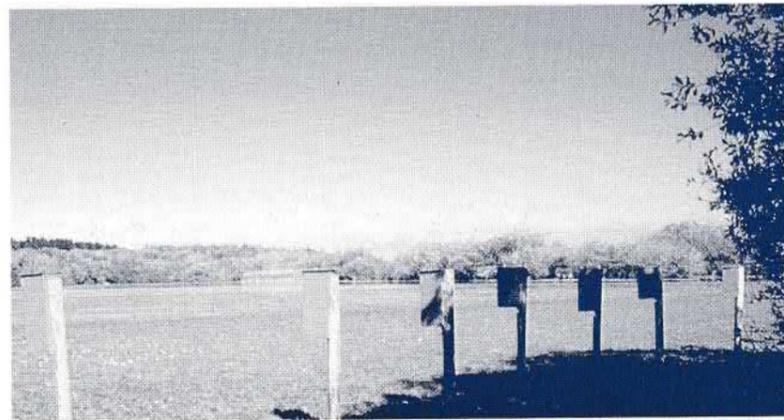
The plans for both designs are based on the use of 2400mm x 1200mm sheets of 9mm plywood which is suitably treated for exterior use. For each design there is a cutting plan, to ensure the correct number of components are cut from each sheet, while minimising waste, and an assembly diagram, to illustrate correct overlaps. Thicker plywood may be used for a longer life, however, this will entail some dimensional alterations.

NEST BOX CONSTRUCTION

The dimensions on the plans are in millimetres, and are finished sizes. Therefore, most of the waste shown around the edges of the sheets will be consumed by the thickness of the saw blade multiplied by the number of cuts made. One sheet of plywood will yield enough pieces to build six front entry nest boxes, or four side entry nest boxes.

Galvanised flat head nails, or non-corroding screws, should be used to assemble the nest boxes, and for added strength, lengths of 20mm square timber can be used in the corners. This will provide something more substantial for the nails or screws to hold in to, and will avoid the problem of the ply splitting when nailing or screwing into an edge.

To minimise the amount of reinforcing timber needed, it should be used along the



A successful line of nest boxes located over water and in the lee of sheltering vegetation.

top and bottom edges of the two sides on the front entry nest box, while on the side entry nest box it should be placed vertically along both edges of the front and back. In both cases allowances will have to be made for the recessed bottom to fit.

The entry hole of the front entry nest box should be between 90mm and 95mm in diameter as anything larger could allow other ducks to gain entry and evict the Grey Teal. The centre of the hole should be on the centreline of the front, about 90mm from the top edge. A strip of chicken wire netting must also be fixed on the inside of the front, from the bottom edge of the entry hole to the bottom of the nest box. This gives the ducklings a ladder to climb out of the nest box after they have hatched and once their mother decides to lead them away.

The side entry nest box is not as deep as the front entry model so it is easier for the ducklings to escape. However, because plywood has a smooth finish, a

strip of wire netting should be fixed on the inside of these as well.

The assembly diagrams show the nest boxes with their lids removed. The dashed detail shows the suggested lid overlap of the nest box's four sides, to help

keep it weatherproof. When fitting the lid, which has to be removable, short lengths of 20mm square timber can be fixed to its underside to fit tightly inside the four vertical sides of the box. The lid can then be weighted down with something heavy, or secured with screws.

The bottoms of both nest box designs are fully recessed and holes should be drilled through them to allow for the drainage of any water which does manage to get into the nest box. If required, the side entry nest box can be assembled with either a left or right entry by simply rotating the back and swapping the two sides.

PLACING THE NEST BOXES

Nest boxes should be securely mounted on a pole, with the bottom about one metre above maximum water level. This allows sufficient clearance for the pond's water level to rise during floods and avoids the boxes becoming flooded. Poles should be driven into the bottom of the pond, in open water, clear of overhanging vegetation as floating weed mats and overhanging branches can allow predators to gain access to the nest boxes.

It is beneficial to locate nest boxes in the lee of tall vegetation to provide them with shelter and some shade. Nest boxes can be erected in lines, or small groups, however, they should not be closer than about four or five metres as neighbouring birds can provide sufficient disturbance to lead to nest desertion. Two nest boxes cannot be erected back to back on the same pole.

The nest boxes can be mounted by permanently nailing or screwing them to the pole. However, there are advantages in having the boxes mounted to allow them to be easily removed for servicing. Half round poles are cheaper and have a flat surface on which the nest box can be mounted.

MOUNTING THE NEST BOXES

Mounts can be made from 50 x 50mm tanalised timber, such as fence battens. For front entry nest boxes a 230mm length of timber, drilled with two vertical holes to accept locating pins, should be fastened within 10mm of the top edge of the back of the nest box. A second 230mm length

of timber should be fastened to the pole with its top edge 50mm below the top of the post. This should also be drilled with two vertical holes corresponding to those on the nest box mount, however, they should remain blind. A short block should also be fastened further down the post with its top edge 340mm below the top of the post.

The nest box can then be mounted by resting it on the top post mounting and dropping long nails through the holes as locating pins. The nest box can then be secured by nailing or screwing through the extended back into the lower block attached to the post.



A healthy clutch of eggs in a nest box. Note the straw on the bottom of the box and the wire netting "ladder" on the right.

The side entry nest box can be mounted in a similar way, however, the mounts should be 260mm long and only extend across the back of the main nest box, not the side entry. A different bottom mount will also be needed. Instead of a block, a further 260mm mount should be fastened to the next box close to the bottom edge of the back. A second mount should also be fitted to the post in such a position that the top mount on the nest box fits over the top mount on the post while the bottom mount on the nest box fits tightly under the bottom mount on the post. Both the top and bottom mounts can then be secured using locating pins, as on the front entry nest box, to allow the nest box to be easily removed from its post.

ANNUAL SERVICING

Grey Teal begin searching for nest sites in May and June. Eggs can be laid from July onwards, so long as water conditions are suitable, and nesting may continue

into December, or even as late as January or February in exceptional years. However, because ducks do not carry nesting material to their nest site, the nest boxes must be furnished with suitable material, such as dry straw, before the nesting season.

Once Grey Teal have finished nesting Starlings and Mynas may take the nest boxes over. These birds do carry nesting material so it is common to find a nest box completely filled with dry grass and twigs once they have finished with it.

Nest boxes will need to be cleaned out and provisioned with fresh nest material

each year. This is best done about May as the Starlings and Mynas should have finished nesting yet the Grey Teal should not have started. An annual clean out will also reduce the risk of disease and parasite infestation for the Grey Teal.

The bottom of each nest box should be covered with 50 - 75mm of nesting material, enough for the female Grey Teal to fashion it into a nest bowl without the eggs having to sit on the wooden bottom. The use of hay should be avoided as this can be very dusty and may cause irritation to the female while she is incubating the eggs. A shallow layer of peat can also be placed in the nest box, underneath the layer of straw. This absorbs water and can help maintain a high level of humidity within the nest box, a factor that can assist with the successful hatching of the eggs.

SUMMARY

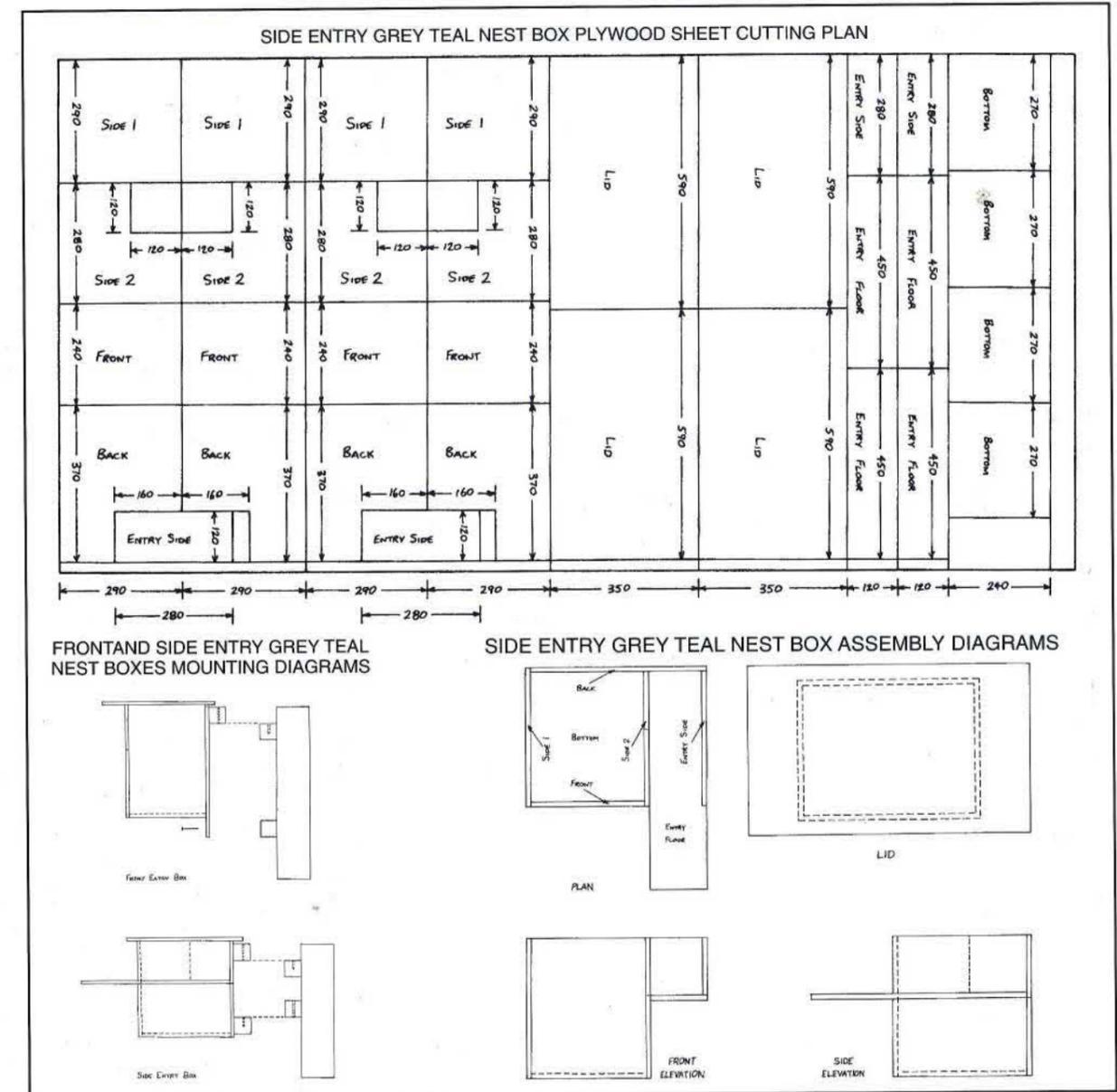
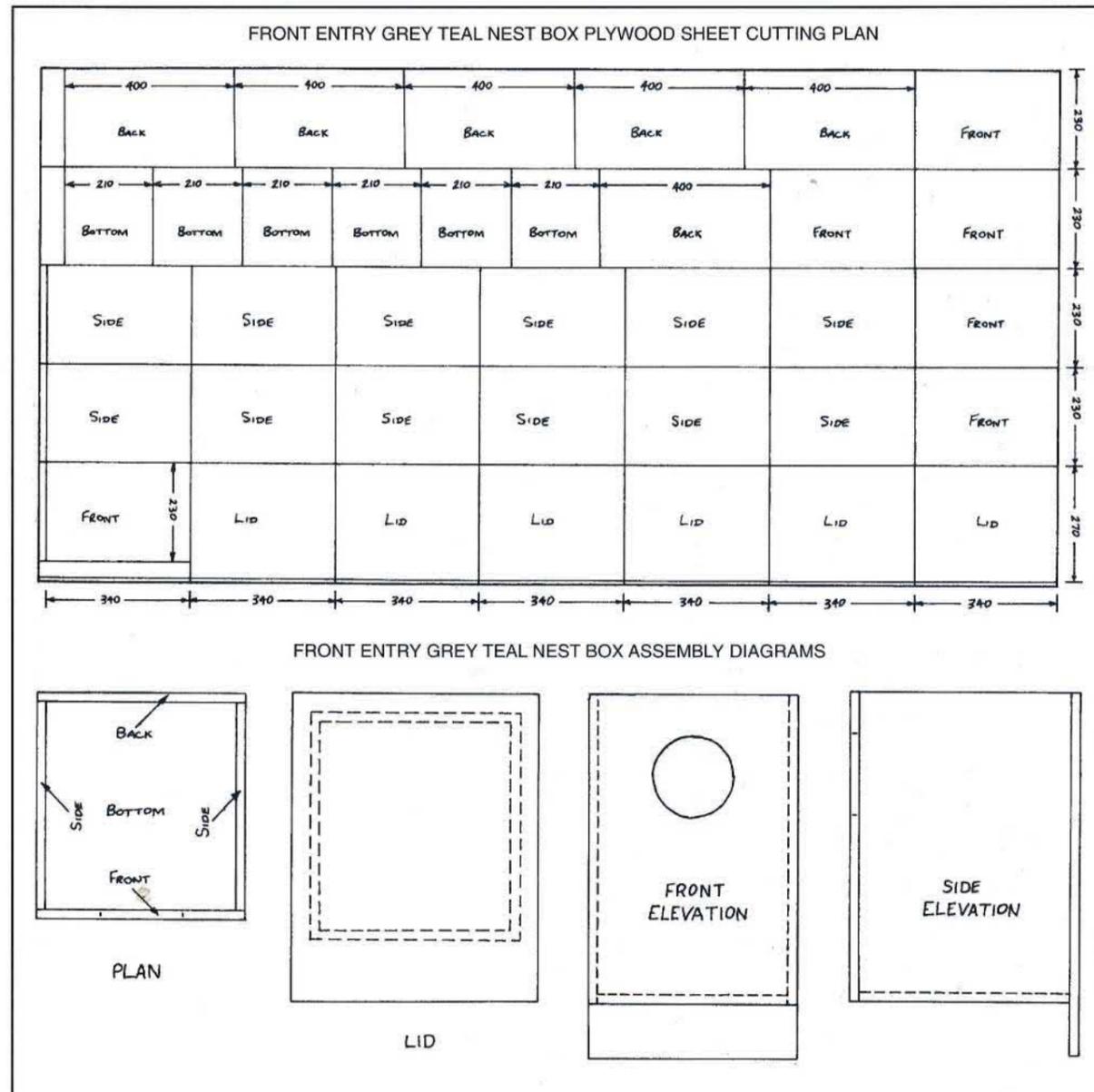
If all goes well, the nest boxes will start



Placing fresh nesting material into a fixed front entry nest box in May. Photo Grant Dumbell.

being used by Grey Teal as soon as they have been erected. However, if pinioned birds are present they will need to be given access to the nest boxes via a ramp. This can be made from a piece of 100 x 25mm timber covered with wire netting, or having shallow cross cuts in it, to allow the birds to grip as they climb up to the entrance. The ramp should extend down to water level, but remember this can also give predators entry to the nest box.

Should you need any further information please write to:
Ducks Unlimited New Zealand Inc,
P.O. Box 9795, Newmarket, Auckland.



Flight needs your input

Flight is the main channel of communication between DU and its members and we would like to hear more about what people are up to. You might be surprised how many people could benefit from the experiences you are able to share through the magazine.

Articles and DU News

Are you able to pen a short article about wetlands, wildfowl, techniques or tips? Other readers are keen to hear about your experiences and projects, or about the work that you know somebody else is carrying out. You might even get an offer of help!

Our People

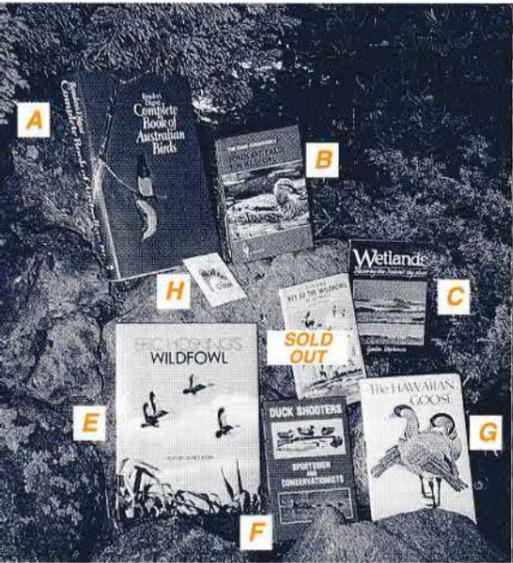
We would also like to know more about our members. Send us a photo and some background of yourself such as where you live, what you do and what your interests are.

If you are able to make a contribution to the magazine, no matter how brief, send your neatly handwritten or typed material, along with any photos, to Carolyn Hooson, Flight Magazine, P.O. Box 9795, Newmarket Auckland.

Thanks for your help,
Carolyn.



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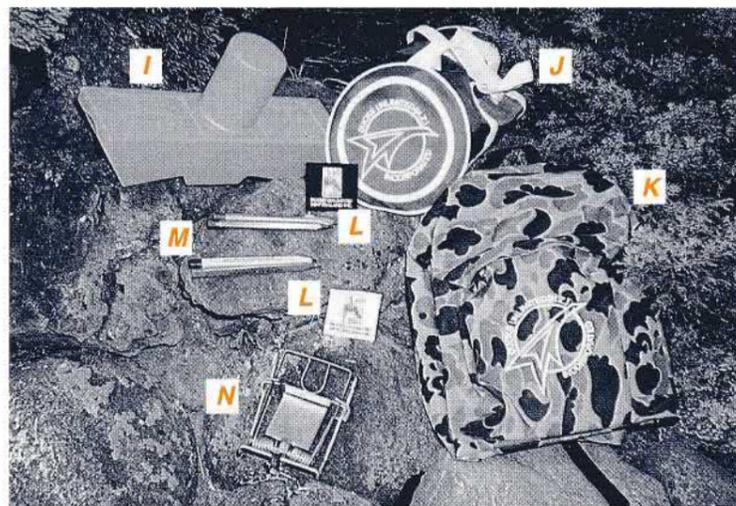
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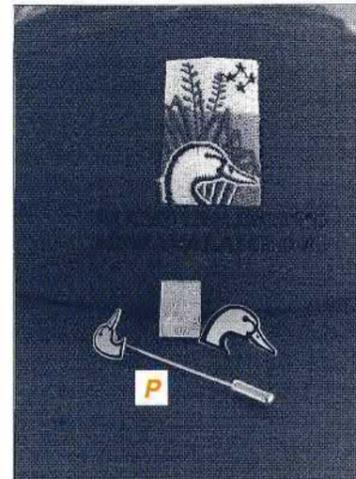
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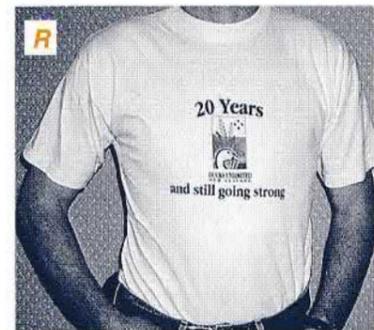
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