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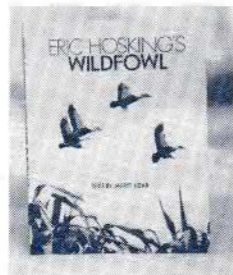
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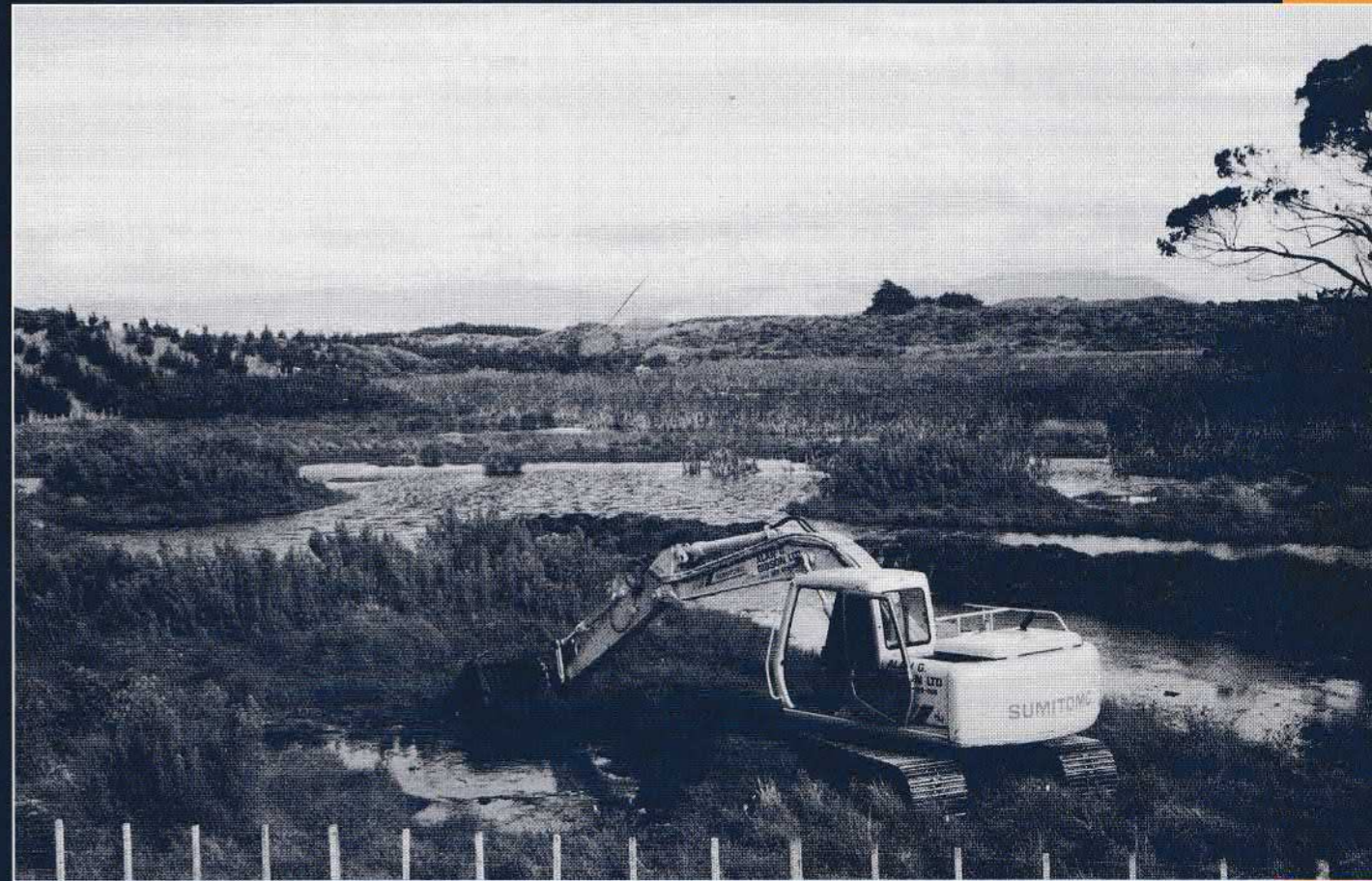
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Flight



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For Wetlands and Waterfowl.

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INSIGHT

Alan Wilks
President

I have just re-read my last "Insight" and decided I painted a rather gloomy picture of our immediate future. When I was writing it we had just terminated our only employee's contract because we couldn't afford him, we were faced with a severance payment (which Grant fortunately agreed to spread over the financial year), there appeared to be little prospect of selling the Pearce Wetlands, and we knew it would be difficult to cope with the day-to-day running of Ducks Unlimited.

I can now say that the situation not only looks brighter, it is positively blooming.

One of our directors now clears the DU box and sorts the mail, and we are fortunate that Craig Worth volunteered to take over membership and become Treasurer. Glenys Hansen resigned her position for personal reasons after nine dedicated years as Treasurer and we're grateful that she will remain a director and be responsible for Chapter and AGM auction items.

You will have noticed Craig's new method of invoicing membership renewals which has proved to be very effective and has generally been well received by members, many of whom have upgraded to a sponsorship. Thank you for your faith in us which I assure you is not misplaced.

"Flight" production seemed like being a major problem as our Executive Director had been the editor, sourced content and supervised the printing. The Board sought quotes from various free-lance journalist-editors and from printers and contracted two Wairarapa businesses as our new production team (see the April issue of "Flight").

It was fortunate that the local quotes were the lowest because I had offered to source copy for the new editor and, all inclusive, we're saving over \$500 an issue. I'm sure you'll agree that the new team has maintained the standards and quality of "Flight", but I do need the help of members in all regions of New Zealand in providing subject matter and photographs for future issues.

With the imminent sale of the Pearce Wetlands (see my Pearce Wetlands Annual Report on page 11) we will retire debt which will reduce our interest payments and balance the books this financial year. I am confident that we will be seeking applications for wetland development funding in early 1998, which is what Ducks Unlimited is all about!



OUR MISSION

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

- 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: Another DU wetland project. William Abel.

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OBITUARIES

ARNE NIELSON

A respected life member was lost to Ducks Unlimited with the recent passing of Arne Nielson. A true man of the land, Arne arrived in New Zealand at the age of twelve from Denmark. He was always so aware of the natural beauty of the New Zealand countryside. He enjoyed working the land and being part of an environment he treasured. His favourite pastime was observing the wild deer on his Mount Bruce property, and capturing close images with his camera.

In his youth, Arne was a wrestling champion, a keen clay target shooter in later years, and still actively pursuing deer in his eighty-second year. Arne, like so many hunters, enjoyed the companionship and environment of waterfowl hunting and created several habitat areas on his property.

Ducks Unlimited extends sincere condolences to Arne's family.



JOHN GILL

With deep regret Ducks Unlimited records the passing of honorary vet, John Gill.

John had green fingers in the world of waterfowl breeding. This was aptly rewarded with some thirty ducklings in one season for Operation Pateke. He was recipient for several years of Breeder of the Year for Pateke and was naturally well known for his expertise in the field of breeding endangered species.

The Department of Conservation entrusted to John some of the initial imports of the Campbell Island teal, recognising his ability and dedication.

John's freely given advice and warm friendly presence at the Ducks Unlimited AGMs will be sadly missed. Our deepest sympathy is extended to John's family from his many friends in Ducks Unlimited.



FRED BAILEY

Fred, a Life Member, joined Ducks Unlimited in its early days during the seventies and served as a director in the eighties. He and his wife, Sue, have three daughters and live in Auckland.

At the age of 22, he established Fred Bailey Engineering, specialising in precision rubber-roller production. Having gained a skipper's ticket in 1985, he launched the luxury 45-foot game-fishing and charter vessel Broadbill in 1987. Three years later, Fred began manufacturing and marketing Broadbill custom gamefishing lures for local and export sales.

Some years ago, Fred instigated the purchase of a private wetland by a group of ten DU members named "The Home of the Duck". His interests include game and trout fishing, duck and deer hunting, scuba diving, skiing, and building and racing classic cars. He assures us Broadbill will be available for the Americas Cup!

What does he do in his spare time?



GUY SANDALL

Guy has been a member for seven years and has always had a strong interest in waterfowl and wetlands. He comes from a farming background, raised in the Awatere Valley in Marlborough on the family property. After completing his education, he worked as a shepherd/musterer on South Island stations.

Married to Denise, they have two sons and a daughter. They bought their first farm on the Wairarapa coast which they developed extensively before moving to another property closer to town.

Guy now operates a custom kill and processing plant just out of Greytown which he calls "Clayton Station". ("It's what you have when you're not having a station.") He has developed a substantial wetland on the property and enjoys his involvement with waterfowl.

BOOK REVIEW by *Graham Gurr*

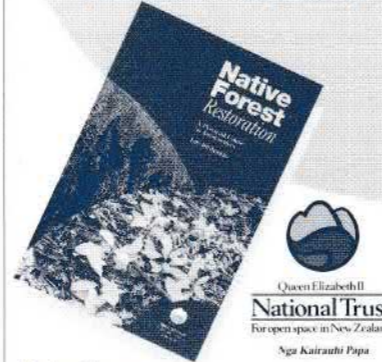
Frank Todd. *Natural History of the Waterfowl*. Published in association with Ducks Unlimited (USA), 1996. Hardback, 325 x 265 mm, 500 pages full colour. \$195.00 inc. gst and postage.

This book not only looks good, it is good. In a large format and printed on art paper, its 500 pages contain over 750 colour photographs of waterfowl, illustrating the 160 members of the duck, goose and swan families from around the world it covers. All aspects of biology, feeding habits, courtship and migration are covered. Coloured maps show the distribution of each species and large photographs make identification a breeze.

Published in association with Ducks Unlimited (USA), they claim it is the most comprehensive reference on waterfowl. I suspect they may be right. Possibly the only book that comes close is the "Waterfowl of the World" by Jean Delacour, illustrated by Peter Scott. (DU used to sell the coloured key identification guide from the book.) That took three volumes. Forty years later, *Natural History of the Waterfowl* provides an accessible and readable successor.

When the sample copy we had was passed around at the last Board meeting, every member ordered a copy before we even knew what the price was going to be. Fortunately, we have been able to secure a limited number of copies from DU which we will be selling for \$195.00 per copy, including gst and postage within New Zealand.

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WE MADE AN "L" OF A MISTAKE

Several members have drawn attention to an alleged misspelling of "shoveler" in the Donor Decoy article on page 6 of the April issue of Flight. We spelt the name with two l's.

The New Zealand Fish and Game Council, Australian and New Zealand "Reader's Digest Book of Birds", Peter Scott's "Morning Flight", and the two American authorities, Frank Todd ("Waterfowl of the World") and Richard Le Master ("Gallery of Ducks") all spell the name "shoveler". But - the Chambers and Oxford dictionaries tell us "shoveller - type of duck".

If you shovel, you are a shoveller; if you dial or trial, you are a dialler or trialler.

Do we have to accept that the duck is named not because it shovels with its shovel-shaped beak but because of its beak it's a shovel(l)er?

DUCKED AND DUFFED

We hear that on opening morning of duck shooting a woman was teeing off on a golf course and there were some duck shooters on an adjacent property.

Just as she addressed her ball, some ducks came in and the ensuing volley made her completely duff her shot.

We understand that her partner spent the rest of the round eying the sky when the woman was about to play her ball - and calling "ducks!" instead of "fore!"

DU TO HOST AMERICAN COUPLE

Last year we were approached by the Washington Seattle chapter of DU Inc. with their idea of swapping a hunting, shooting, fishing trip to be auctioned as a fund raiser. We agreed we could host such a trip and provide accommodation and recreational opportunities... and promptly forgot about it.

Imagine our embarrassment when the American chapter chairman rang mid-May to say they'd sold the trip and the couple were coming to New Zealand in June! We were so overcome that we forgot to ask exactly what they had sold as a package.

The wife of the couple rang next day and we meekly asked, "What have you bought, what do you expect us to provide?"

"Thirty nights' first-class accommodation and all travel to and from and within New Zealand paid for," she glibly replied.

After a short pause, she added: "I'm kidding", at which stage we started to breathe again.

It turned out that we were to provide eight nights' accommodation with members, plus archery hunting if possible, and game bird shooting and fishing. Within a week we had faxed them with an itinerary to cover a trip from Auckland to Ohakune with all the sporting activities covered. We expected the couple in the last week of June, and we'll publish a report on their trip in the next issue of Flight.

Remember - we'll be auctioning a similar trip to the States at the AGM dinner this month.

WILDFOWL EXCHANGE

Mike Connole, Greytown, has five pairs of mandarin ducks for sale. He is also interested in acquiring Australian shelduck and a pair of Cape Barren geese. Contact: (06)304 9754.

GREY TEAL NEST BOX MAINTENANCE DAY

Tony and Liz Flexman's estate, The Windermere Game Conservancy, is at Mangatawhiri near Pokeno, south of Auckland. The farm includes one part of the upper section of the Whangamarino (Kopuku) swamp. The grey teal nest boxes on the wetland were given their annual clean-out and repair on April 19 this year.

There are around one hundred nest boxes, most of which are over twenty years old. A number of them are now reaching the end of their life, so a few more boxes and posts will be needed from time to time to make up for those which the wetland has claimed. Ducks Unlimited Auckland committee member Chris Bindon, along with four other people from West Auckland Forest & Bird and Auckland Branch of the Ornithological Society were those who serviced the nest boxes for the soon-approaching grey teal breeding season.

Despite heavy rain setting in through the early afternoon, and a water level so low that the volunteers were rowing as much mud as water, the group still had a really enjoyable and productive day.

We trust that this grey teal production factory in the heart of grey teal country continues to flourish and churn out vast numbers of this delightful little protected native bird, Tete.



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Annual 1997 Conference Programme

This year's conference at the Waipuna International Hotel and Conference Centre from July 11-13 offers a fine venue and a programme of field trips, seminars and social events members will find extremely worthwhile.

Registrations at the conference venue open at the conference registration desk from 5.00pm on Friday July 11. From 6.00pm there will be a happy hour in the Meeting Room.

The conference proper begins at 9.30 am on Saturday July 12 with the AGM and formal business. The remainder of the

day includes a wetlands tour, or time for shopping in downtown Auckland. The tour will take in the Whangamarino Weir, with John Dyer giving a talk on the importance of Wetland and Weir.

Lunch (sausages in bread and steak sandwiches) will be at Rongopai Wines, with an opportunity to taste and buy wines before moving on to view Lake Whangape, and a visit to the Churchill Wetland. John Lindeman will talk on the aims and work to date on the wetland. The tour will return to Auckland around 3.30pm.

The highlights of Saturday evening include the dinner which will be followed by the auction. A feature of the auction this year will be an eight-night, hosted and guided hunting-fishing-shooting trip in the United States.

The programme for Sunday July 13 begins at 10.00am with a session on predator control. Speakers include Phil Thomson of PhilProof Feeders and Traps, and there'll be discussion of predator controls and a demonstration of tunnels and bait stations. From 11.00am there will be a seminar on Wetland Planting.

1997 ANNUAL CONFERENCE 11 - 13 July 1997	Waipuna International Hotel and Conference Centre Auckland Make a note of the dates NOW Enjoy a visit to the Queen City Full weekend programme Conference Registration \$50 per person Accommodation \$145 per room per night	Send your registration to David Smith 1997 Conference Convener P.O. Box 9795 Newmarket Auckland
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Annual Reports 96-97

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Alan Wilks

My first year as President has probably been the most difficult in Ducks Unlimited New Zealand's twenty-three year history! I don't necessarily take the blame for this but it has been my final responsibility.

The Board has been aware of my concern and worry and it has been of great solace to me that the directors have continually reminded me that it was a shared problem. Ever since I was elected to the Board in 1990, the issue of money - or rather the lack of it - has been aired at

every meeting. Year after year we have just managed to scrape through and balance the books. That is, until the last couple of years when we have been in deficit.

We were forced to borrow to meet our obligations to the Sinclair Wetlands, and then borrow more to stay afloat. Obviously this situation could not continue. Our past president, David Smith, had already signalled to you our intention to dispose of the Pearce Wetlands to free up some capital.

When I took over as President I had two objectives: to sell the Pearce Wetlands to

reduce debt servicing and to recruit more members to increase revenue. We put the wetland out for tender. Although there was considerable interest, we did not receive an acceptable offer. We also produced an attractive new pamphlet designed specifically for a rural mail-drop and aimed at enlisting new members. Ten thousand were distributed last November and the result was negligible.

We were getting the message from Chapters that they had severe reservations about fundraising for conservation when the money was being spent on debt servicing and administration.

By early New Year it was obvious something drastic had to be done. We had exhausted our credit and would not survive to the end of the financial year. In February the Board took the only course of action left to it and terminated our Executive Director's contract.

It would be logical to ask why we didn't do this sooner. There are two basic reasons. First, with the recent development of DU New Zealand we didn't think we could successfully run it as a completely voluntary organisation. Second, although we were aware that our membership was too small to support a full-time employee, we were confident of attracting new members.

This confidence was misplaced. For the past few years we have been unable to spend very much on wetland development and, consequently, public awareness and membership support has been based on the ownership of the Pearce and Sinclair wetlands and our blue duck, brown teal and mute swan programmes. I believe this was the reason our membership drive failed.

So that was the situation at the end of the last financial year. A gloomy picture, but I feel the circumstances need to be presented to you, our membership, without whom we would not have lasted this long.

THE CURRENT YEAR

There's the old saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going", and that's exactly what we have done. Your Board of Directors has individually picked up the administration of DU with every director taking on areas of responsibility that were previously handled by our Executive Director.

You will appreciate that it is not a simple matter to lose a sole full-time employee and still keep an organisation such as ours running smoothly but I am confident we can achieve it and wish to acknowledge the time, effort and dedication of your directors who totally support my confidence.

We were delighted to accept the offer of Judy Stevens-Morehu to act as our Minutes Secretary. Judy brings a wealth of experience to this area which is much appreciated.

The coming year will not be easy for us but with the imminent sale of the Pearce Wetlands and the retirement of debt and subsequent major reduction in debt servicing, we will finish it in a much better financial position. DU is reliant on its membership and I would like to acknowledge your support and also the efforts of Chapter chairs and committee members.

THE FUTURE

The difficult decisions your Board has made will produce significant benefits for DU. I believe the day is not far off when we will be able to say honestly, "Every dollar raised by Ducks Unlimited will be spent on waterfowl and wetland projects," and I am convinced that once we are seen to be spending money on conservation again, new members will inevitably follow.

I look forward to the next financial year.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Glenys Hansen

At the time of writing it seemed unlikely that I would be able to present an audited set of accounts to the AGM.

Last year I apologised and referred to "circumstances beyond my control". This year I make no apology. Once again I have been unable to extract the information I required from the Sinclair Wetlands local Technical Committee, no matter how hard I've tried.

Sinclair Wetlands transactions are an intrinsic part of DU's finances. Without detailed information I have not been able to complete the last financial year's accounts and our new Treasurer cannot roll over to this financial year, which is most frustrating.

The Board acknowledges that this cannot be allowed to continue. We do, after all, fund the Sinclair Wetlands.

WETLAND REPORT

Ken Cook

A considerable number of new wetlands have been created in 1996-97 - probably none more important than Life Member Mike Bourke's new "Lake Bourke" at Rangiwahia (near Mangaweka). Mike has worked on this project for some time and it must have given him great satisfaction as he diverted the small creek on his farm to start filling the fifteen acre wetland.

Although only one wetland has qualified for subsidy in the past year, many others have been created or enlarged with advice and assistance from DU people.

I support the planting of native flora in and around our wetlands. However, the value of foreign plants is enormous. Trees which provide food, e.g. oaks, have great potential. Surprisingly, many people still insist on planting willow when there are so many more desirable plants.

Recently we were asked by DOC to assist with the planning of the restoration and development of a wetland on Mana Island. Jim Campbell and myself were invited to view and discuss the project, which was a pleasure indeed.

The proposed area was a wetland of importance before the advent of European farming. The area of four or five acres is adjacent to the beach and will provide a habitat for brown teal. This will provide a predator-free release site for pateke in the near future.

OPERATION PATEKE

Alan Wilks

Breeders produced a sufficient number of birds during the last financial year to meet the DOC release requirements. Although all breeders' returns were not to hand at the time of writing, it would appear that some forty birds were reared. We have also replaced a number of ageing pairs.

During the year under review, seven birds were released at Trounson Kauri Park and sixteen at the Wilsons' property at Puketia, both in Northland. Since then, a further twenty-one have been released at these two properties.

The Trounson Park releases have not been particularly successful, with only three birds surviving out of the initial seven. Still, that's three more in the wild.

The Wilson story is much more encouraging. Twelve of our captive-reared brown teal were released in November, 1995. The seven birds carrying transmitters were all predated within four weeks and the remainder disappeared despite a trapping programme. However, two more releases took place last year with all sixteen birds fitted with transmitters. Only two were predated.

Their efforts were rewarded last November with six ducklings which were all successfully reared.

To quote the Wilsons, "It has been rewarding seeing degraded streams regenerating and once again supporting brown teal. It would seem that captive-reared birds can be successfully returned to the wild if a predator-control regime is in place."

Ducks Unlimited is grateful to June and Ian Wilson for providing the habitat and effort to support our captive-breeding programme.

Another encouraging piece of news was the recent DOC sighting of a banded bird at Ngahau Bay in Northland. From the colour band combination, Grant Dumbell was able to confirm that it was a captive-bred bird we released at Mimiwhangata in June, 1991.

I believe our captive-breeding programme and releases have a vital role to play in brown teal recovery.

Continued on page 11

"AS MUDDY AS YOU WANT..."

The Masterton Intermediate School Environmental Science Centre

by Howard Thomson

Masterton Intermediate School has had a long association with wetlands and waterfowl. Encouraged by former staff member and Ducks Unlimited member Lawson Campbell, the school built waterfowl aviaries and enclosed a pond area with assistance from Ducks Unlimited. The school was the first recipient of the Andrew Dixon McMaster trophy for furthering student interest in wetland and waterfowl conservation.

Successive staffs of Masterton Intermediate School have developed a number of programmes outside the basic curriculum area to enhance the learning opportunities of students. As a consequence, the school has gained a reputation for the imaginative use it has made of the natural resources available in the district. It has developed its own farm, nursery, waterfowl enclosure, and forestry block and runs the Wellington Fish & Game Council trout hatchery.

Last year, the Masterton Trust Lands Trust took over ownership of the old trout hatchery building and leased the property to the school. This was a decision agreed to by the whole staff and supported by the MIS Board of Trustees. It gave the school the chance to group together all the varied aspects of environmental education developed over the years.

The trout hatchery building was in a neglected state. Its refurbishment was approached as a two-year plan. This would involve the school community

TROUT HATCHERY REVIEW

I really enjoyed the time at the trout hatchery. Some of the things we did were making critter-catchers and testing them, cleaning out the creek and catching crawlies. We learnt heaps about trout from reading books. We also watched a video on marine life and dolphins. Some of us lucky ones got to clean out the chook pens and feed the chooks and go and get the honey from the bees. We were kept busy all the time and I really enjoyed it - so did our whole class.

- Jacqui Hammond

through working bees as and when money was available. Plans were drawn up so that a small hatchery room was retained, along with a storage room for farm tools and equipment, and a new Environmental Science classroom.



Early in 1996, the school was approached by the Rotary Club of Masterton who wanted to take on the refurbishment as a community project. The first major financial support came via a grant of \$25,000 from the Eastern and Central Community Trust. Ducks Unlimited was approached by Principal Frazer Mailman to support an application to the Lottery Grants Board. Although DU gave this support, promoting their interest in wetland and waterfowl education, the application was unfortunately not successful.

ENJOYING TIME AT THE SCIENCE CENTRE

My name is Danielle Saywell and I am a form 2 at MIS and I'm going to tell you about the science centre.

It's really neat over there because you can wear mufti all week and you get to help feeding fish, planting trees and making the centre look attractive. One of the things that I like is you can get as muddy as you want and not worry about it! We have great fun as a class even doing written work. The written work helps us learn lots, even if we don't write much we still learn lots about trout, perch, honey bees and lots of other things. I really enjoy the Science Centre and I know everybody else does too!

- Danielle Saywell

MY TIME AT THE TROUT HATCHERY

Well, I really enjoyed my time at the Environmental Science Centre and I think our whole class did. Most of all I enjoyed the critter-catching. I think everyone did. I also enjoyed the unit studies we did - it was really fun.

There were also those lucky people who got to go and see the bees. That would have been really exciting. Me and a few other people were chosen to go to the bakery and get loads of bread. Then, when we got back, we got to go and feed the chickens.

By the time I had finished my time there for the day I was tired. We kept ourselves busy all the time. And one more thing - the barbecue. Our class barbecue was really fun. I think all the classes had a good one. I'm looking forward to our next turn.

- Moana Ryan

But support for the project suddenly blossomed throughout the Masterton business community. From mid-July, 1996, work began on a regular basis, with Rotary Club members logging in excess of 900 hours of voluntary labour, to which the greater school community and staff added their efforts. I spent so much

The Programme

In their two years at Masterton Intermediate School, students have the opportunity to work with their class in the Environmental Science Centre on four separate occasions.

Twice a year, each class works at the centre for a week, attending the centre from Monday to Thursday. Classes are accompanied by their regular classroom teachers who assist the teacher at the centre.

The 2 Year Cycle of Studies at the Centre

Odd years

- The Life Cycle of Rainbow Trout
- Terms 1 & 4 - An Aquatic Environment Study
Terms 2 & 3 - A Study of Honeybees
- A Native Bush Study
- Growing Plants - Trees and Ferns
- Developing the Centre's Grounds
- Providing Indoor Plants for the Classroom
- Maintenance on or at the :
farm, hatchery, firewood plots,
MIS gardens, beehives
- An Individual Research Topic - based on the above programme, one topic each session, i.e., two topics each year.

Even Years

- The MIS Farm
- A Rocky Shore Study
- A Terrestrial Study
- (e), (f), and (g) from above.



At work in the Environmental Science classroom.

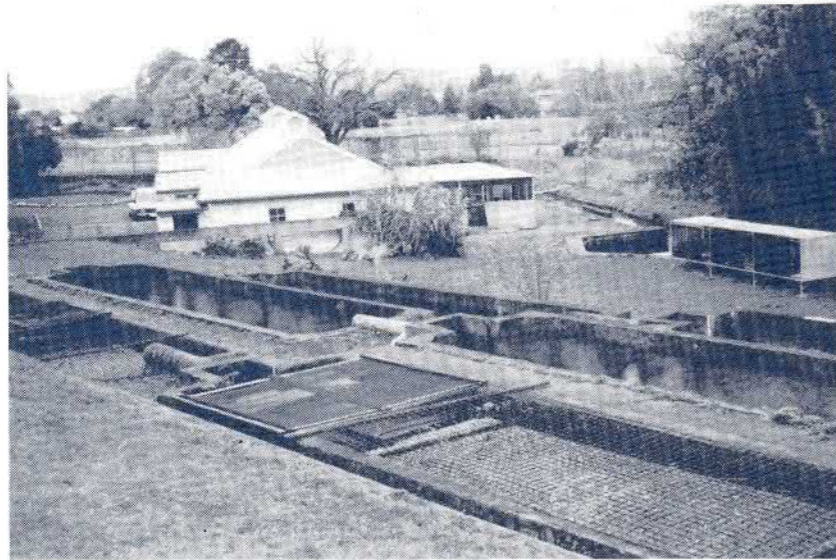


"Most of all I enjoyed the critter catching..."

time involved with working bees that when my wife came to help with painting, she asked, "Where are the hooks to hang your hammock?"

All in all, the project was completed late in January, 1997, at a cost of some \$80,000, and officially opened by the Mayor of Masterton, Bob Francis, on February 4. The school started the new year with the tremendously exciting new facility. The Board of Trustees provided a teacher's salary so a full-time teacher could staff the centre.

My principal keeps telling me to stop walking around with a big smile on my face. But the centre has pay-offs for the students of Masterton Intermediate, including those who are not academically inclined. These students find that they can succeed in the practical environment of the Environmental Science Centre.



The Masterton Intermediate School Environmental Science Centre.



THE SCIENCE CENTRE

During the week at the science centre I was exposed to a lot of things I'm familiar with and some I had never even dreamt of.

We had a lot of fun in a cool new, but old, place because I used to be friends with the people living beside it.

The science centre is really neat because you have access and permission to go to the creek out the back to catch crawlies and cockabullies. Last week a challenge came out to design a turtle cage about 2m² so the turtles can swim, sunbathe and lay eggs (which might happen). The best bit about the science centre is that there are fish ponds, really big ones, that is, and a small fish tank. Some people are lucky enough to get to go to Taupo to collect the eggs.

- Allan Sandford



On March 21, the school hosted a ministerial visit to the Environmental Science Centre by the Minister of Education, Wyatt Creech, and the Minister of Conservation, Nick Smith. The ministers spent time viewing the various aspects of the centre and were impressed with the facility and how the school was covering a wide range of environmental projects.

The photo at left shows MIS Principal Frazer Mailman (right) introducing the Minister of Conservation, Nick Smith, (centre), to Graham Chandler, President of Masterton Rotary.



Photographs for this article were kindly supplied by Howard Thomson and Masterton Intermediate School.

The sections of this article in boxes were written by students of Masterton Intermediate School.



Annual Reports (cont)

PEARCE WETLANDS

Alan Wilks

The wetlands were used during the past year by a small group of mainly Manawatu members for duck and goose shooting.

As you are aware, we put the property up for tender last year without any acceptable response. We now have an unconditional offer from an undisclosed purchaser who we understand is sympathetic to the wetland values of the property which is covered by a Queen Elizabeth II covenant instigated by DU and is thus protected for its wetland values for all time.

Some members will oppose this sale, but many were unhappy with the original purchase of a wetland that wasn't going anywhere and which we couldn't afford anyway. It has cost us debt servicing and rates for the past nine years. The sale at Government Valuation (which is \$15,000 more than it cost), plus GST, will enable us to retire \$125,000 debt and save \$15,000 a year on interest and rates.

That's money we will be able to spend on wetlands.

OPERATION ROYAL

SWAN

David Johnston

The 1996-97 breeding season has been very poor with very few birds available for distribution. This was caused in part by very cold and wet weather during the nesting period, with higher than usual losses. There have also not been any birds available from the South Island.

One thing that does show through, though, is the fact that good nutrition is vital both for breeding and also cygnet survival. One of our long-term breeders, who has been consistently successful, feeds one kilogram of poultry pellets per bird per day and I am convinced from this, as well as my own experience, that feed is the main key to success.

I am pleased to announce that Howard Egan and Pearl were the most successful royal swan breeders this year with four birds.

At this time I would like to thank all breeders, and may next season be more successful.

OPERATION WHIO

David Smith

This programme is best described as being at a crossroads. With four deaths - three from old age and only one bird

fledged this year (a female, thankfully) - we are clearly failing to maintain our stock. With DOC's reluctance to entertain the idea of new stock from the wild, we have to decide where we (DU and our loyal breeders) are headed.

To date, no blue duck recovery plan has surfaced for adoption. Until this is in place, a captive management plan is of little use. But given that we are presently unable even to maintain our stock, that may be only of academic interest.

This year's surviving chick was hand reared. There were five others hatched, which were left with their parents. This is not to say that success will only come from hand reared birds - and there is little point in producing birds for release which can only raise young with our intervention. But while our stocks are declining, we need to hedge our bets as best we can. If that means intervention, so be it.

The search for a successful breeding formula continues. I doubt we will ever fully develop one as there are so many variables but we will continue to try and hope that more pieces of the puzzle are found.

Our thanks must go to all our dedicated breeders for their efforts. A meeting of breeders will take place later this year to decide which road we are going to take.

Creating a Wetland at Rangiwahia

Turning twenty acres of good potato-growing land into lake and wetland might sound like madness to some. But for Ducks Unlimited member Mike Bourke, it is the realisation of a long-held dream.

Mike Bourke, who farms the land his grandparents cleared from the bush of the Rangiwahia area, now looks out from his house over the wetland he created. The lake area, "Lake Bourke", is just short of a kilometre around.

An interest in wildfowl goes back quite a way for Mike Bourke, and he used to breed pheasants. He formed a small dam below the house 12 years ago and stocked it with perch to complement the ducks, geese and white swans which were drawn to it.

The land for the new wetland was bought five years ago. Mike Bourke applied for and received a grant from the New Zealand Game Bird Habitat Trust of \$30,000 to pay for its construction. Work began in February this year.

The design of the project was Mike Bourke's. "I had a rough idea of what I wanted," he says. Although he planned on one dam, the practicalities dictated two. Some of the islands emerged somewhat bigger than planned and several extra were added. (cont)



Before...the designated wetland area planted in potatoes.

Earthmoving machinery shifted thousands of cubic metres of earth to create the dam walls and a lake to depths ranging from 300mm to six metres in places. Local contractor, Roberts Contracting, put in two weeks of long days while the weather held.

The wetland margins were contoured with excavated topsoil. Stumps were dragged into position for birds to roost in. Lime was spread on the dam base to raise the pH and encourage growth of aquatic plants. The wetland is fed by the Stoney Creek from springs with running water year round. It's estimated the larger dam will be viable for a couple of hundred years.

The earthworks were finished at the end of January, and the dam and lake took seventy days, until mid-April, to fill. Waterfowl quickly took up residence. By June the population included paradise duck, mallard, swan, grey teal, spoonbill, white faced heron and pied stilts.

With the first breeding season near, predator control is beginning, with poison being laid for rats, and traps set for stoats, cats and ferrets.

Further development of the wetland involves planting some fifteen acres in trees, including different conifers, and he expects to spend another \$10,000 this year. Hillsides above the wetland have been planted in maples, gums and oaks (for their autumn colour). The islands in the lake are being planted with natives. Water lilies have been planted in the lake.

The main problems the project struck related to cost. There's been some seepage, through an old gravel layer of the creek running into the lake, creating another wetland across the road. But Mike Bourke doesn't anticipate problems with the earthworks and the flow of water to the wetland can be controlled.

The Bourkes' house on a hillside above the wetland overlooks a dream coming



Thousands of cubic metres of earth were shifted to form the lake.

true. Half a kilometre of fencing has been started with posts in place. Stock are keeping the grass down, but will eventually be excluded. Although fish have yet to be added to the lake, the eels

are there already. And there were eight hundred mallard duck on the wetland just before duck shooting.

Photos for this article kindly supplied by Mike Bourke.

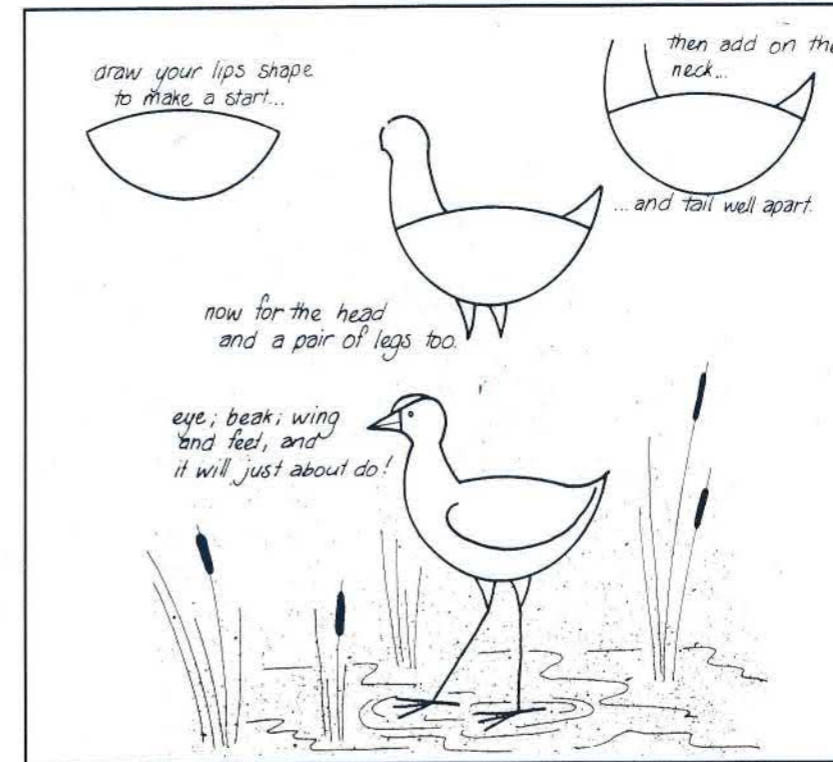


After...the completed wetland.



Forming the lake.

DRAWING THE PUKEKO




The pukeko (*Porphyrio porphyrio melanotus*) is a native of New Zealand and Australia although a different sub-species occurs in other parts of the world. It is also known as the swamp hen, pakura, puke, bowie and pukaki.

It is widely distributed throughout New Zealand and is mainly found in lowland swamps, lakes and riverbanks with raupo and scrub cover. The pukeko is mainly vegetarian but eats animals such as small fish, snails, insects and birds.

From the tip of its red bill to the tip of its tail, the pukeko measures approximately 500mm. Both male and female adult pukeko are alike, with the female being slightly smaller. The pukeko is largely black but bright blue on its neck, throat and chest.

Illustration republished courtesy of Alan Fielding.




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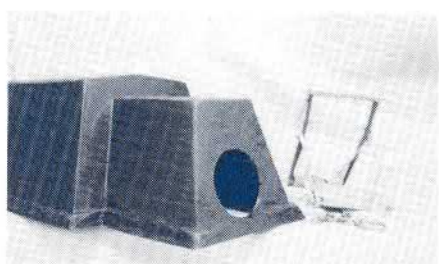
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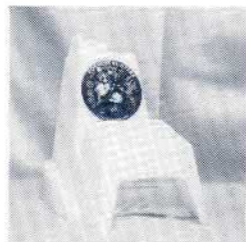
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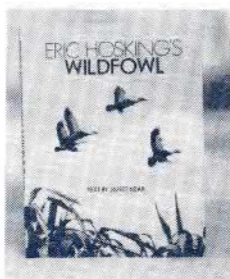
ESSENTIAL READING

NEW ZEALAND WETLANDS: A MANAGEMENT GUIDE

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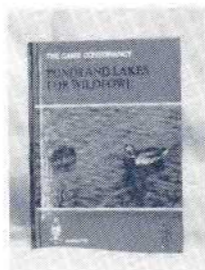
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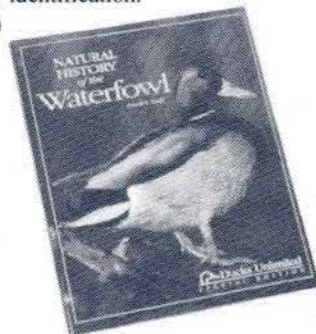
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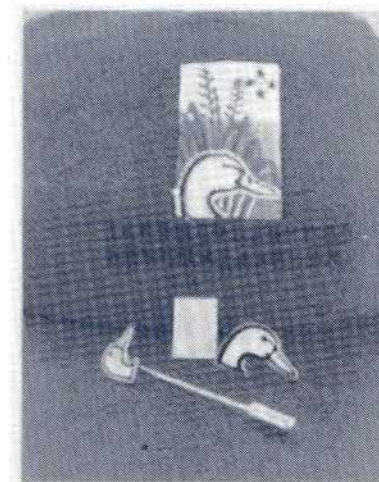
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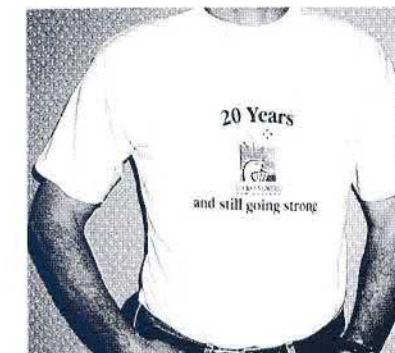
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