

# Wet & Wild!



**NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL WETLAND TRUST**

**No. 3, Spring 2001**

I welcome all readers to this edition of the Wetland Trust newsletter, which is also the start of the term of the second Board of Trustees.

As you may be aware there were a number of changes at the annual meeting in May. Later in this newsletter an introduction is made to the current Trustees and also identifies the office holders. I particularly wish to commend Paula Reeves who has volunteered to be the newsletter editor. Her job would be much easier if there were unsolicited contributions and I would urge you all to consider writing a short note on wetland activities, opportunities or threats from your local areas. It would also be useful to have notes of successes and/or failures so that lessons can be learnt from both.

The groundwork laid by the previous Board of Trustees is now bearing fruit with progress being made on securing a site and undertaking preliminary designs for a new building. More details on these matters will be advertised as our plans become finalised.

I urge you all to consider the words of Dr Tony Reiger who provided one of the addresses at the annual meeting, reproduced in this newsletter edition where he issued a challenge for all of us to consider the direction that New Zealand takes in the future relating to natural wetland habitat.

I am heartened by the interest now being taken by central and local government in wetland issues but this is no reason for us to sit back and allow others to carry the burden. Our primary task is to introduce as many people to the benefits and attractions of wetlands as possible to ensure that work on wetland advocacy has the support of the majority of the public. It is only with popular support that it will be possible to implement policies which are formulated.

I urge you all to pass on the word of the existence of the Trust and encourage people to join so that we can have a greater pool of knowledge and wisdom as we move forward into the future.

David Lawrie  
**Chairperson**

## The Golden Plover Award

Congratulations go to Sue Moore who has been awarded the 2001 Golden Plover Award. Sue is carrying out research on brown teal.

The Golden Plover Award has been set up by Dr Tony Reiger to fund original research on wetland ecology at Masters level. Applications are due in for the award by March 31 of each year. For more information on how to apply check out the following website:

[www.waikato.ac.nz/asd/pdf/schol/regulations/16.pdf](http://www.waikato.ac.nz/asd/pdf/schol/regulations/16.pdf)

## Subscriptions due

A gentle reminder that annual subscriptions are due for this financial year. Please fill in the form on the back page of this newsletter and send this to us with your \$10 subscription fee.

Doug Emmett  
**Treasurer**

# New trustees...

The following trustees remain on the National Wetland Trust and were profiled in the first edition of this newsletter:

David Lawrie – Chairperson

Doug Emmett – Treasurer

Ian Boothroyd

Bev Clarkson

Gordon Stephenson

David Sharland

Keith Thompson

There are six new members of the Trust who are introduced to you below.

## **Karen Denyer**

Karen is Environment Waikato's terrestrial and wetland ecologist. Her job involves identifying information needs for native forests, scrub and wetlands, to contract necessary research, obtain, store and manage information, and provide technical input to education products or events, policy development and review, and resource consent processing. Karen helped develop the wetland factsheets that Environment Waikato produced several years ago that were a huge success with over 2000 distributed. Karen brings to the Trust her enthusiasm for environmental education and the development of the wetland education centre.

## **Phillipe Gerbeaux**

Phillipe Gerbeaux came to New Zealand in the mid-eighties to do his Ph.D research on the ecology and management of aquatic macrophytes in Waihora (Lake Ellesmere). Phillippe returned briefly to his native France before getting employed by the Hydrology Centre in Christchurch up until 1992, when DSIR was disbanded. Phillippe then took up a contract with Tour du Valat, a leading research centre working on the conservation of mediterranean wetlands based in the south of France. In 1995 he took up his current position of wetland ecologist with the Department of Conservation in Hokitika. Among other things he is responsible for the coordination of the West Coast Conservancy freshwater/wetland programme, but he also contributes to projects at national level.

His proposed contribution to the Trust is to bring a South Island perspective and representation.

## **Tahi Ngakete**

Tahi is affiliated with Ngati Pou, Ngati Tahinga and Ngati Mahuta and is currently the chairman of the Nga Muka Development Trust. He has also spent 5 years as a trustee on the Tainui Maori Trust Board. Tahi currently works as an Environment Officer for the Nga Muka Development Trust where he deals with resource management issues for the Rangiriri, Te Kauwhata, Mercer and Maramarua Regions. Tahi provides a Maori perspective for the National Wetland Trust.

## **Paula Reeves**

Paula is a wetland plant ecologist who recently joined the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) in Hamilton. Prior to NIWA, she spent six years working as an environmental policy analyst at Waitakere City Council and the Wellington Regional Council. At both these local authorities she worked with landowners and community groups on a number of successful wetland restoration projects.

## **Tony Roxburgh**

Tony is employed as an Area Manager for the Department of Conservation based in Hamilton with responsibility for the advocacy of natural and historic resources and management of public conservation land from the northern King Country through to the Bombay hills. Tony has had a particular interest in wetland ecology and over the past 16 years has been actively involved in the protection, conservation and management of the wetlands within the central and lower Waikato and Hauraki Plains.

## **Don Scarlet - Secretary**

Don is Mighty River Power's Regional Affairs Manager. Don has always had a passion for the out doors and now shares that love with his young family. For the last 15 years Don has held a number of practical environmental management roles in the Waikato region. These have included senior consents and policy roles at Environment Waikato and more recently he has been Project Manager of Mighty River Power's project to renew the resource consents for the Waikato Hydro System.

Don is an active member of a number of community environmental interest groups and has acted as an environmental advocate as chair of an action group in his home community over the last 8 years.

# An overseas perspective on the state of our wetlands

*Address by Tony Reiger to the Annual General Meeting of the National Wetland Trust on 30 May 2001.*

Coming to New Zealand for 1-3 months regularly since 1978 has given me a series of time lapse images of New Zealand wetlands which if I had lived here year round I could not have experienced. I assumed, as I am sure the New Zealanders that were informing me in 1978 did, that when they stated that 90% of the country's native wetlands had already been destroyed in a variety of ways, but that the destruction had stabilised, it was based on some means of relativity or measurement. However, the culmination of the images for me since those days in 1978, belie the accuracy of that assumption.

To the contrary, my time-lapse impressions tell a tale of wetlands under an overwhelming and relentless siege. The unnatural wetlands, those that are artificially created sometimes out of mediation, self-interests, and even guilt, require constant nurturing and care, much more so than the native/natural wetlands which are by their definition in a much, much slower transition or evolution, and are for the most part maintenance free by humans. So while artificial wetlands have value, certainly better than nothing, they are very pale substitutes for the original.

This is why the exclusive focus on creating and then maintaining artificial wetlands is so myopic at best. Mother nature has a very brutal way of dealing with creations not her own.

The compound tragedy of the demise of the Grey Duck of New Zealand is in my mind because of the correlation of the demise of New Zealand's native wetlands. Many humans love Mallards primarily because they accept us as we are, not as we could, or should be, for the overall betterment of our environment. They will try to raise a brood on the most meagre stock pond with very little or no safe fringe areas for loafing or feeding their young. They resort to urban parks to gorge themselves on stale bread and even congregate on sewage lagoons busily trying to make a living. That same mallard shot a mile away, or less, from the sewage lagoon is a trophy bird and gives us bragging rights because the hunter is as clever as the duck. The Grey Duck, a refugee

from an earlier New Zealand, a cleaner, more natural environment, has fewer and fewer places to hide in his homeland every passing year. So the Grey Duck has become another indicator species that is destined to be as rare as a natural, healthy New Zealand wetland.

If the 10% remnant figure that was earnestly bantered about in 1978 concerning wetlands was accurate, do we even have 5% left in 2001? Maybe 2%? Every year since 1978 when I have come here, I have witnessed wetland destruction in draining and filling, as well as polluting with erosion and effluent runoff. In fact in the last 3 years the destruction is as accelerated as ever with forestry practices and the rush to replace sheep with cattle. Dairy conversions seems to have sidetracked what land ethic existed in Southland.

We can try to console ourselves that policies and legislation like the Resource Management Act are turning the destructive tide. I do not believe that there is much to console ourselves about at the end of the day. If one looks behind the façade of protection, it becomes apparent that too often the system is subverted in a variety of ways. The Nike slogan of "Just Do It" has become the slogan of the drainers and polluters. A growing cadre of environmental professionals attest to the frustration and work related malaise of trying to do a responsible job in an atmosphere of supervisory perfidy and political expediency. While there is nothing really new about this balancing act of the irreplaceable, orderly natural world versus the helter skelter, disorderly world of political and economic expediency, each nation has to historically reinvent the wheel for itself. What New Zealand decides to do will depend on the citizens of this country.

My observations over the last 23 years tell me that unless there is a dramatic reversal of the land ethic of this nation, there will be precious few native wetlands left in New Zealand 23 years hence.

Because of New Zealand's size any percentage of her remaining native wetlands was always minuscule compared to most other nations. The potentially hopeful aspect of a smaller

population is that change can be effected by a smaller group of inspired leaders, working in concert with each other, on the common denominator of preserving the native wetlands of this country, big and small, in every part of this still beautiful and caring nation. I believe that New Zealand has a golden opportunity to be the world leader in a land ethic that could provide spiritual nourishment for generations of New Zealanders that are yet to be borne. Or will New Zealand stand before the world some 20 years from now with so few natural native pristine wetlands left that the public will have access to them only through paid highly controlled means such as the access to Farewell Spit?

I believe as John Dewey said, "Experience is the master driver of effective and lasting education".

We, who love the wetlands of New Zealand, must intensify ways of educating the public, all aspects of the public, about the values of wetlands, especially the native wetlands. The National Wetland Trust can act as a catalyst to provide mentors, guides to work with the public in an interactive, living, environment.

The more we can have the public experience wetlands, to open all of their senses to the wonder of wetlands, the more we will be heard and the more wetlands will be understood

and appreciated. Nothing can compare to a dedicated mentor working in a dynamic, alive, interactive classroom like a wetland itself, with people that are open to experience and learn.

Some goals we should consider:

1. To work for an effective national moratorium on the destruction of any more native wetlands.
2. To work for increasing research to effectively manage the remnant of wetlands we have left in New Zealand.
3. The creation of wetland "classrooms", on national and regional levels, where mentors can be out with the public, young and old, sharing their values, not in a passive setting but in an interactive setting, where all the senses can experience the wonder of a wetland.

Would we rather have generations of New Zealanders fill their senses with the totality of an interactive wetland, or doom them to sit inside a tour bus glimpsing bits and pieces of wetland, or worse yet, have them sit in front of a computer reading about what a New Zealand native wetland once was.

The choices are for us to make beginning now. The clock is ticking.

Tony Reiger

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## Wetland creation at Driving Creek

The Driving Creek Wildlife Sanctuary Trust was established in 1997 by Barry Brickell, in order to develop a wildlife sanctuary that he had envisaged for years on land he owns adjacent to Driving Creek Railway and Potteries complex. This charitable trust has been able to secure the necessary grants for its establishment, and will be the first fully vermin-free 'mainland island' type sanctuary on the Coromandel Peninsula.

To date, a lake and wetland has been formed making use of small creek whose regenerating catchment lies entirely within Barry's land. The land is registered with the QEII National Trust protecting its natural values in perpetuity.

Last year approximately 2000 native shrubs and grasses were planted as the initial stage in conversion of the pasture to native shrub and wetland plant associations. The once

farmed small, open valley of the sanctuary area is ideal for suitable public access and the provision of a variety of different environments and ecological habitats.

A system of public access pathways has been formed approximately 1km in length, and will be metalled in due course. Public access will be via one specially constructed gateway within an interpretation building adjacent to the potteries. Interest in the Sanctuary will be enhanced by Barry Brickell's original concept of allowing 'environmental' sculptures to be installed at various points along the pathways. One archway sculpture is presently under construction.

Research into suitable designs of vermin-proof fences, is currently underway in various parts of the country. Mr David Wallace, farmer and conservationist near Cambridge, continues to develop remarkably successful types of fence that

are also cost effective. The installation of the fence should be done within the next two or three years, depending on the Trust's finances. Meanwhile extensive plantings are to be undertaken this coming season and the next. Already, one can discern a change, with last year's plants beginning to over-top the now rank pasture of this summer season.

The Sanctuary's wildlife advisor and consultant, Mr Rob Chappell, of the local Department of Conservation office, has set out a schedule for the development of the Sanctuary. Following the completion of the fence and the eradication of pests within, he suggests the introduction of brown teal, kiwi juveniles (as part of Project Nest Egg) and the North Island

weka. Other possibilities are takahe, native fish and lizards.

Bird encouraging plants are not necessarily restricted to NZ native species. An area adjacent to the sanctuary is being considered for the planting of certain exotic species (e.g. grevillea, bottle brush and banksia species) to encourage nectar feeding native birds into the sanctuary area and surrounds.

The Trust is very keen to form a volunteer working group (Friends of the Sanctuary) to assist with planting, pest and weed control and other work associated with the Sanctuary. Please contact Barry Brickell (07 866 8703) or Henry Woodyear-Smith (07 866 7064) for details.

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## Wetland snippets

### "Over half way...."

The Taranaki Regional Council (TRC) has recently reached the halfway mark of a programme to manage and protect significant wetlands in the Taranaki Region. The proposed Regional Freshwater Plan for Taranaki lists 31 unprotected significant wetlands for which there is funding available from the Council.

To date the Council has agreements with the owners of 17 of these significant wetlands to enhance and protect them. This includes weed control, fencing and planting (locally sourced natives of course!), and legal protection by either QE II National Trust covenant or memorandum of encumbrance with the TRC which is also registered on the title and binding on future landowners.

*Maggie Bayfield*

*Taranaki Regional Council*

### Wetland Talk at Tasman District EcoFest

As part of our 'EcoFest' festival being run

from October 27<sup>th</sup> to November 11<sup>th</sup> Brian Sorrell from NIWA is going to give two talks on wetlands. The first aimed especially at landowners will be delivered in Golden Bay at the Onekaka hall. Following the talk there is a short trip to Duggan Stream to look at some riparian plantings and the local wetland environment. The second talk will be in the evening at the Richmond or Nelson council chambers. It is hoped to have a coin collection at this talk with the proceeds going to the wetland Trust.

Both talks will be general in nature outlining some of the features that make a wetland, a wetland, and some of the various types and their ecological functioning.

*Rob Smith*

*Tasman District Council*

### Waikato Peat Lakes

Significant progress has been made to protect minimum water levels of the Waikato Regions nationally significant peat lakes. Water control structures have been installed in two priority lakes

and plans are underway to continue this work at a further four peat lakes.

Fish and phytoplankton surveys of two major peat lake systems in the Region (Rotomanuka and Serpentine) have also been undertaken in association with DOC Waikato in an effort to investigate options for the eradication of pest fish species and the re-establishment of native macrophytes. This work will continue over the next 2 -3 years.

*Grant Barnes*

*Environment Waikato*

### and in Australia...

BHP and Conservation Volunteers Australia have joined forces to address the degraded state of Australia's wetlands. "Revive our Wetlands", initiated in March this year, aims to revitalise 100 wetlands. The three-year program will involve more than 14,000 volunteer days - contributing more than \$1 million worth of practical assistance to wetlands revitalisation. On top of this BHP will provide \$1.5 million dollars in cash/in-kind support. An idea for NZ?

## Watch this space...

Positive negotiations are taking place for a site at Rangiriri for a Wetland Education Centre. We should know by next issue whether this has been successful and will provide full details then.

## KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE TRUST

To submit a contribution for the next newsletter please contact:

Paula Reeves

ph: 07 8561738

Email: p.reeves@niwa.cri.nz

Address: NIWA, PO Box 11-115, Hillcrest, HAMILTON.

Return Address:

NATIONAL WETLAND TRUST  
23 St Andrews Terrace  
HAMILTON



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## MEMBERSHIP FORM

An annual family subscription is \$10 and is valid until March 31, 2002.

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Treasurer National Wetland Trust  
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