

SHORT NOTES

DUCKS UNLIMITED (N.Z.) INC.

After just over one year in existence Ducks Unlimited (N.Z.) is firmly established as a major waterfowl and wetland conservation group. Membership, of which there are seven categories, is open to any person, society, or company which wishes to support the aims and objects of the organisation.

DU's first major project, which is to raise the number of Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*) in New Zealand to 100,000 over a ten year period, is off to a good start and over one hundred specially designed nesting boxes have already been erected in well known Grey Teal areas — mainly in the Hamilton district. Three different designs of nesting boxes are being used; the designs being based on studies in Australia where nesting boxes have been used for both the Chestnut Teal (*Anas castanea*) and the Grey Teal, with excellent results; the study of the Grey Teal's nesting habits in New Zealand waterfowl collections, and on the study of the Grey Teal's natural breeding habitat in Australia — which consists mainly of hollows in trees. Similar habitat is not available in New Zealand and the DU Directors are convinced that this is the reason why the N.Z. population has failed to expand. (Current numbers are thought to be about 18,000). In appropriate areas the DU boxes will provide suitable predator free nesting habitat, and the construction of the boxes is designed to give twenty to thirty years' life.

For the first project valuable assistance has been gained from the Lands and Survey Department, the Wildlife Service, acclimatisation societies and farmers.

Details of DU's second major project have recently been finalised and the Wildlife Service has approved the project, which will involve the hand rearing and subsequent liberation of 1,000 Brown Teal (*Anas castanea chlorotis*) over the next ten years. The Brown Teal is endemic to New Zealand and is among the rare birds of the world, numbering only about 2,000, and confined to a few outlying islands. Dr Murray Williams of the Wildlife Service, and DU's Honorary Scientific Adviser, is in charge of the project.

The Brown Teal has previously been hand reared in New Zealand on a limited scale, with reasonable success and several trial liberations of hand reared and wild caught birds have been made. The bird is very adaptable and if liberated in sufficient numbers could possibly be induced back into its former range.

Fifteen pairs of Brown Teal are currently held by DU members and the Mt Bruce Native Bird Reserve, and, as birds are reared, other DU members will be given the opportunity to try their hand in this major conservation project.

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