

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME NEWSBRIEF

If you require further elaboration or clarification of items contained herein, or any other matters relating to F&GC business, please don't hesitate to contact your local ward councillor or the office.

Matters arising from Council Meeting of 8th April 2019

1. Murray Young and Grant Annan were awarded Council's Merit Certificate for outstanding service and contribution to the Council, wildlife and conservation. Murray has spent many years as a Fish and Game Councillor and Chairman. Grant was nominated by Mr David Nordell, President of the Te Awamutu Fish & Game Association, for his considerable efforts in organising and running the Annual Fishing Contest at Lake Arapuni for the last 25 years.
2. Mr Wilson reported on his recent meeting with Walking Access NZ who are working on enhancing access to public land in the North Waikato. Mr Wilson emphasised that there would be increasing demands for public access to Council's wetlands that could conflict with their wildlife values.
3. Mr Wilson introduced the Financial Statements noting that Fish licence sales would be similar to previous years. Game sales had a very slow start but had recovered in recent days. However, game sales were very much dependant on April rainfall and the forecast was not promising.
4. Councillor Annan spoke on the recent Governors Forum, held in Wellington that was attended by himself and Councillor Nigel Juby. The Forum were given presentations by Sir Geoffrey Palmer & Elana Geddis on the power and responsibilities of regional F&G councils and the NZC, and on governance by Graeme Nahkies.
5. Mr Wilson introduced the Final Report for the Lake Waikare and Whangamarino Wetland Flood Scheme, noting that under-spending on this project was \$45,000 less than budgeted.
6. The Chairman expressed his appreciation to staff issuing certificates to the children who helped with duck banding over the summer. Councillor Smith strongly agreed noting that the children very much appreciated the certificates.
7. Dr Daniel spoke on the recent Hamilton Anglers kids fishing day on Cambridge Lake, emphasising that there were over 60 kids attending who were given soft baits provided by the event sponsor. Dr Daniel stated that a similar event would be held soon on Lake Pupuke.
8. The Chairman expressed his appreciation for the efforts of Dr Daniel and his family who recently spent the entire weekend camped at Lake Arapuni during the recent Te Awamutu F&G Club's fishing competition. The Chairman noted that he had received numerous comments from anglers expressing how great it was to see a Fish & Game officer there the whole weekend of the event.

Matters Arising From Chief Executive's Report

- **Drift dives** were completed in the Waihou, Waimakariri, Mangatutu, Awakino and Whakapapa rivers. All rivers surveyed had fish populations similar to previous years with the exception of the Waihou where there was a significant decline in small fish. An attempt was made to drift dive the Whanganui River, but poor water quality prevented the survey.
- **Duck banding:** We aim to catch 3000 birds every year. This is based on catching 1000 on the Hauraki Plains and an average of 400 at each of our other 5 sites. However this year numbers were down. High December rainfall certainly played a role at some sites, especially those banded early-mid January as nearby wetlands were full. John Dyer had issues at the Wellsford over the past few years and the new Aka Aka site this year. Ensuring catch rates in these areas next year remains our priority to achieve our target and get adequate spatial coverage.
- **Swan trend count** numbers in the Lower Waikato Lakes and Western Harbours combined were down slightly at 4,177. Rudi Hoetjes, the Northland F&G manager, very generously does our northern parry count. This year 3,370 parries were counted, (3,475 last year) but the trend counts in Graph 3 are based on the four sites that are surveyed each year.
- The 2019 King Country paradise shelduck trend count shows that numbers remain below the threshold for having a special season (6,000 birds). After ground-truthing the initial estimate, the total number counted in 2019 was 5,715 shelduck (Graph 4). It appears that the 7 week main season, (May-June), for parries is now adequate to keep them from becoming a problem for farmers in this area.
- **Botulism:** Thankfully it has been a quieter year on the botulism front than last season although we are aware of significant outbreaks have been detected at the Tuakau and Helensville Waste Water Treatment Plants. Hopefully this will abate with colder temperatures soon. The rains we got just before Christmas likely helped to recharge areas before the big dry hit. In total we are aware of 5 WWTPs that have experienced outbreaks and a few small outbreaks on farm ponds and the wetlands.
- **Healthy Rivers Plan Change 1:** This has consumed the majority of the RMA time over the last two months with substantial staff time required for freshwater ecology and fisheries evidence (full report attached as separate agenda item). The lack of a spawning habitat map in our current management plan was identified as a gap as there is higher protection required for spawning habitat. Creating a map based on field observations will be a substantial task involving both desktop and field work. This will be added to the annual work plan over the next couple of years.
- **Pond Ballot:** A ballot has been held for 3 pond sites on F&G land; Pond 8 in the McKenzie Wetland, Pond 6 in the North Shepherd and Pond 1 in the Cocks Wetland.
- **Funding Applications:** David Klee has completed one WCEET funding application for a wetland project being conducted with a local dairy farmer in the Maramarua drainage district. This a joint project between the landowner, WRC and F&G. Another 3 applications are also being progressed although these may not be submitted in this funding round as further liaison is required with landowners to finalise the size, scale and relative contributions of the parties involved.
- **Waikato Federated Farmers:** Mr Wilson gave a presentation to the Executive Committee of Waikato Federated Farmers on AWF&G and our concerns regarding water quality, wetlands etc.
- **Gamebird ranging:** The February Special Paradise Shelduck Season saw John Dyer going to all the usual spots as well as many others seldom checked. Practically no one was in the field, (permit numbers were down to about half the usual amount this year).