

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

Waipa Peat Lake & Wetland Accord

Before the meeting, Councillors attended the re-signing of the Waipa Peat Lake & Wetland Accord to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the original signing of the Accord. The event was held at Lake Rotopiko (Serpentine). The Chairman, Murray Young, signed on behalf of Fish & Game. Accord members include Waipa District Council, Waikato Regional Council, Iwi, DOC, and F&G.

Matters Arising from Council Meeting of 11 February 2017

- Counties Power are considering removal of their power-pylons on the Dean Wetland. It was agreed that they could be removed in the first ten days of April and after May.
- A letter was received from Mr Dan Madsen regarding the adjoining property to the Piggott Wetland. Discussion ensued on the potential of Fish & Game purchasing this land if the owners decided to sell. Mr Wilson was asked to investigate further.
- Concern was expressed that a percentage of the initial blood samples taken from mallard ducks were showing high levels of copper.
- The meeting discussed the consent renewal for the Pukekohe Waste Water Treatment Plant. Council has lodged an objection to the consent.
- The meeting tabled the annual accounts for the Land and Water Habitat Trust.
- Disappointed was expressed that not all Councillors had been informed about banding. It was suggested that Councillors should be informed via email or similar, the schedule should be added to the web page. Mr Wilson to discuss a plan with staff to promote participation and PR.
- Councillors requested Mr Dyer to keep them informed on proposed changes to the legislation on firearms.
- Mr Dyer updated that botulism is at low levels this year to date.
- Councillors requested an update from Mr Wilson on the field trip at the next meeting.

Matters Arising From Chief Executive's Report

Mallard banding: To date, all banding sites have produced excellent catches. So far we have captured over 3000 ducks across 3 sites and this exceeds the numbers caught at all our sites in recent years. Once again, a massive thanks to all of our volunteers who come out and make it possible for us to catch and process those numbers of birds. Without their help the banding project could not succeed.

PhD Project Mallard Productivity: Jenn Sheppard is currently busy working on data analysis and also collecting further blood samples during banding for a collaborative project she is working on looking at hybridization. The first manuscript, "Effects of surgically implanted transmitters on reproduction and survival in mallards" has been conditionally accepted by the *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, pending revisions.

Masters Project Heavy Metal Concentrations: Katie Gibb has been busy conducting further necropsy's and prepping the close to 800 samples ready for analysis. At the moment we have only conducted a small number of subsamples, but even these have given us some interesting results. For pre-breeding blood samples, 15% had Lead levels which were considered above background levels, and 10% were above what was considered toxic. Organs allow a more historical view, three elements were found to be elevated; Copper, Cadmium and Lead. We found 5% of birds with toxic Lead levels, Cadmium levels showed 10% of samples with levels considered abnormal. However, the most unexpected and interesting result was the Copper, with 35% elevated above normal range.

Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan: Mischa Davis has finished a report on the Hauraki Gulf Marine Spatial Plan and how the Plan affects Fish & Game. Of importance is how the Plan can be useful when Fish & Game are taking part in Resource Management Act processes in the contributing catchments of the Hauraki Gulf.

Healthy Rivers plan change for the Waikato/Waipā catchment (PC 1): Fish and Game's overall strategy has been to seek improvements which ensure that the objectives of the proposed plan are capable of being achieved by its rules and policies.

Williamson Wetland: Ongoing liaison with pond holders to ensure the implementation of the predator control programme. Some have failed to reply to correspondence and will need to be chased up to ensure everyone is pulling their weight.

North & Central Shepherd: Alligator weed has been found in the Central Shepherd Wetland having thoroughly taken over one of the ponds there, allegedly since last May when it was apparently absent. The best spray for this plant is Metsulfuron but a special permit is needed to spray it over water. This entails considerable public consultation and so we were delighted that some DoC personnel, already authorised to spray this species in the same general area, were able to include this pond by the Whangamarino River as well.

Yellow flag is also a major weed in the Central Shepherd Block by Island Block Road especially. Now that the water level has fallen to allow practical access, a private contractor is going to sort it out.

Cock's Wetland: We also learnt that there is also yellow flag growing on a pond in the Cock's Wetland. This is a serious weed that we try to keep the lid on wherever possible, so it is disappointing that it has been left unchecked by one of the pond-holders there. Once again DoC staff were able to lend a hand once we found them suitable access keys.

Trapping trial: We purchased 10 of the Good Nature gas powered traps and placed them on private land surrounding some of our recently constructed wetlands. Each trap is coupled with a game camera, which have been freed up after the angler use study. We also have standard DOC 200 traps in the area. We aim to capture predator interactions and get an idea of catch rates compared to standard traps. The possum traps are working well, with an average kill rate of 3 animals per trap for every 3 week interval. We are yet to catch any stoats in the A-24 traps and Good Nature have been contacted to see if we can make any further improvements to our trapping regime. The cameras are capturing some interesting interaction, with the stoat lure attracting a number of cats and possums, just not the target species.