



The two petrel islands, Île Amere (foreground), and Île Kie (more distant), that are included in the vast Yves Merlet Marine Reserve, off the southern tip of New Caledonia. Mainland New Caledonia is visible in the distance.

Some members of the *Derwent* team soon after arriving back in Whangarei on 23 September 1982. From the left: George Schischka, Anton Habraken, Steve Dawson, Andy Davis, Gill Eller, Bill Ringer, Tony Crocker, Chris White and Tim Lovegrove. With the exception of Bill, this was the crew which sailed *Derwent* home on the last leg of the voyage from new Caledonia.

Photograph: Northern Advocate.

are taking their toll of them also. It is quite possible that some petrel colonies will be wiped out before they are even discovered.

Bush birds are numerous at Yate, especially in the varied forests along the banks of La Rivière Blanche and La Rivière Bleue. This place is one of the strongholds of the rare crow honeyeater, *Gymnomyza aubryana*, a relative of the curious ma'o of Samoa. The rhythmic clicking song of the crow honeyeater was one of the most distinctive sounds of the dawn chorus at Yate.

Another local specialty was the handsome New Caledonian goshawk. The endemic cloven-feathered dove occurs here also. The only other place where we encountered that species was at the Île des Pins. Also locally common was the giant pigeon or notou.

Haute Yate is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding wilderness areas of New Caledonia. Fortunately it already has some measure of protection.

On our way southwards to the Île des Pins we paused at several of the small coral cays in the lagoon. Some of these islets have breeding colonies of petrels, shearwaters, gulls and terns. Part of the extensive system of coral reefs south of New Caledonia has been created a reserve. This is the 16 000 ha Yves Merlet Marine Reserve, which comprises barrier and lagoon reefs, and two valuable petrel islands, Île Kie and Île Amere.

The last stop before setting out on the homeward voyage to New Zealand was spectacular Île des Pins — named the Isle of Pines by Cook in the 1770s. There is a splendid anchorage at Kuto on the south west corner of the island — not far from the crumbling ruins of the old penal establishment.

Near Gadji on the northern side of the island is a broad expanse of forest, which was logged some years ago. Only the biggest trees were removed, leaving the remainder of the forest quite intact. At Gadji forest birds were common, including the notou and the cloven-feathered dove.

From Île des Pins the expedition set out on the 1500 kilometre voyage back to Whangarei. As usual on the ocean



passages detailed records were kept of the seabirds. The highlight was witnessing the return migration of the short-tailed shearwaters, which breed in Bass Strait and winter in the North Pacific. They were heading back south on a very broad front, which extended practically from Île des Pins to a point not far north of the Three Kings.

We arrived back in Whangarei on a warm, sunny morning in late September, after the most idyllic ocean crossing of the voyage.

For a group of keen naturalists, apart from being the experience of a lifetime, the voyage had given us a special appreciation of some of the conservation problems of the Pacific Islands.

In many cases unique forests are being threatened merely by rapidly expanding populations. However there are also many places where the small island governments

have been perhaps too ready to allow large multinational companies to obtain logging rights for timber reserves which are definitely non renewable in one or even several generations.

There is a desperate need for more conservation planning in the South West Pacific — before it is too late. Unfortunately conservation movements such as we know them just do not exist in the Pacific Islands. The stimulation is going to have to come from concerned groups overseas. Perhaps it is time that New Zealand conservation groups directed some of their attention and experience to the needs of our near Pacific neighbours.

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