

A view of the south west end of the lake.

Photographs E. A. Norris

predictions can be made. For example, it is suspected that Lake Heron is the only source of water in the upper reaches of the Rakaia in winter. Any change may affect the braiding pattern of the river, which in turn could modify Salmon and Trout spawning. Lake Stream is known to be an important Salmon spawning area.

Lake Heron is a shallow lake (60 percent is less than five metres deep). The wildlife service states 'It is a largely unmodified ecosystem, (although cattle can be observed grazing on the wetlands) and an example of an original habitat type not represented elsewhere in the country. Its large size contains viable populations of almost all species which are typical of this habitat type'.

Volume 3 of *The Rakaia River and Catchment — A resource survey*, page 60 states:

'The Lake Heron area is probably the most important Lake and/or wetland habitat remaining in the entire South Island High Country. At present the Lake and its immediate environ are protected as a nature reserve in conjunction with a wild life refuge. This reserve classification overlooks that the outstanding value of the Lake Heron area is attributable not just to

the qualities of the area protected, but rather to the whole, complex intergraded Lake Heron/Cameron River/Fan wetland/Lake Stream ecosystem. Modification of any part of this system will have ramifications for the whole system.'

The Mid Canterbury Branch would agree with this view. We feel the society should resist strongly any moves to modify this Lake. There are other options available for irrigation: Lake Coleridge is already modified for Hydro electric purposes. It could well be that its potential would be more effectively realised as an irrigation storage lake rather than hydro electric as at present.

The daming of the Stour River, a tributary of the Ashburton, is another possibility which could be investigated.

One of the pleasing aspects of our visits to Lake Heron has been the presence of other interests, including members of the Barhill Irrigation group. They have appreciated our point of view, and appear willing to accept that irrigation water may have to come from another source. We hope to be able to continue this dialogue with them.

