

GORGE HILL — A SOUTHLAND RED TUSSOCK RESERVE

Our Society welcomes the Lands and Survey Department decision to reserve 3100 hectares of red tussock and beech forest in Western Southland. At the time of European settlement lowland tussock grasslands covered 45% of the Southland Land District (excluding Fiordland National Park). Currently less than 10 hectares of red tussock land is reserved in the District. The protection of Gorge Hill will therefore protect a representative section of pre-European vegetation unreserved elsewhere in New Zealand. The Wildlife Service also wishes to use parts of the Gorge Hill tussock lands to establish an additional population of takahe and takahe breeding facilities. Further tussock land reserves should be forthcoming from studies by the Biological Resources Centre now underway in the South Island high country.

ANTARCTICA — PENGUIN PLEA

Adelie penguins have recently been killed by construction workers building the French Government airstrip at Dumont d'Urville, Adelie Land. An even greater threat to all Antarctic life looms from the exploration and exploitation of minerals. An oil blow-out or spill, noise, seismic blasts and other disturbance could have a drastic effect on the wildlife and ecosystems. We need your help to prevent this. From 21–31 May 1984 officials meet in Tokyo to negotiate conditions for mining and oil production in the Antarctic. Until now the Antarctic Treaty system has operated to protect the continent — but the minerals negotiations could drastically change that.

Our Society is a member of the Antarctic and Southern Oceans Coalition who have been asked to send a New Zealand conservationist to Tokyo to put the case for preservation of the Antarctic. We need your help to assist with the delegates travel costs. If you can help please send any donations to our Secretary, P.O. Box 631 Wellington.

NATIONAL PARKS AND RESERVES BOARDS

Throughout New Zealand, our Society has nominees on the different National Parks and Reserves Boards as well as State Forest Park Advisory Committees. These groups play a major role in the management of any Park or Reserve in your region. You may wish to contact our nominees on these Boards and Committees. A list of nominees is available from the Secretary, P.O. Box 631, Wellington.

SNARES ISLANDS NEED GREATER PROTECTION

The sub-antarctic Snares Islands are rat free and host four endemic bird species (tit, snipe, fernbird, crested penguin) and millions of breeding seabirds.

Despite being designated a National Reserve last year, our Society considers they are still inadequately protected against the accidental escape of rats from nearby boats. The recent discovery of a Norway rat on Codfish Island adjacent to a boat anchoring area is a disaster and highlights the need to provide greater protection for the Snares. The best solution would be to create a zone around the Snares from which all boats are excluded. Policing of this zone could be by the Ministry of Defence whose planes regularly overfly the island. The first steps toward this came earlier this year when the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries prohibited all crayfishing within 12 miles of the Snares without a mooring permit (issued by Lands and Survey Department). Prohibition of all mooring within this zone is the next step that Government should take.

LOGUES BUSH, WELLSFORD — A SUCCESSFUL APPEAL

The Mid-North branch has expressed its sincere thanks to the public and Society branches who helped with the successful appeal to raise a public contribution of \$25,000 to assist in securing the 40 hectare Logues Bush (purchased as a scenic reserve for a total of \$150,000). This lowland forest of kauri, kahikatea and totara is a valuable example of a forest type once widespread through Northland.

CONSERVATION WEEK 1984 — WATER MEANS LIFE

The theme for Conservation Week this year is particularly appropriate because of widespread concern for the future of our rivers and disappearing wetlands. The year started well with the Government decision to protect the Motu as a Wild and Scenic River, and the favourable outcome of the Conservation Order application for the South Island's Ahuriri River. We await decisions on the future of the Rakaia Conservation Order application. Meanwhile Acclimatization Societies will shortly be filing applications for the Maitai River in Southland and the Rangitikei River. Wetland conservation is a key issue for our Society. At the forthcoming June Council meeting approval is to be sought for our final Society wetland policy.

HAWKES BAY KIWIS GAIN REPRIEVE

In response to major concerns expressed throughout the Hawkes Bay region, the Lands and Survey Department has postponed further clearance on its Waitere farm block while a management plan is prepared. The shrubland covered block beside the Mohaka river contains the largest recorded population of kiwis in Hawkes Bay as well as important fernbird and robin populations. This is a major achievement for our Napier branch who have led a campaign to protect the kiwis which dominated newspaper headlines throughout Hawkes Bay earlier this year. Public comment will shortly be invited on the management plan.

WHEN IS A FOREST NOT A FOREST?

Native forest has been defined over the last 10 years to be woody vegetation exceeding 6 metres in height and covering more than 5% of the ground area (eg Forestry Development Conference 1974, John Nicholls 1976, King Country (1978) and Tongariro (1983) Land Use Studies). The Government's 1978 Indigenous Forest Policy forbids the clear felling of State owned native forests unless other non-forested land is unavailable and only after social, environmental and economic factors are studied and demonstrated publicly to be enhanced by the clearance. Unfortunately our branches have reported that this sensible Government policy is being violated in State Forests in Northland, Tongariro, Hawkes Bay, Nelson and Westland with continuing clearance of native forest and regenerating native forest. Violation is occurring in two main ways. Even though they exceed 6 metres in height, shrublands and regenerating forest are frequently cleared because they are considered to be only "scrub". Remnants of native forest are also often cleared in "tidy up" activities. Our Society also wants the Indigenous Forest Policy to apply to all Crown owned native forests. This would force the Lands and Survey Department to justify the clearance of native forests on farm development blocks and could also control bush clearance on Crown leasehold lands.

An example is the extensive clearance of matai/kaikawaka/totara forest on the Raurimu and Taurewa land development blocks which adjoin Tongariro National Park. This has been widely criticised in the King Country. The clearance is destroying outstanding bush areas rich in native wildlife including kiwi, parakeet, kaka and robin. It is prime habitat for the endangered parasitic wood rose (*Dactylanthus*) and is of major soil and water and recreational value.

Gerry McSweeney,
National Conservation Officer.