

“Now that the millable timber has gone, the second wave of the onslaught is underway.”

by Forest Service bureaucrats, but all it is asking for is that the local community should have a say over what happens in its own backyard.

“We want a forest park and we want a committee to set a management plan as to the best use of the land. It’s a pretty innovative suggestion”, says Alan Bradbury.

He views the way in which the locals have taken up the conservation of Tongariro forest as indicative of a change of heart to these matters by the establishment. “There has been a change. Before it was tear down, destroy, destroy, destroy. Farmers in particular had been the worst when it came to that. It is time to stop,” he says.

Significantly many of the people strongly supporting the campaign to stop conversion of the forest to pines used to be involved in logging it.

Bluey Smith and his father logged out much of Tongariro Forest for the Dominion sawmill in Owango. He and his wife now strongly support the Forest Park campaign.

His botanist son Kevin recently joined with Forest and Bird National Conservation Officer, Gerry McSweeney, to carry out a vital ecological survey of Tongariro Forest last April.

That survey identified may plant and forest association unique to the Tongariro Forest. It also found major flaws in the Forest Service 1983 Land Use Study.

Most of the areas mapped as “heavy scrub” were found to be indigenous forest by the normally accepted definition of what constitutes a forest. Unfortunately the Forest Service was using an incorrect definition. Secondly, any land that had been ring fenced to keep out stock was simply described as ‘partially developed farmland’. Yet some of this contained sizeable areas of lightly exploited forest inhabited by important bird species such as robins and parakeets. One such area con-

tained the only recorded stand of red beech (apart from a little stand on Mt Pihanga) in the area north of the Tongariro volcanoes.

Gerry McSweeney and Kevin Smith found a whole range of native birds both in the native forest and regenerating shrubland areas.

The North Island brown kiwi was widespread throughout, along with species such as whiteheads, pigeon, tui, bellbird, tomtit, and fantail. Less common species such as kaka, parakeet, robin and falcon are also present in the forest. Blue duck are abundant in the Wanganui and Whakapapa rivers which drain through Tongariro forest.

The Forest and Bird survey recommended that the ecological reserves proposed in the forest be more than doubled in extent to achieve adequate scientific representation of Tongariro’s important plant communities.

It also suggested that the remaining forest and shrubland areas be protected to conserve the area’s wildlife, to protect rare plants like the curious wood rose *Dactylanthus taylori*, the river systems and to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation.

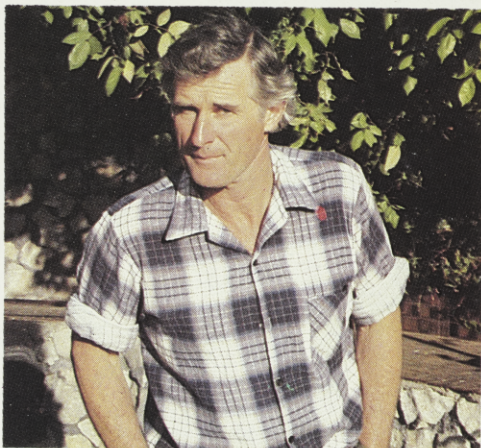
Forest and Bird’s scientific reserve recommendations were subsequently largely endorsed by the Forest Service’s special Scientific Reserves Advisory Committee.

King Country locals are fond of quoting the words of that doughty warrior Sir Winston Churchill, who told President Roosevelt in 1941: “Give us the tools and we will finish the job.” So far the only tools possessed by the committee have been the organisational and lobbying skills of people such as Alan Bradbury, Keith Chapple — writer of their voluminous submissions — Noeline Buckland, secretary and local body councillor, and Anne Fraser, whose plant and wildlife expertise is always sought after. The next move is up to the Government and the Forest Service. Will they provide the local people with the opportunity to decide their own destiny or will it be determined for them?



Educational lodges in Tongariro State Forest provide for at least 31,700 user days per annum. This area was formerly a key natural area for the nearby Outdoor Pursuits Centre until in early 1984 381 hectares in the Mangetepopo Valley was cleared and burnt.

Photo: C Melody



Alan Bradbury: “Before it was tear down, destroy, destroy, destroy”.

Photo: G Hutching



This sign on the Okupata road shows that people have never been welcome in Tongariro Forest. However a Forest Park would be open for all. Such regulations didn’t stop Kevin Smith from visiting his old hunting haunts for a 1984 reserve survey, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather who were loggers in Tongariro forest.

Photo: G McSweeney



Since 1957 Lands and Survey have been clearing southern Tongariro State Forest for pasture. Foreground matai burnt 1984, background windrows of matai-totara. In response to widespread opposition, clearance ceased in May 1984.

Photo: G McSweeney