

Karamea's Swampy Tarn deserves protection

Forest and Bird's newest group at Karamea are fighting to save virgin forest around a tranquil lake near the Karamea end of the famous Wangapeka Track. Swampy Tarn and the kahikatea/rimu in its catchment are in the North-West Nelson State Forest Park. That hasn't stopped this area being zoned for logging in the 1981 Buller Management Plan. Clearfelling of podocarps has progressed from the end of Wangapeka track right up to the edge of the Swampy Tarn catchment.

Many Karamea people support efforts to protect the Swampy Tarn catchment and the now famous Oparara Valley from logging. These are key natural areas in the heart of New Zealand's largest Forest Park and if they are lost to logging it will reveal once and for all the inappropriateness of the "Park" title.

Forest Service, Nelson have promised to "look into" this issue.

New Zealand Forest Products Mamaku reserve decision shows sensitivity to public concerns

Forest and Bird members throughout the Bay of Plenty-Rotorua region have welcomed the decision to reserve 1700 hectares of native forest near the Waipari-Kuhatahi stream in Mamaku State Forest near Rotorua. The Government recently announced that New Zealand Forest Products had agreed to relinquish its 1972 exotic conversion lease over 1700 hectares of Mamaku State Forest to allow the area to become an ecological reserve. This is a credit to the company's sensitivity to public concern.

Forest Products made the decision based on recommendations contained in 1983 reports by Forest and Bird on botanical values of the area and by Wildlife Service. Both these studies considered the area to be of major ecological importance. The forest contains kokako and other native wildlife. It also contains a representative sequence of the forested western fall of the Mamaku plateau, a rare stand of black beech and virgin rimu/pukatea forest and unusual hard beech forests.

Less welcome however is the announcement by Government that Forest Products have agreed to relinquish only 27 hectares of their lease over the nearby Puwhenua State Forest. A much bigger area of this forest should have been excluded from the lease because the whole area is a key kokako forest. It has all been ranked by Wildlife Service as outstanding wildlife habitat and unprotected

forest is now destined for exotic conversion.

New Zealand's first lizard reserve

On 10 March, Forest and Bird's National Executive inspected New Zealand's first lizard reserve at Pukerua Bay, Wellington and have since congratulated Internal Affairs Minister, Peter Tapsell and his Wildlife Service on their efforts and progress in lizard conservation. Although our best known reptile, the tuatara, has been legally protected since 1895, no native lizards received similar status until 1981.

There are 38 recognised species of lizards in New Zealand which divide into two scientific families; 16 species of geckos and 22 species of skinks. *All but the four common species (two skinks, two geckos) are now legally protected and must not be collected in the wild.* Unfortunately eleven species of lizard are classified in the *New Zealand Red Data Book of Endangered Species* — some of which featured in last year's Post Office endangered species stamp series.

Since assuming responsibility for lizards in 1981, Wildlife Service have appointed two staff to work full time on lizard conservation and have initiated studies to determine the conservation status of many of the rare or poorly known lizards such as the Great Barrier skink, our largest skink which grows to over 300 mm in length and the Otago and Grand skinks which are nearly as large and occur in the eastern South Island tussock country. However no trace has yet been found of the monster lizard, known from a single specimen, 600 mm long collected in the 19th century. Searches for it in inland Taranaki have so far

proved unsuccessful.

At Pukerua Bay, Wildlife Service has purchased eight hectares of steep coastal shrubland and scree slopes, home to five lizard species including the very rare Whitaker's skink *Cyclodina whitakeri*, a nocturnal species known to live only at Pukerua Bay and on two islands near the Coromandel Peninsula. Native coastal vegetation around Wellington has been devastated by roading, quarrying, housing development, and by fire and heavy grazing. It is hoped now Whitaker's skink can have a secure future.

Nuclear Policy

A nuclear winter, following a nuclear war between the United States and the USSR, would be devastating for survivors, however far they might live from the conflict. A recent fact sheet produced by New Zealand doctors, engineers and scientists showed that the threat of a nuclear war is the number one ecological problem facing the earth, and certainly human beings. "The scientific studies conclude that eventually there might be no human survivors of a nuclear war in the Northern Hemisphere. The complete extinction of our human species cannot be excluded," the document points out.

With this in mind, Forest and Bird's executive resolved at its March meeting that "as ecologists believing in the imminence of the threat to all life posed by the possibility of a nuclear winter, the Executive of the Society opposed nuclear weapons and their presence in New Zealand." This motion now becomes the basis of an executive remit to the June Council meeting to formulate Society policy.

Dr Gerry McSweeney, National Conservation Officer



This year's summer camp at Turangi was a great success, to go by the numbers attending — 110 people spent the days between December 28 and January 6 exploring the Tongariro National Park, the Kaimanawa Ranges, Pureora Forest and other interesting sports in the region. Planned by the Wellington branch, the camp provided a blend of outdoor activities by day and stimulating entertainment in the evening by way of films or guest speakers. Phil Rider, chairman of the Wellington branch, points out that, while Turangi Park Ranger Lee Busby and Forest Service head Dave Wilson might have been somewhat overwhelmed by the thought of adding up to 80 people to their day trips, they responded well to the challenge. Let's hope that this coming summer the scheduled camps will be as well attended.