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Cover caption: The North Island kaka (*Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis*) is a victim of the havoc that has been wrecked on New Zealand's indigenous forest. Though once in great numbers, its presence in most districts today is rare, as the native forest it relies on for food and a home has been progressively destroyed, both by Government agencies and private landowners. In this issue, the Society considers ways of protecting forests on private land, in an effort to provide such splendid birds with hope for the future. Photo: Geoff Moon

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In case the notion exists that New Zealand's pioneering days are past, it is salutary to be reminded that between 1978 and 1982, Rural Bank Land Development Encouragement Loans (LDELs) financed the clearance of 30,361 hectares of native forest, 367,101 hectares of "scrub and brushweed," as well as the destruction of major areas of native tussock grasslands and the drainage of many wetlands. Unfortunately, much of this development is uneconomic — stock numbers placed on this land are lower than on existing farmland.

The strong tradition of private ownership in this country, part of which includes the concept that individuals may do what they like with what is theirs, will mean that land clearance will continue, albeit not at the same rate now that many Government subsidies have been cut (wetland subsidies being an outstanding anomaly). What can the Society do to see that such development is sensible and non-exploitative?

Professor John Morton, on page 14 of this issue, argues for the persuasive approach; property owners should not be coerced into setting aside land, but arrive at that decision voluntarily—except in extreme cases. An article on one farmer who has covenanted land under a QE II Open Space Covenant provides an example of this voluntary approach.

Dr Gerry McSweeney and Guy Salmon consider the threat of the chipmills to the Catlins and Nelson regions, while Mark Bellingham reports on Maori initiatives to preserve land, one successful, the other still failing to convince the decision makers.

Some statistics: at present 48 percent of our indigenous forest is in State Forest, 25 percent in National Parks and Reserves, 6 percent is unoccupied Crown land, and finally, 21 percent is "other tenures," much of the latter being in private hands.

The first newsletter of the NZ Native Birds Protection Society (later to become Forest and Bird), on April 16, 1923, carried this comment from its founder, Val Sanderson: 'The study of nature by our children would inculcate that love of country which is so essential to any nation, it would encourage observation and play a large part in the formation of the very best of individual characteristics in the future citizens of New Zealand.'

That sentiment still holds true today, and in recognition of it the Society this issue starts a new format junior section, put together by natural historian, Piers Hayman. Of course, we already have a number of dedicated young Forest and Birders who have joined the Society without the incentive of a special new section aimed at them — here mention must be made of the tremendous effort of 21 pupils from Tokoroa High School who recently became members. To quote from George Crabbe: *Habit with him was all the test of truth, 'It must be right: I've done it since my youth.'* No doubt he was only referring to good habits, such as belonging to Forest and Bird.

Please take special note of the advertisement for the 1986 calendar on the inside back page. This is to be our major fundraising project for the year; for that reason alone it deserves your support, but in addition it promises to be one of the best looking calendars produced in this country.

Finally, the new application cards inserted in the magazine are there for you to tear out to pass on to family and friends. Forest and Bird has been growing beyond expectations recently; with your help that trend could continue.

Gerard Hutching, Editor

Contributors to *Forest & Bird* may express their opinions on contentious issues. Those opinions are not necessarily the prevailing opinion of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society.

