



At Te Paki in the far north, beautiful Spirits Bay was zoned for clearance by the Lands and Survey Department, but pressure from the Society and others has forced a deferment of the Department's plans. This photo looks south-west to Cape Maria van Diemen.

Photo: A. F. Mark

1966 to protect important natural features, as well as to develop areas for farms. Pressure from the Society (see article in November 1984 issue) and others has led to Lands and Survey deferring development of Spirits Bay, a 2250-hectare area with high biological values. The Society believes Te Paki should become a National Reserve because of its biological and cultural importance.

At Waitere near Napier, a 1650-hectare land development block contains substantial areas of indigenous shrubland with relatively high numbers of North Island kiwi, fernbird and robin — indeed the highest density of kiwis on public land in Hawkes Bay. The Land Settlement Board has placed a three-year moratorium on the block to allow it to resolve the conservation issues.

The August 1985 *Forest and Bird* looked at the issue of Taranaki's Aotuhia Land Development Block adjacent to the proposed Wanganui River National Park, where 12 farms are identified for development at cost of \$10 million. Besides being an uneconomic proposal, it would also destroy shrublands which are ideal habitat for kiwi.

A further North Island issue, as yet unresolved, is a substantial area of the now rare monao (*Dracophyllum subulatum*) scrub on the Whakatau Farm Development Block in the Rotorua district. The case for reservation here is also compelling.

## Wetlands

The 1983 report of the Environmental Council's Wetland Task Force

highlighted the seriously diminished state of the remaining wetlands, and prompted strongly-worded conservation policies from several Government departments and statutory bodies, eg Land Settlement Board.

Several wetland areas presently being considered for reservation demonstrate a range of problems still being encountered.

Unauthorised drainage of wetlands contained within pastoral leases have undermined the integrity of important wetlands in South Canterbury (eg the Wolds) and in the Matukituki Valley of western Otago (Big Boggy Burn) while boundaries defined within the perimeter of some wetlands destined for reservation has undermined their integrity as ecosystems. This occurred with Borland Mire near Monowai in western Southland and at Kepler Mire, a unique string bog in the Manapouri-Te Anau basin of western Southland — in the latter case subsequent realignment of the fence has resolved the problem.

The Waituna Wetland Scientific Reserve in Southland is one of only two in New Zealand recognised as being of international importance. Here two adjoining areas of cushion bog, Awarua Bog and Seaward Moss, would provide a much better representation of the unique lowland cushion bog communities.

These two areas of Crown land are under threat from land development and possible lignite exploitation. Reserve proposals supplied on request by DSIR Botany Division in 1977 to Lands and Survey Department have received no action to date.

The nationally important Whangamarino wetland, of almost 10,000 hectares in the lower Waikato Valley, in which biological, ecological and hydrological values are all recognised — it is an integral part of the lower Waikato flood protection scheme — has been the subject of recent significant decisions by the Planning Tribunal, High Court and Court of Appeal. Two farmers who own land on its margin were granted water rights by the local catchment authority to allow them to drain their areas for farming. The Planning Tribunal dismissed appeals against these rights and ruled that the Water and Soil Conservation Act did not provide procedures for identifying and protecting important wetland ecosystems in perpetuity.

Significantly, the judge said the efforts of the appellants (including Lands and Survey) would have been better directed to providing for improved control and preservation of wetlands. The Department appealed this decision to the High Court and eventually to the Court of Appeal. Amendments to the law are clearly called for if wetlands are to receive adequate legal protection.

Coastal wetlands are equally vulnerable — the Aramoana salt marsh, at the entrance to Otago Harbour, remains vulnerable to industrial development, as is the Ahuriri estuarine wetland near Napier.

Coastal dunelands are seriously under-represented in the protected natural areas system and many important ones remain under threat. At Kaitorete Spit, which encloses Lake Ellesmere, native dune plants and ecosystems are threatened by sand mining (see *Forest and Bird* August 1984).

The Protected Natural Areas Programme is at present investigating areas such as Otago's Old Man Range. As a result, these magnificent tors and the unique vegetation surrounding them may be formally reserved.

Photo: G. Romseur



Some tussockland areas have been accepted for reservation as State Forest Ecological Areas. The photo shows snow tussock on the Tararua, just below Mt Hector. (c.4500 metres)

Photo: A. F. Mark