

Tussock grasslands

Major debate focusses on the South Island, but in the North Island the substantial upland Ngamatea red tussock-wetland near Taihape is being rapidly diminished through the injection of Rural Bank finance for farming. The area is privately owned, but given the high elevation and its importance as a water source, the use of Government money to develop it appears to be highly questionable.

Most of New Zealand's unique tussock grasslands are contained within the Crown-owned pastoral leasehold land of the central and eastern South Island — 2.7 million hectares or 10 percent of the country's land surface.

Several recent official publications have highlighted the lack of formally protected natural areas within this region. The Society is financing, in collaboration with Federated Mountain Clubs, NZ Acclimatisation Societies and the Deerstalkers Association, a fulltime researcher into the conservation and recreational aspects of this land.

The Society strongly supports the Government's recently restated policy of de-stocking, retirement and resumption of Class 8 and severely eroded Class 7 lands — areas that have no sustainable productive capacity. Many unique natural features of New Zealand are contained in these areas and virtually none have been formally recognised to date.

There are also important recreational values in these areas that complement those available in our national parks.

Values of Non-Forested Natural Areas

The protection of non-forested natural areas will serve a multitude of purposes that are in the national interest. For example, protecting wetlands and high-altitude tussock grasslands will improve management and production of water for a range of human uses, as well as enhancing soil conservation.

The education, recreation and tourist values of such areas will continue to grow as they become better known. An increasing number of eminent overseas biologists are visiting New Zealand with the express purpose of studying various aspects of these largely non-forested areas. Clearly New Zealand's non-forested natural ecosystems are internationally as important and as unique as the native forests which have received strong public support and official recognition.

Protected Natural Areas Programme

This was started in 1982 with the completion of an Ecological District Map, followed by publication of a comprehensive Register of Protected Natural Areas in New Zealand. This has allowed the reserve needs to be clearly defined. It has

certainly highlighted the dearth of reserves in the central and eastern South Island, especially on Crown pastoral leasehold land.

Over the first two summers seven ecological districts of the MacKenzie Ecological region, plus four ecological districts in Central Otago, together with part of the Heron Ecological Region in Canterbury, have been surveyed and reports are now beginning to appear. Other districts are also being surveyed in the North Island — that for the Raglan Ecological District is now available.

The organisational procedure to assess these reports and act on recommendations is at present being put in place. It will involve an initial assessment by the Protected Areas Scientific Advisory Committee, and subsequently by the Forest Service and Lands and Survey for land in Crown tenure, but also by the QE II National Trust for private lands.

Clearly, the substantial investment of finance and personnel now committed to the PNA programme, and the publicity it has received both here and abroad, has heightened expectations about what it will achieve.

Continued support for the exercise and its objectives will be assured from the scientific community. However, it is likely that success will be even more dependent on widespread public support, similar to that generated for saving native forests.

Society's Lodges and Houses

Bushy Park Lodge

Kai Iwi, 24km north of Wanganui on sealed road.

Historic homestead, fine grounds and view. 89 ha of virgin bush with tracks and trees identified.

Accommodation: for 12 in five bedrooms, single and double beds. Sleeps 18 with mattresses. Bedding, linen and towels supplied. Showers, drying cupboard, kitchen with electric stoves, refrigerator, deep freeze, cutlery and crockery. Bring own rations. Milk may be ordered.

Fees: (House Guests) Members \$14 single, \$18 double. Non-members \$20 single, \$25 double. Children 5-12 \$6. Continental breakfast available \$4. (Day Visitors) All adults \$2, children 5-15 \$1, Family \$3 or \$5. Closed to day visitors but not House Guests Mon & Tues.

Bookings and Information Leaflet: Custodian, Bushy Park Lodge, Kai Iwi, RD8 Wanganui. Telephone Kai Iwi 879.

Okarito Beach NFAC Cottage

Sleeps 4-6 in basic but comfortable facilities, water, wood stove, 2 rooms. Sited in historic township, coastal and bush walks, Okarito lagoon, Westland National Park and glaciers. \$3 per person per night. Bookings: Bill Minehan, Private Bag, Hokitika, Ph 734 Whataroa.

Patoka Lodge, Hawke's Bay

The lodge is situated 48km from Napier on the Puketitiri Road and

8km past Patoka, amid the 14ha William Hartree Memorial Scenic Reserve.

The Lodge accommodates 10 people. Extra mattresses and pillows are available to sleep up to 20. The lodge has a full equipped kitchen, including refrigerator.

Visitors supply their own linen and cutlery. The nearest store is 8km away. No animals are permitted.

For rates sent a stamped addressed envelopes to the Booking Officer, June Northe, 212 Kennedy Road, Napier, Telephone Napier 438-193.

Ruapehu Lodge, Whakapapa Village, Tongariro National Park

Ruapehu Lodge is now available for MEMBERS ONLY, and all bookings must be made with the Society's head office, P.O. Box 631, Wellington.

Fees: Winter Season (1 June to 31 October and Christmas and Easter holidays \$8.00 per night. Summer Season 1 November to 31 May) Adults \$6.00 per night Children \$3.00 per night

Full payment must be paid four weeks before occupation, (otherwise bookings may be forfeited) after which time there is no refund for cancellation.

No animals or pets are allowed in the lodge or the National Park.

There is no key at the lodge, but one will be posted ten days before occupation. No member may occupy the

lodge without first booking through Head Office, Wellington.

Tautuku Lodge, Coastal Otago

Situated 72km from Balclutha on State Highway 92, Tautuku Lodge on the Society's 550ha bush-clad Lenz Reserve in coastal south-east Otago.

The lodge is fully equipped and accommodates eight or nine people. Bring with you food supplies, bed linen, blankets, towels, tea-towels etc.

For rates apply to the Booking Officer Miss M. Roy, Papatowai, Waipati, RD, Owaka, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope.

Turner Cottage, Stewart Island

Turner Cottage, is on Stewart Island and is a two-roomed dwelling furnished for two people.

For details write, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope, to: "Turner Cottage", C/o Mrs N. Fife, P.O. Box 67, Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island.

Tai Haruru Lodge, Piha, West Auckland

A seaside home situated in Garden Road, Piha, 38km from central Auckland. Eight minutes' walk from the Piha store, with right-of-way access to the surf beach and close to bush reserves and walking tracks in the Waitakere Ranges.

The lodge is fully equipped and sleeps six to eight persons. It has a large lounge with open fire, dining area, and modern kitchen.

You will need food supplies, bed linen, towels, and tea-towels.

Different rates apply for winter and summer, for rates send a stamped, addressed envelope to the Booking Officer, Mrs B. Marshall, 160 Valley Road, Henderson, Auckland. Telephone 836-5859.

Waiheke Island Cottage, Onetangi, Waiheke Island

The cottage has comfortable bunk accommodation for eight people and has a stove, refrigerator, and hot water. Adjacent to a 49ha wildlife reserve, belonging to the Society it is in easy walking distance from shops and beach. It is reached by ferry from Auckland City (two or three returns daily) and by bus or taxi from the island ferry wharf. Everything is supplied except linen and food. No animals are permitted.

Different rates apply for winter and summer. For rates sent an addressed envelope to the Booking Officer, Mrs R. Roley, 23 Stoddard Street, Mt Roskill, Auckland. Telephone Auckland 696-769 (evenings).