

## Environment management shakeup — but conservation work must continue

The restructuring of environmental management announced by Government in mid-September concludes years of review and reorganisation of Government agencies with nature conservation roles. Implementation of the Government decision will take until 1 April 1986 and probably even longer. Meanwhile the important and valuable conservation work undertaken by staff in the Wildlife Service, National Parks and Reserves and Environmental Forestry must continue.

Our Society and our members acknowledge and appreciate the tremendous efforts made by those staff. We will participate with many of the public in the excellent holiday programmes which will be organised again this summer in our National and Forest Parks and Reserves. Environmental Forestry staff will continue their vital vegetation and introduced animal survey work to monitor and control damage to native forests by deer, possums and goats. Wildlife Service staff plan this summer to complete the first ever fauna survey of the whole of New Zealand and continue efforts to rescue many of our endangered species from the brink of extinction.

Earlier this year 1100 environmental staff within these three departments united to press for the establishment of a Conservation Department. Wildlife Service Director, Ralph Adams, spoke for many of these environmental staff in welcoming the Government decision.

"It's a constructive move towards caring for the natural resources of New Zealand ... and a real opportunity for the Wildlife Service to now work closely with those other organisations that will be coming together. It will lead to a far more cohesive approach, particularly in habitat protection."

## Representative reserve programme in trouble

The Government's 1984 environment policies promised that in implementing a strategy to integrate conservation and development it would ensure that "our remaining endangered species and ecosystems and representative examples of our full range of plants, animals and landscapes are protected".

Unfortunately the Protected Natural Area (PNA) programme fundamental to that policy is in danger of imminent collapse for lack of adequate funding and staffing. For the last two years PNA teams have surveyed Central Otago, the Mackenzie Basin and parts of Northland and East Cape. The work has been largely funded through Labour Department

job schemes which recently ceased. Lands and Survey which administers the PNA programme has been so far unable to obtain long term funding to cover the whole country for PNA (estimated at around \$7 million over the next 10 years). The fact that \$10 million can be found by Lands and Survey for uneconomic farm development in the shrublands of Aotuhia in eastern Taranaki for the third time in 80 years (see *Forest and Bird* August 1985), suggests a review of spending priorities is long overdue.

Our Society executive recently urged Government to give money to the PNA programme, and to ensure that their recommended reserves are designated — especially where this can easily be done on public lands. The new Conservation Department should have the establishment of representative reserves through the PNA programme as one of its central functions, since chances to preserve examples of our diverse natural landscape are rapidly disappearing.

Our Society plans to increase public awareness by running a series of one day seminars throughout the country. These will highlight what's left of our nature heritage in each area and focus on the diversity of wetlands, dunelands, shrublands and, of course, native forest that remain.

## Aorangi Forest — test case for nga whenua rahui

Aorangi ... "cloud piercer". Not the monarch of the Southern Alps but a spectacular flat topped 1200 metre peak 30 kilometres east of Taihape. The surrounding 4751 hectares of native forest and volcanic plateau cedar, toa toa and red tussock forms one of the nation's most important privately owned natural areas. It adjoins the Ruahine Forest Park and for years has been sought for protection by the Forest Service. Aorangi is a meeting place: native forest meets red tussock, sedimentary rocks grade into volcanic ash, predominantly South Island alpine plants grade into northern species and the area is rich in Maori spiritual tradition and values.

Until now Aorangi has been secure from development because of its inaccessibility, but Maori owners are seeking approval to helicopter log the block to at last obtain revenue from it. There is widespread public support throughout the Taihape-Rangitikei region for the block to be preserved. Local people are working with Aorangi Maori owners to explore alternatives to logging. Most favoured is the Nga Whenua Rahui (land preservation) scheme promoted by Northland Maori people and endorsed recently by Maori Affairs Minister Koro

Wetere. The scheme envisages a partnership in conservation through a protective lease arrangement involving a financial commitment by the Crown.

"Each case will have to be considered on its own merits", said Mr Wetere recently. In the largely deforested southern North Island protection for a valuable block like Aorangi must rank of outstanding merit.

## Waitemata Harbour Maritime Park

New Zealand's first maritime plan published in August is a good example of the dilemma we face in coastal planning. The Waitemata Harbour Planning Authority is the Auckland Harbour Board, the major developer on the harbour.

Because of this the plan shows a strong bias towards development:

- Pollen Island wetlands are zoned for port development. This saltmarsh island and mangrove system is the highest value natural area on the harbour. It has the only fernbird population on the harbour.
- Many of the numerous Harbour Board reclamation approvals need to be revoked. Some of these old reclamation approvals are in conservation and recreation zones, where no reclaiming should now be contemplated.
- Over 60 percent of the harbour has not been zoned. Imagine a County Council forgetting to zone 60 percent of rural land!

## Gerry McSweeney Conservation Director



Bush clearance for the Southland chipmill — Progress Valley south-east Otago. The Catlins coastline contains the last extensive native forests on the South Island's east coast. Much is in private or Maori ownership. Within these forests breed yellow-eyed penguin — the world's rarest penguin — in trouble because of bush clearance, stock intrusion and predators. Forest and Bird is encouraging farmers to maintain coastal forest and penguin habitat in the Catlins, and the latest news is that Maori owners have agreed to lease 2885 ha of their land to Lands and Survey until 1988. A long term lease after this may follow. The Society's 16-17 November Council meeting will be held at our Tautuku Lodge just north of here and will focus on forest and coastline conservation.

Photo: Chris Ward