



South-West support growing

Support is mounting behind the proposed South-west New Zealand World Heritage area advocated by conservation, recreation and tourism interests (see *Forest and Bird* November 1985). The West Coast and Otago National Parks and Reserves Boards have come out strongly in favour of the proposal.

Even more significantly, in early December the proposal was backed by the powerful Tourist Industry Federation — New Zealand's national tourism advocate.

Major advantages of this internationally-significant nomination are that it would ensure the co-ordinated, integrated protection, management and promotion of an extensive area of already protected natural public land—stretching from Mount Cook-Westland, south to Fiordland-Waitutu. Already the bulk (86 percent) of the 2.1 million hectares in the proposed area is either protected by policy or statute. Decisions on which parts of the remaining 14 percent will be protected are expected shortly — this includes the state forests of southern South Westland and the Red Hills of West Otago. Protected parts of these areas will be added to the World Heritage area at a later date.

Mana Island—a Wellington nature treasure house

The long awaited draft management plan for Mana Island is now up for public comment until 28 February 1986. This island is already nationally important for native wildlife and plants primarily because it is still free of introduced pests other than mice — its future potential however is enormous. Mana Island's remnant natural areas contain the threatened McGregor's skink, the gold-striped gecko and the giant weta along with the *Anogramma leptophylla* fern and Cook's scurvy grass. Sooty shearwaters and blue penguins also frequent its shores as do an increasing number of people, mainly for recreation and education as the island also contains several interesting historic sites.

The Society supports the plan and in particular recommendation that farming on the island should cease because it is uneconomic and that the island should become a haven for selected rare or endangered native plants and animals. A really exciting initiative which our Society supports is the proposed native plant planting programme. However, we do believe that there is a need to strictly control visitors going to the island as indiscriminate boat visits could spell disaster if rats were inadvertently introduced. Obviously the survival of existing or introduced nationally threatened wildlife hinges on keeping the island free of predators. Its overall management should naturally fall to the Department of Conservation. The Lands and Survey Department are to be congratulated on this excellent plan.

New deal for Kauri roading

Forest and Bird has achieved significant changes in the way that road works are to be planned and carried out in our internationally-treasured Waipoua Forest. Works Minister Fraser Colman finally conceded that the Society's criticisms of insensitive roadworks were correct after disclosure of an internal MWD report which also condemned the "upgrading" work. Before Ministry of Works bulldozer gangs are let loose along the remaining portion of the Waipoua Forest road they must now:

- complete a management plan of the entire route with full public involvement.
- undertake environmental impact assessments for each segment of the road to be upgraded in consultation with the Nature Conservation Council, F.R.I., Forest and Bird, MWD Environmental Design and other parties with skills in forest roading.
- conduct a staff-training seminar for all those in MWD involved in forest roading to explain the need for more care and to establish new techniques such as matting and single lanes around and between large kauris.
- restore damage to the forest wherever possible, i.e., remove seal and metal from base and roots, remove illegal dumps, revegetate machine-storage areas, etc.

Native plants and takahe more important than tahr and wapiti

Forest and Bird and the Deerstalkers Association have clashed over two introduced animal issues recently. One concerns wapiti and takahe, the other the future of the tahr, a Himalayan mountain goat. Early next year the Southland National Parks and Reserves Board are due to consider a proposal to re-establish the rare takahe in Fiordland's Stuart Mountains. At present this spectacular flightless rail is found in the Murchison mountains where it was "rediscovered" by Dr Geoffrey Orbell in 1948. Because numbers there are so low, Wildlife Service staff have been rearing birds in captivity with a view to establishing a second population in the wild — a move strenuously opposed by the deerstalkers who are worried that wapiti will have to be removed. The introduced wapiti competes with the takahe for the nutritious tussocks which form the bird's staple food.

Our Society gives its full support to the takahe liberations. Not only will it enable Wildlife Service to expand the takahe population but it will be insurance against the possibility that disease could wipe out the Murchison population. Although the Fiordland wapiti herd is the only wild herd in the country, the wapiti or elk is widespread in North America and increasing numbers of these large animals are being bred by deer farmers up and down New Zealand. It is sad reflection on the priori-

ties of some people that they should place a common introduced animal before the unique takahe whose numbers have dwindled to perhaps 200 birds. New Zealand has far too many endangered birds already and should do everything possible to rescue takahe from the brink of extinction. Himalayan tahr are capable of inflicting enormous damage on the high country (see *Forest and Bird* May 1984). The Forest Service is proposing to create a tahr management area between Arthurs Pass and Mt Cook National Parks, in which tahr herds will be built up for shooters' pleasure.

Canterbury University botanist Colin Burrows describes no fewer than 17 special alpine plants whose survival or distribution is severely threatened by tahr browsing. Tahr in the high country are an ecological disaster, along with any other grazing animals. This fact has been recognised by the Government — it has started to take sheep off severely eroded land, yet on the other hand it is proposing to build tahr numbers up.

At present tahr numbers are down to between 1000 and 2000 animals, and there is a very real possibility that they could be eradicated. In order to placate hunters, tahr numbers could be built up on much less important land — and some high country runholders are either doing so or propose to.

Forest and Bird opposes the tahr breeding area because:-

- Alternative areas to "save the tahr for shooters" have not even been considered.
- The area proposed for tahr management is of major ecological value containing a number of rare plants and unusual native plant and animal distributions even revealed by the few scientific surveys of the area to date.
- The area zoned for tahr management is largely a wilderness area and the proposal runs contrary to the operative management plan for this Crown land.
- The retention and development of a tahr herd in the central Southern Alps is likely to be extremely costly for the taxpayer.

Please write to the Minister of Forests, expressing your opposition to the tahr management scheme.

Kiwi reprieve at Aotuhia

If you want to get results — go straight to the top — Peter Winter and other Taranaki Society members proved the truth of this old adage with their recent success at halting Aotuhia shrubland clearance. They telegraphed direct to Prime Minister David Lange after they proved a number of kiwis were threatened by Lands and Survey's crushing and burning operations next to the proposed Wanganui River National Park.

(Continued on page 31)