



Leaving Tory Channel, early morning ferry.

Photo: T. Fitzgibbon

Gannets nesting at the end of Waimaru Peninsula, Pelorous Sound. There are now about 60 nests in use, developed from a single pair first noticed 15 years ago. Photo: Beverly Baseman



A further ongoing bone of contention has been the failure by some board members to recognise the importance of restricting public access to rat-free sanctuaries such as Maud Island and the Chetwodes, where rare species require vigilant protection (takahe and kakapo were recently transferred to Maud Island).

Despite the fact that new buildings cannot be built on the foreshore reserve, and existing ones have to be licensed, pine planting has been allowed down to the water's edge and stock have not been strictly controlled — what purpose has a foreshore reserve in those circumstances?

Exotic animals have not been dealt with severely enough by the board — even though Dr Geoff Walls' DSIR reserves sur-

vey shows many forests and giant snails are doomed unless pig numbers are drastically reduced. Captain Cook's legacy also returns to haunt nature on Arapawa Island, where a family has lobbied nationwide for ten years to keep feral goats on the island's scenic reserve, arguing they were a valuable old English breed. Finally last year, and at great expense, an electric fence was built to exclude all feral stock from the reserve. A similar fence is planned to bar pigs from the alpine community on Mt Stokes, where the plants have been severely depleted (*Celmisia macmahoni* and *Astelia traversii* are endemic).

It has taken a long time for the natural values of the Sounds to be recognised.

However, today most treasure them and want to work for their protection, and to allow sensitive recreation use — not only in the reserves but also in the forests regenerating over vast areas abused in times past.

The Marlborough Sounds form a unique recreational playground and — in the areas where the original vegetation remains — a scenic paradise. If conservationists are vigilant enough, they will be able to protect the regenerating forests from fire, bulldozers and introduced animals and it will be possible to restore some of the original forested beauty of the Sounds. 🐦