

BIRDS CAMPAIGN *in flight*

Nationwide attention was drawn in March to the plight of the kea and the yellow-eyed penguin when the Minister of Internal Affairs, Dr Tapsell, launched the Society's campaign to protect these increasingly threatened birds.

The result of the special ministerial launching was a commitment from Dr Tapsell that later this year he would introduce legislation to gain full protection for the kea, and a commitment from the Wildlife Service to work with Forest and Bird and other interested parties in putting together a yellow-eyed penguin rescue strategy.

Dr Tapsell's announcement that six keas had been returned to Otago's Remarkable Ranges was also welcomed. Since November 1985 members and the Otago public had expressed outrage at the removal to cages of five male keas found on the Mt Cook Company's Remarkables skifield. Dr Tapsell said he was concerned about the decline of native birds, and quoted a comment made to him recently by a Maori in his 80s. The man said that when he was a boy native birds had "filled the sky."

Society President Dr Alan Edmonds said now was the time to rescue uncommon and declining bird species rather than wait until they reached the brink of extinction. The little spotted kiwi was a striking example of a bird which had once been considered widespread throughout the forested South Island. However, to everyone's dismay a late 1970s survey confirmed worst fears: this unique ancient species was now confined to a handful of birds on D'Urville Island and a significant population on Kapiti.

Although both the kea and yellow-eyed penguin are not classified as rare and endangered, they are both in trouble.

Kea — reduced to between 1000 and 5000 birds, they have been maligned ever since Europeans pushed sheep into the high country. Bounty records allow us to accurately estimate that at least 150,000 have been killed by humans. Today, this magnificent mountain monarch, the world's only alpine parrot, is under pressure from skifield operators and the perils of parrot poachers.

The following steps need to be taken for the kea: immediate full protection, an education programme to convince farmers and skifield operators that keas should be accommodated, a major crackdown on poaching and an end to captive rearing. The sight of a caged kea is not an edifying one.

Hoiho, the **yellow-eyed penguin**, the world's rarest, needs forested coastlines



The kea and yellow-eyed penguin posters launched by Dr Tapsell, and available from Forest and Bird's mail order service.

near deep water to breed. Now reduced to between 2000 and 4000, this solitary breeder lives on the south-east coast of the South Island or on a few southern offshore islands.

New Zealand is a penguin paradise, with no fewer than six of the world's 18 species finding a home here. However, over the last 100 years this country has become less and less of a paradise for hoiho, principally because its coastal forest home has been progressively destroyed. Only six small areas on the mainland are adequately protected.

New Zealand owes it to the birds and to the world to safeguard the wonderful wildlife it has. The launching of the posters is the beginning of a co-operative effort between the Society, Government agencies, farmers and the public — showing the birds and the world that we do care. 🐦

Hoiho Campaign Fund

Since we started our yellow-eyed penguin campaign with the February magazine, donations have been steadily coming in, proving once again that our members are part of one of the most generous groups in the country. Your donations are extremely important. The world's rarest penguin is threatened by clearance of its coastal forest breeding areas, predators as well as damage and penguin disturbance by domestic stock. To solve these problems requires a major co-ordinated effort and a large amount of money. The Wildlife Service is now preparing a Conservation Plan for the penguin to set priorities for action.

- A full-time co-ordinator for rescue work is needed.
- The Society is helping fund University research work.
- We are negotiating to acquire key coastal forest breeding areas imminently threatened by wood-chipping.
- Conservation covenants are needed to protect other important forest areas.
- Fencing of bush remnants is vital to secure their value as breeding habitat against stock, especially on the Otago Peninsula.
- Replanting and restoration of crucial seashore areas is also needed to encourage penguins to forest areas further inland.

All this costs money. Your help is therefore essential to give the world's rarest penguin a future — please give generously.

Campaign total to date: \$2,484.00