

Challenging times

In contemplating my first editorial for *Forest and Bird* I look back on some very important achievements in nature conservation over the past decade or so. The period has also been notable for the expansion of the Society's involvement into most of the facets that its objective embraces: "To take all reasonable steps within the power of the Society for the preservation and protection of the indigenous flora and fauna and natural features of New Zealand, for the benefit of the public . . ."

From the traditional fields of forests and our indigenous birdlife we are now actively involved in the conservation of wetlands, coastal lands and the publicly-owned pastoral leasehold tussock grasslands and alpine lands of the South Island high country. Collaboration with several other organisations that share our concerns for some of these issues — as the Joint Campaign on Native Forests and the High Country Public Lands Coalition — clearly have strengthened our ability to deal with them.

Our highly professional and dedicated staff based not only at Head Office but also in some of the critical regions of the country are maintaining a high profile for the Society. Recently and in conjunction with the local branch, the staff have been highlighting the positive aspects of nature conservation by promoting nature tourism as an important aspect of regional development.

These are particularly demanding and challenging times for the Society, especially its staff and executive, as the new environmental administration for which we strived so hard and long, begins to unfold. There remain several contentious issues which have yet to be resolved. These issues include: the administration and management of the Crown-owned pastoral leasehold lands; unacceptable conflicts between a conservation advocacy role and a possible utilization (indigenous logging) role for the Department of Conservation; the need for a strong conservation research section in the new department combined with a stewardship role for the department to manage and protect uncommitted natural lands in the short term. I suggest that our achievements in the future are likely to depend heavily on the final form of the reorganised environmental administration. We cannot afford to neglect it at this time.

In no field of nature conservation would the importance of a well organised environmental administration be more crucial than in the reservation of adequately representative marine ecosystems, the main theme addressed in this issue of our journal. The need and urgency to add to our two existing marine reserves (Poor Knights and Okakari Point to Cape Rodney), both in the far north, is seldom questioned. Moreover, some enlightened legislation has now been drafted that allows for a greater range of reservations than exists at present.

Provided the responsibility for control of foreshores and coastal waters comes within the ambit of the new Department of Conservation, as now seems likely, the Society should be adequately rewarded for the effort it should invest in this aspect of nature conservation; too often it has been neglected in the past.

Dr Alan Mark, President



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Journal of the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc.

ISSN 0015-7384

Forest & Bird is published quarterly by the Royal Forest & Bird Protection Society of New Zealand Inc.

Head Office: Seventh Floor, Central House, 26 Brandon Street, Wellington.

Postal address: P.O. Box 631, Wellington

Editor: Gerard Hutching.
Registered at P.O. Headquarters, Wellington as a magazine.

Design & Production: Creative Services
Typesetting: Computype
Photoprocess: Reproscan
Printing: Lithographic Services