

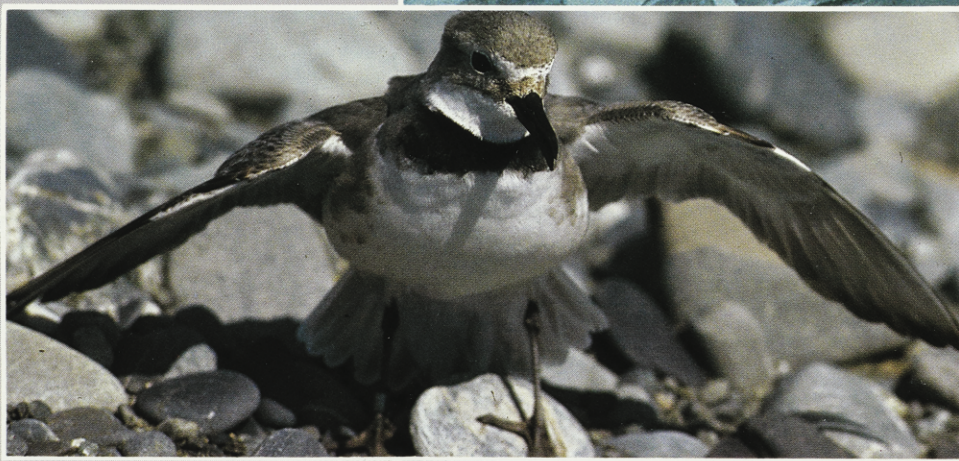
## Wild and Scenic Rivers

**T**he future of the wild and scenic rivers concept and the protection it could afford to Canterbury's Rakaia River (photo right), key nesting habitat for the wrybill plover (inset) now hangs in the balance.

In November 1986, acting on an appeal from Federated Farmers, the High Court ruled that a Conservation Order protecting the Rakaia River misinterpreted the intent of the 1981 Wild and Scenic River Amendment to the Water and Soil Act. Conservation and recreation groups have held high hopes of protecting our dwindling wild and scenic rivers by use of the amendment. Slow but steady progress has since been made in safeguarding rivers and lakes including the Motu, Rakaia, Ahuriri, Maitai and Lake Wairarapa.

The High Court decision could jeopardise that progress. Acclimatisation Societies have decided that the decision must be tested at the highest level possible and they are therefore appealing the High Court Rakaia decision at the Court of Appeal. The present Government came to power committed to protecting a schedule of the country's finest rivers and lakes in the revised Water and Soil legislation. This schedule has just been agreed on through consultation between development, conservation and recreation interests. Unfortunately the new legislation is now unlikely to be introduced to Parliament until 1988, after the next election.

Meanwhile there are strong moves from "free marketeers" to streamline and strip away planning controls like the Water and Soil Act (and the Town and Country Planning Act). Unless resisted these moves could introduce a new era of uncontrolled wetland drainage, water pollution and waterway destruction. *Photos: Rakaia: Graeme Loh. Wrybill plover: Craig Potton.*



Front cover: An article on page 2 of this issue marks the welcome addition of New Zealand's 11th national park, the Whanganui, to our park network. The painting on the cover is by well known artist Jonathan White and is reproduced with his kind permission. It strikingly depicts the ferns and bush-clad hill country of the upper Whanganui River gorge.

