

A legacy for our children

I have been involved in formal and informal conservation education most of my life, first as a student and later as a teacher. Over the years I have had my eyes opened to the extraordinary natural world in which we live, and in turn I have attempted to pass on the sense of respect I feel for things natural to generations of students. They have come on a range of field trips, experienced all sorts of weather and at the end of the day are never the same as they were before. They in turn have become teachers, conservation campaigners, civil servants. As we move through the 1980s, it gives me great heart to see the concept of nature conservation blossoming.

However, it can be too easy to be complacent and to think that what is protected now is secure for ever — forgetting that our national parks and reserves will need champions in the future if they are to survive the constant assaults of a consumer society. One need only look at the increasing urbanisation of New Zealand in the last 20 years to see that there is a major challenge to make people aware of the environment away from the cities.

Conservation New Zealand has performed a valuable service, but more of its type of work needs to be done. In our schools, too often general subjects such as nature study are sacrificed for narrow vocational training.

This then is the challenge to the Society as we introduce our *special conservation education appeal*. In this issue, our Society's Deputy President, Gordon Ell, discusses the reasons why we ought to focus on conservation education. Next month you will receive our annual appeal seeking funds for conservation education by our Society. I hope you can respond with your usual generosity.

You will no doubt agree it is vital that we provide a legacy for our children to be proud of. Nowhere is the need for this more immediate than in New Zealand's South-West. I first visited the region in my student days via the dusty roads of central Otago and Arthurs Pass. Later I made scientific trips to the Hollyford Valley, Secretary Island and Lakes Hankinson-Thompson in Fiordland National Park. I also made vegetation surveys of Mt Aspiring National Park and the Haast lowlands. In the 1960s I conducted ecological surveys of the Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau shorelines and later was involved with the Save Manapouri campaign.

Today I continue that association as Chairman of the Lakes' Guardians with the pleasure of seeing the research findings applied to the management of these important lakes. I was honoured to be with David Bellamy when he described Waitutu forest as one of the ecological wonders of the world.

Soon after you receive this magazine the Government could decide on the future of the south western forests. Kevin Smith's article in this issue shows us the extraordinary legacies of our Gondwanaland past — the great kahikatea forests, now virtually confined to this region, deserve our protection. Many of you have special forests in your own regions you are fighting for. On a nationwide scale, however, no challenge will be greater than the fight to protect our largest remaining unspoilt, natural area, the South-West. I urge you to give this campaign your full support. 🌿

Dr Alan Mark, President



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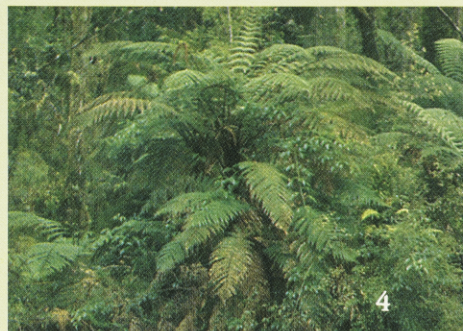
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