



Tropical Rainforest Report

Described as "the most pristine tropical island of its size in the world", Rennell Island in the Solomon Islands is currently under threat of logging by a member of the Wang group of companies.

About 2000 people live on the 69,000 ha island, and apart from small areas of garden, it is covered with untouched forest. Other facts about Rennell:

- it contains the largest lake in the Pacific (15,000 ha);
- of the 50 bird species, 21 are endemic;
- it is likely that more than 40 percent of the plant species do not occur elsewhere;
- the forest is not a big one and a logging operation would not produce much revenue for the Government or people.

As with many other tropical rainforest logging proposals, this one is being promoted in order to provide the Solomons with foreign exchange. As Minister of Health the Hon John Tapaika says, he favours logging because "we desperately need foreign exchange. Thus the selling of our much loved land and forest, which we do with broken hearts for the future."

One ray of hope for nations in such a dilemma is the "debt of nature" concept. In Bolivia a group called Conservation International purchased \$650,000 of Bolivian foreign debt, and in return the Bolivian Government committed itself to protecting 3.7 million acres of tropical rainforest in the Amazonian basin.

In contrast to this positive move, the World Bank, United Nations agencies and major international aid agencies have come up with the Tropical Forest Action Plan, to which they have pledged \$1 billion for the next eight years. Unfortunately, only 8 percent of this money will go towards protecting natural areas; most will be used for industrial uses of forests, agroforestry programmes and strengthening forestry institutions. The plan continues to propagate the myth of sustained yield logging in tropical rainforests.

Education and Extension

Our tremendously successful environmental education appeal has enabled the Society to employ an education and extension officer. Andrea Lomdahl started work at Head Office in November last year. Andrea is an Australian who has worked for World Wildlife Fund (Australia) for the last two years in publications and publicity; before that she completed a degree in botany and zoology.

Many of you, especially active branch members, will be certain to meet Andrea shortly — but please be patient, 50 branches is a lot to cover. One of her roles will be in assisting branches with their many publicity needs.

Fletchers Upset Canadian Conservationists

Fletcher Challenge Ltd, which has been posting large profits recently largely thanks to its successful Canadian companies British Columbia Forest Products Ltd and Crown Forests Ltd, is now running into major conflict with Canadian conservationists over the logging of the Stein Valley, claimed by the conservationists to be the last major unlogged valley in southwestern British Columbia.



The mid-Stein Valley, where Fletcher's subsidiary plans to log.

The timber industry has painted the issue as one of jobs versus preservation, while conservationists say it is time the timber industry started sustained yield logging and diversified into alternative ways of living — such as tourism. The Indian land claimants of the valley are also said to be opposed to logging.

Under the logging plan for the Stein, the lower and upper parts of the 1100 square km valley will be set aside as wilderness areas, but the middle section will be logged for 9 percent of its timber over 30 years. Therefore a logging road will have to traverse a "wilderness area" with its steep rock walls and narrow valley bottom.

A Wilderness Advisory Committee set up by the BC Government noted that the mid-Stein contained an important grizzly bear population. However, it opted for logging in order to keep mills in the region going, but only if agreement could be reached with the Indian owners to build an access road. No such agreement has been forthcoming.

No conservationist organisations were represented on the Wilderness Advisory Committee. Most members were from the logging industry.

Taiko Comes Out of Hiding

The mysterious taiko, once considered to be the world's rarest seabird, has baffled researchers who have been looking since 1969 for its breeding grounds. However, late last year the intrepid David Crockett and other ornithologists located a breeding burrow on the main Chatham Island, the first time since mutton birding ended in the early 1900s that a burrow has been recorded.

Wild cats and pigs found around the breeding area pose problems for the taiko, which has an estimated population of 100.

Books Received

Tuatara, by Don Newman (McIndoe, \$5.95). This latest booklet in the New Zealand endangered wildlife series centres on the ecology and conservation of this ancient order of reptiles. Excellent colour photos and clear diagrams throughout enhance the text.

Kakapo Country: the story of the world's most unusual bird, by David Cemmick and Dick Veitch (Hodder & Stoughton, \$39.95 hardback, \$32.95 softback). Another successful collaboration between wildlife artist Cemmick and writer Veitch, following up their Black Robin Country. This book mainly covers the last 30 years of effort to discover, study and conserve the kakapo. Consequently the book centres on Fiordland, Stewart Island and Little Barrier Island. Illustrations are a good smorgasbord of other plants and animals from these three localities. Cemmick's full page kakapo paintings are a feature. Let's hope the past efforts of the Wildlife Service and the future work of the Conservation Department will save this most unusual bird.

Images From A Limestone Landscape, by Andy Dennis and Craig Potton (Potton, \$65.) Dennis and Potton spin dramatic tales of the Paparoa's unique karst landscape in words and images. The authors capture the essence of our newest national park in this large format art book. One can only wonder at the timidity of the decision makers who procrastinated for more than a decade over the park's creation, by which time its original size had been whittled down from encompassing most of the Paparoa range to an area less than a quarter that size. At 28,000 hectares, Paparoa becomes our 12th and smallest National Park. In time the adjacent wilderness conservation lands of the Otututu and Ohikanui, natural treasures such as the Waggon Creek limestone caves which are filled with moa skeletons and the well known Croesus and Moonlight tracks should all be added to the Park.

World Birds, by Brian Martin (Pacific Publishers, \$49.95). A fun read for anyone interested in a "Guinness" look at birds — the rarest bird in the world (ivory-billed woodpecker); the most acute sense of smell (kiwi); the fastest and slowest egg-laying (cuckoos and geese). Slight bias towards British entries (the author is English).

The Dragonflies of New Zealand, by Richard Rowe (Auckland University Press, \$39.95).

Richard Rowe's fascination with dragonflies is conveyed in this excellent review of our Odonata. Well illustrated with colour photos, distribution maps, keys and diagrams, the text includes a chapter on the biography of our dragonflies and sections on each of the species found in New Zealand. This book should certainly stimulate more dragonfly and damselfly watching.