



Fiordland's Kepler Track Opened

The Kepler Track in Fiordland National Park, near Te Anau was opened on 21 February. This 3-4 day, 65 kilometre round track runs through the Kepler Mountains. It is a high standard tramp with good huts suited for people of moderate fitness. In opening the track, Tourism Minister Phil Goff noted that more than \$1 million for construction of the track came from his department in recognition of the tourism industry's debt to New Zealand's natural heritage. More than 400,000 overseas visitors went to at least one national park last year and Fiordland National Park was the most frequently visited.

Mr Goff said the Kepler Track was a much needed addition to the park's facilities and would relieve pressure on the Milford and the Routeburn tracks. Both tracks are now used nearly to capacity. 10,000 people walked the Milford track last year and 8,000 the Routeburn track. The Kepler track will be easier and cheaper for New Zealanders to walk than these other two tracks because of its common start-finish point and easy accessibility.

At the 28 January launch of our South West book Mr Goff strongly supported the South West New Zealand World Heritage proposal. Tourist and Publicity also gave the concept its endorsement in its recent submission on the future of southern South Westland forests.



Forest and Bird Distinguished Life Member and long time Fiordland National Park advocate Les Henderson of Te Anau cuts one of the ribbons to open the Kepler track. Photo: G. McSweeney

Congratulations to Telecoms

Only days before their transfer of assets, Telecom staff agreed to place protective covenants on:

- taraire forest around their Warkworth satellite station

- coastal landscape at Musick Point, Howick, Auckland
- walkways, bush and coastal shrubland at Makara, Wellington
- coastal cliff herbs below the Chatham Island radio site

In addition they agreed to reallocate more than 300 ha of wetland to the Department of Conservation on their Awarua radio site near Bluff.

Telecom's cooperative attitude was in marked contrast to that of the other state-owned corporations, in particular Electricity, which initially refused to even discuss issues over the land they were claiming — they wanted to own river and lake margins.

TBT in Mammals

TBT, the anti-fouling additive in boat paint which has been found to be extremely toxic to shellfish, has been found in the tissues of five dead Californian sea otters. The highest TBT level recorded was 1.2 parts per million, 50,000 times the concentration known to be harmful to oysters.

The significance of the finding is not yet known, but it is hoped that the proof that TBT can accumulate in mammals will lead to further research.

Meanwhile, the New Zealand Navy is pleading to be exempted from moves to have the paint additive banned in New Zealand, because it claims paint with TBT is "more effective". The NZ Navy seems to be taking its lead from the US Navy, which also wants to use the anti-fouling paint, and which has conducted tests supposedly showing the paint to be environmentally safe.

South West Tours Popular

Forest and Bird's special 6-day natural history tours have proved immensely popular with both our members and Haast people. The three tours last year and two so far this year have been booked out with nearly 150 participants.

The tours are being organised by Forest and Bird's West Coast conservation officer Kevin Smith to introduce members to the great forests, coastlines, wetlands and wildlife within our proposed South West World Heritage Area. Local tourist operators are also very enthusiastic about the tours whose leisurely exploration is in marked contrast to the mad rush of most visitors to this region.

Further tours will be run during the clear settled weather this July so members should write to Kevin Smith, Box 57, Hari Hari, South Westland for details.



Cole Creek Beach near Haast is one of the few beaches left in New Zealand dominated by the native sandbinding sedge pingao. Forest and Bird's Natural History tours are helping to keep it that way by weeding out any introduced marram grass to prevent it swamping the pingao.

Photo: G. McSweeney

Forest and Bird SOUTH WESTLAND ADVENTURE TOURS



Have the winter holiday of a lifetime in beautiful South Westland with guide Kevin Smith, an acknowledged expert on the area.

One definite trip is being offered: July 15-20. However, others will be added depending on demand.

These non-profit tours are organised by Forest & Bird to show members the heart of the proposed South-West World Heritage area. Walk through kahikatea forests, discover wetland birds in flax swamps, see seals and penguins along the coast.

All inclusive costs for transport, quality food, motel accommodation, guide, commemorative booklet. Remember: winter is the most settled period on the Coast and is an ideal time for a Coast holiday.

For further details, contact Kevin Smith, PO Box 57, Harihari, South Westland, or phone (0288) 33-090 (Harihari).