



Jason McCormick setting up the tool shed at our depot. Photo: Chris Ferkins

The second week on the job and the Corps members take a break from surveying the big job ahead on Mana Island, to observe a recently released pair of takahe and their new chick. Photo: Chris Ferkins

All the Conservation Corps pilot schemes aim to facilitate the development of young people through involvement in conservation activities which will:

- protect and enhance the environment and historic heritage of Aotearoa/New Zealand;
- increase their awareness of their potential;
- enable them to evaluate their educational and career choices;
- improve their employment prospects by

learning skills, including conservation skills, good work habits, communication and teamwork skills and by offering additional opportunities for learning and personal development;

- develop their knowledge and appreciation of conservation values, processes, and Maori perspectives on the environment;
- be supported by the community and be of lasting public value.

It will be a real challenge to all the sponsoring organisations to meet this range of objectives. The interdepartmental steering group responsible for overseeing the programme has every hope that the Corps members and their leaders will demonstrate clearly the merit of maintaining a New Zealand Conservation Corps.

## A Personal View

"My name is Ingrid Van Dooren and I am 17 years old. I am a member of the Wellington Regional Conservation Corps. What this means for most of the time is a lot of very physical manual work, track clearing and other activities.

Quite often I arrive home exhausted and fall asleep not long after. I wake up sore in my arms and legs and back and dash off at 7.00am with no breakfast to catch the bus to work.

The day begins on a Monday with loading the van with tools, hitching the trailer which is filled with wheelbarrows, weed killers and other things for the day's work. Once underway around 8:30, everyone settles down for the ride out to the day's work site. It may be that some people will be going to Kapiti Island and others to Mana Island or we may be all working at Pauatahanui Inlet or some other project – there is so much to do but so little time.

Before I joined the course, I was looking for some occupation involving outdoor work and I wasn't worried about how much I would get paid – which is just as well because it isn't very much, in fact it is less than the dole. I manage because I live at home and my parents provide for me, however others on the course who live away from home find it hard.

I like working with my hands, drink-

ing fresh water from mountain streams, listening to native birds and breathing fresh air. This is more valuable to me than money I could earn working in an office. I can feel that I am becoming fitter and more skilled in using my hands and my mind.

This has been my first job straight out of school and I really didn't know it would be like this.

Chris, our Supervisor, has an important role to play not only in organizing our work but in co-ordinating many other activities within the Conservation Corps. He carries a portable telephone wherever we go and he makes us laugh when we see him standing in the middle of the bush somewhere like Kapiti Island talking on the telephone.

There are 15 of us on the course. Two people have recently joined the course to take the place of two people who have left. We all missed them when they left because we are like one big family, going away to the islands and sleeping and eating, working as a group.

I think the best week that I have had on the course so far would have to be orientation week when we went and spent a week in the Wairarapa getting to know one another. While we were there we went abseiling, canoeing, caving, tramping and swimming.

By the end of the year we will have

completed some projects while others will not be completed for several years. On Mana Island the Conservation Department would like to turn the whole island into a nature reserve, to plant native trees and introduce native birds and endangered species but the first thing that has to be done is to get rid of every single mouse on the island, and I'm talking millions of mice. We are setting up bait stations across the island at 25 metre intervals.

On Kapiti Island we are digging a track about 800 metres up hill in solid rock and clay. The problem with digging tracks is that the more track you clear the further you have to carry the tools to get to the beginning of the track the next morning. Kapiti is a hard job but being there on a nature reserve makes the hard work enjoyable.

I am also looking after the seed propagation around the Wellington region. This involves going to places around our region collecting seeds from native trees and taking them to a nursery to start them growing so they can be transplanted on Mana Island.

We are a keen bunch of workers who believe in what we are doing and I hope that what you have read will inspire you and make you realise that the Conservation Department and Forest and Bird not only talk about conservation but are actively working to protect our natural heritage." 🐦