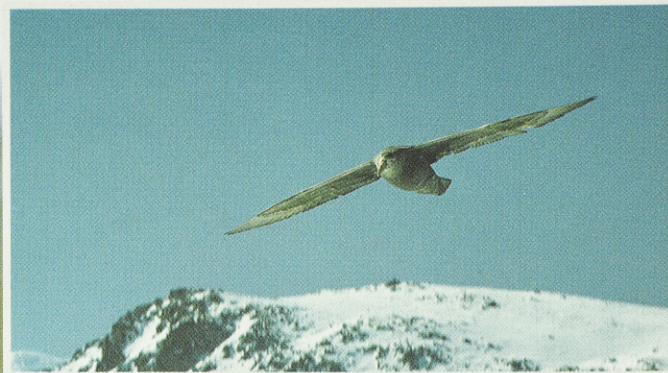




Below: With a six foot wingspan, the southern giant petrel has no natural enemies, but human disturbance around a number of stations has caused them to desert their nests.

Photo: Alan Hemmings



Left: This female Antarctic fur seal and pup are part of a population only now recovering from the near extermination of early 19th Century sealing.

Photo: Alan Hemmings. Opposite top: Courting snow petrels: the most southerly, and exquisite, of birds. Photo: Alan Hemmings. Opposite middle:

Penguins, such as these Chinstrap penguins from the Antarctic Peninsula, may lose their coastal breeding grounds to mining settlements if exploitation is allowed. In places they may already be competing with fishing vessels for their staple food — krill. Photo: Alan Hemmings. Opposite bottom:

The most southerly breeding grounds of the elephant seal are at Anvers Island, scene of the recent Bahia Paraiso oil spill. Photo: Alan Hemmings

future of the Antarctic as a place of unsullied and exquisite beauty, the next few months will be critical. We have to persuade the Government that it cannot proceed with the minerals convention and that it should instead be advocating the total protection of the continent through an Antarctic Treaty Park. With a commitment to compliance with stringent environmental standards, (and this probably requires the establishment of an international Antarctic environmental protection agency of some sort) this could allow the continued use of the Antarctic as a natural laboratory for the study of both specifically Antarctic topics and globally important issues such as climatic change and pollution.

If we want this to happen, we have now to persuade our Government not only to join France and Australia in rejecting the minerals convention, but to actively promote a comprehensive environmental regime for the continent as a matter of some urgency. 🐧

Alan Hemmings has spent the past ten years working on Antarctic, Sub-antarctic and Southern Ocean biology. His zoological research has been principally concerned with skuas, in Antarctica and, more recently, on the Chatham Islands from the Zoology Department of the University of Auckland. He currently works in the Antarctic Policy Group in Environmental Science at the University, where he is involved in Antarctic environmental policy development, including an examination of Antarctic environmental policy for the Ministry for the Environment. Previously, he worked for the British Antarctic Survey for four years, including two-and-a-half years in Antarctica, and was commander of the British biological station at Signy Island. Last year Forest and Bird provided financial assistance for his attendance at the Fifth SCAR Symposium on Antarctic Biology, where he delivered a paper on human impacts on skuas.