

NFAC merger. Inevitably that reduced conservation output. Since then we haven't had internal dissension so we've been able to concentrate on conservation results.

We are very goal orientated and don't suffer fools or bureaucratic inertia. Publication of the journal, branch or conservation newsletter on time, saving hectares of forests from logging, rescuing birds, cleaning up beaches, getting toxins outlawed, running good field trips and gatherings are all direct ways we measure our success.

Forest and Bird is unique. Its membership of nearly 2 percent of the NZ population is per capita a world record membership of an environmental group. It's also a distinctly New Zealand organisation – not a branch of a multinational group whose policies are shaped and strategies planned in far off lands.

*F&B:* What are its weaknesses?

*G.McS:* We have a number. There is a danger that we place too many burdens on our committee members. We desperately need more of our many members to offer to help on branch committees, particularly in our big cities. We also need those committees to welcome newcomers and be constantly on the hunt for new talent and enthusiasts. Another weakness is the risk we run of becoming monument builders through buying land and taking on operational responsibilities for small areas at the expense of efforts to tackle much broader environmental issues. The same amount of money to buy 10 ha of bush in the Bay of Plenty could instead be spent employing Ann and Basil Graeme for a year as Conservation Officers. Their work could lead to preserving thousands of hectares through their lobbying and negotiations.

*F&B:* You've got a background in tussock grassland issues and you've always been keen to achieve more conservation in the South Island high country. Has that issue moved as fast as you would like it to, and what have been the impediments in its way?

*G.McS:* Compared to better known ecosystems like native forests, it has been harder to make people aware of the 20 percent of New Zealand covered by tussock and alpine grasslands. Thanks to Alan Mark's efforts and Forest and Bird and FMC's campaigns, people now recognise there are important natural values and landscapes in the high country worth protection. Our High Country Coalition with FMC and the Acclimatisation Society has been central in getting the high country recognised as an issue and preventing the privatisation of these public lands. The stumbling block to getting areas formally protected has been the outdated Land Act. Fortunately this is being revised this year. I like to hope that in ten years time there will be a high country network of large Conservation Parks and smaller ecological reserves, and a close dialogue between high country users and farmers in the management of these areas.

*F&B:* Do you see environmental issues as non-partisan in political terms?

*G.McS:* Yes. The environment is everyone's concern. It worries me that by setting up Green parties or backing one particular party,

those parties that don't have your support may adopt a hard anti-environment line promoting all sorts of crazy developments and set us back years as Ronald Reagan did in the U.S. I think it's far better to challenge all the parties to make environmental issues a central feature of their manifesto. Last election it was interesting how both National and Labour sensed the importance of the environment and both sent out their environmental policies to all our members. I think environmental concerns will feature even more prominently in the 1990 election.

*F&B:* How do you view the Labour Government's record on environmental decisions over the last 5 years?

*G.McS:* I have already applauded their excellent record in removing subsidies and creating the Conservation Department. It has also been encouraging how they have tackled native forest conservation in the West Coast Accord, stopping logging in North Island state forests and saved the forests of South West New Zealand. Above all they have had an open, consultative style on conservation issues. I have found it a pleasure to work with Philip Woollaston, Helen Clark, Fran Wilde, Geoffrey Palmer and the Caucus Environment Committee who all have a strong commitment to the environment.

There are some clouds on the horizon between now and the next election. I continue to worry that new resource management laws will give regional government too much power and environmentalists will end up battling 14 different regional governments to establish environmental standards previously set at a national level. I think the Labour Government has been led up the garden path on Antarctica by our Foreign Affairs officials out of touch with public support for full protection for the frozen continent. We also need to watch Mike Moore's campaign to use inflated claims of jobs and revenue to destroy sensible and reasonable environmental controls which protect the coast and our reserve systems.

*F&B:* Do you see environmental issues dominating the political agenda during the 1990s?

*G.McS:* Yes. Whether we like it or not the 1990s are the last chance decade. If we can't turn around world thinking and action on issues such as greenhouse pollution, CFCs and tropical rainforests in the next ten years, we either won't have a future at all or if we do, it will be a miserable one.

*F&B:* Conservation groups are often portrayed as Pakeha-dominated urban-orientated organisations. Are Forest and Bird's links with the Maori community, farmers and foresters growing?

*G.McS:* We are Pakeha-dominated but we're not urban-orientated – probably the reverse. Many of our strongest branches are in provincial towns and these areas have usually also been at the forefront of our campaigns. There have been growing links with farming action groups on issues such as mining, protecting native forests and even on the high country issue. I've valued Sir Peter Elworthy and Hamish Ensor's help in finding a common ground between conservationists and

high country farmers. We have also recently found lots of common ground with commercial foresters determined to plant future plantations away from native forest areas. I regret that Forest and Bird doesn't have a strong Maori membership but that is not an unusual feature amongst voluntary conservation groups. Nevertheless, I have valued Ngai Tahu Sandra Lee's vital contribution on the Forest and Bird Executive. She has opened our eyes to the Maori dimension in conservation. Our awareness has been helped by working alongside Maori groups on issues such as Wellington sewage, the Kauri National Park, marine reserve proposals and native forest protection.

*F&B:* What have been the most personally satisfying issues you've been involved in during your time at Forest and Bird?

*G.McS:* There are three issues that stand out; the Crown land carve up from 1985 to '88, the South West New Zealand campaign from 1985-89 and most recently negotiating the forest conservation accord with Tasman Forestry Ltd.

The Crown land carve up started like a detective mystery. Our team pieced together the evidence for the misallocation of 600,000 ha helped by superb work by branches and members. Having published the evidence and established our credibility we were then invited by Government to work in the team negotiating directly with State corporations and DoC to sensibly reallocate the lands.

The South West NZ World Heritage concept originated from my 1985 Anzac fellowship where I saw how Australia was seizing upon World Heritage as both a conservation tool and to help tourism promotion. Since then our team spearheaded by Kevin Smith and Gerard Hutching promoted the idea through books, pamphlets, posters and calendars and the grand concept has been crucial in getting protection for the entire 2.6 million ha which will be nominated for World Heritage status later this year.

The Tasman Accord has been very important because it is a breakthrough in getting protection for some 40,000 ha of prime native forest in total. Because of the enthusiasm and interest of people like Bryce Heard and David Buckleigh of the Fletcher Challenge subsidiary Tasman Forestry and David Field of DoC, our Forest and Bird team was able to reach amicable agreement. The alternative of polarized bitter debate, legal actions and possibly mediation by Government haunted all of us involved in the negotiations and we were determined to show it was possible for industry and the environment movement to work together. I hope it will be a model to other companies and organisations in New Zealand and elsewhere.

*F&B:* What has been your involvement in tourism and do you see it as a natural ally of conservation?

*G.McS:* Through conservation work I've guided thousands of people into the forests and mountains. I spent 8 years in Arthur's Pass and Westland National Park co-ordinating summer nature programmes and visitor activities.

I also worked in Westland National Park at the height of the campaign to get Okarito for-