

est added to the Park. By showing it was possible to save the forests and use them sensitively for tourism it was possible to gain the support of many of the local people in South Westland against logging.

Since then, at Forest and Bird we have built on that concept to protect the Paparoas, the Karamea forests and the Tongariro Forest Park. Kevin Smith's excellent South Westland nature tours, Mark Bellingham's Chatham Island tours and my trips for Venturetreks in New Zealand, Australia and Malaysia are all examples of sensitive nature tourism instead of environmental abuse.

I think tourism is a vital ally of conservation. It is infinitely better than clearance of forests for logging pine trees or farming. Nature-based tourism is also a good way to create jobs and revenue for New Zealand built around our clean green image. It must be well planned and tourist attractions need to be well managed. Therefore we must be prepared to adequately fund DoC so its staff can do this. Equally DoC needs to be responsive to the needs of the tourist industry.

F&B: What are your reasons for wanting to run a wilderness lodge at Lake Moeraki in South Westland?

G.McS: Firstly, my family and I want to spend more time together. My Forest and Bird job has inevitably involved a tremendous amount of travel and a lot of irregular hours so we want a change.

Secondly, my wife Anne and I have a dream that has grown out of our time in Franz Josef Glacier. It involves offering visitors to New Zealand and New Zealanders a really

high quality outdoor experience from a comfortable base.

Thirdly, I think its important to have a staff turnover in all organisations. Kevin Smith has tremendous experience in the conservation field and will work with Joan Leckie and all our team to bring new energy to our Head Office.

Finally, we are keen to live in the wilderness again and give our kids a chance to grow up, not in a concrete jungle but amongst the rainforests and wildlife we have all fought so hard to protect.

F&B: What is your Lodge offering?

G.McS: It is an existing motor lodge, 30 km north of Haast on the Haast Pass Highway. It has new motel units, cottages, a caravan park and a restaurant. As well as accommodation and meals we have developed a programme of guided nature walks, talks, birdwatching, canoeing, hunting and fishing. Its location between a lake and the sea, surrounded by high rainforest and mountains, makes it an ideal place to spend a few days discovering original New Zealand at its finest.

Later next year we plan to establish a Rainforest Education Centre which can host and train young students who want to research the forests and animals. We have already received some sponsorship to build the centre and are looking for more.

F&B: Will you miss the political scene in Wellington and the interaction with other conservationists?

G.McS: I will miss it. It has been terrifically

stimulating to work with all the sensitive caring people in Forest and Bird, the Department of Conservation and others working in environmental fields. In particular, I'll miss the close team of Alan Mark, Joan Leckie, Mark Bellingham, Andrea Lomdahl and Gerard Hutching and everyone else on the staff and Executive. I suppose I will also miss the drama of the media and political battles we have fought on conservation issues. Obviously we will maintain a close interest and involvement in environmental issues.

F&B: Canadian zoologist and science broadcaster David Suzuki says that in 40 years time there won't be any wilderness left in the world. Are our work and beliefs just a token gesture?

G.McS: No. Most environmentalists are optimists and I think anyone who feels otherwise should read our Annual Report and think again. In just 10 years New Zealanders have gone from wreaking havoc on our swamps, forests, tussocklands and coast to an era of caring and appreciation.

A whole new environmental ethic has taken hold in New Zealand. I think we're now missionaries who have to sell to the world that message of living conservatively and cherishing our natural heritage. Our politicians have been effectively communicating that on the world stage and people throughout the world see New Zealand as a symbol of hope.

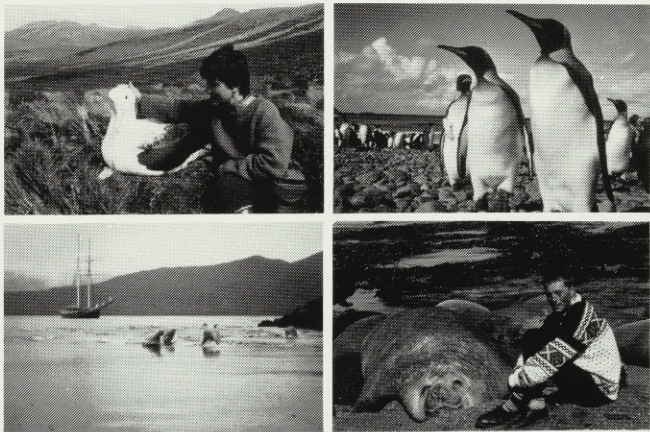
It's our job to maintain that reputation. I know Forest and Bird will continue to play a key role in doing that. 🦋

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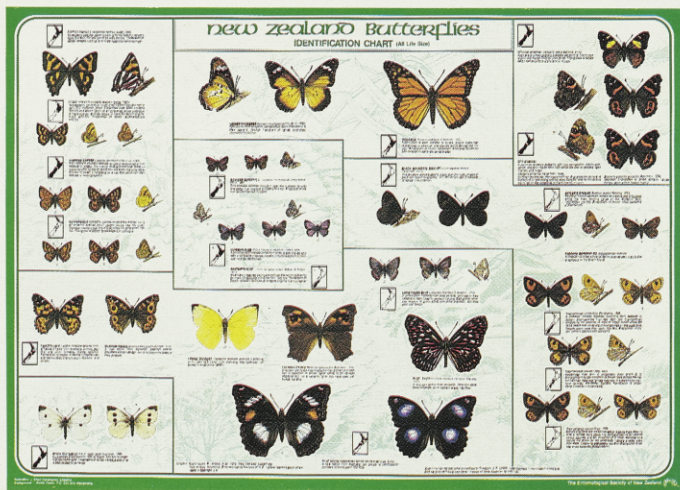
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