

Tourism Comes to Whirinaki

IMAGINE TRAMPING through huge red beech forest, dripping with moss and rain, the water sloshing in your boots, then rounding a corner and finding a pixie village of tents nestling among the tree trunks. No zone of increasing devastation that so often heralds a hut, just a blink from wilderness to home comfort.

Such contrast is the flavour of the 5-day Whirinaki Wilderness Trek. It is luxury tramping. Hot showers and toilets hide discretely under the pungas. A cordon-bleu dinner with wine is waiting at day's end. But still it is a very real adventure. Trekking 39 kms through forest and stream in an untamed wilderness will be a source of pleasure and achievement to overseas visitors and New Zealanders ill-equipped to set off on such ventures by themselves.

The adventure begins on the Mohaka River, rafting rapids that are exciting but not terrifying, to the isolated Te Hoe Station. After a night on the farm, where owner Jim Hali-burton has entertained those not inclined to rafting, the group is driven through a ravaged landscape to the remote Whirinaki Conservation Park. Local guides escort the party on the three-day trek, camping overnight at the tent villages. Emerging at Te Whaiti the group is welcomed onto the Murumurunga marae for



a hangi and their last evening together sleeping in the meeting house.

The trek is varied and original. It is run by the Mohaka Development Company in conjunction with the Ngatiwhare people and the Department of Conservation.

The local guides and staff are an asset. They are genuine kiwis, proud of their wilderness and their heritage, and treat their charges as friends rather than paying customers.

In this grand landscape there is a real sense of wilderness and the commercial venture is careful to tread lightly and display an admirable respect for the environment. Rubbish is carefully controlled. Scroggin is provided on each walk, but not barley sugars, lest the wrappers be dropped! Would that other

trampers follow this example!

We have destroyed the forests of the Central North Island until only remnants remain. It is good to see this precious forest being benignly used in a venture which will provide enjoyment and employment for many. This is an enterprise that deserves to succeed. 🦜

Ann Graeme



Plants to Protect

PLANTS (along with invertebrates) are the Cinderellas of the conservation world. While birds readily gain people's attention, plants are often overlooked.

A book just printed by DSIR Publishing aims to correct that imbalance and put more of a spotlight on our at-risk plants. *Threatened Plants of New Zealand* by David Given and Catherine Wilson points out that one out of ten New Zealand plant species are at risk of extinction in the wild. Wholesale destruction of forests, scrub and wetlands has seen whole populations dwindle to just a few individuals.

The new book replaces the *Red Data Book of New Zealand* but in fact there is no comparison between the two as the *Red Data Book* had no photos or maps and was not the useful field guide that *Threatened Plants* is.

Altogether 100 plants are featured, virtually all photographed in colour. Co-author David



Given is New Zealand's foremost expert on threatened plants, having written an earlier book *Rare and Endangered Plants of New Zealand*. If the publicity for rare plants this book achieves helps advance long overdue rare plant legislation, the authors will no doubt be more than pleased. 🦜



Authors of the Threatened Plants of New Zealand, David Given and Catherine Wilson.