



The giant map in Aotea Square showing the worst areas of ginger infestation. Photo: New Zealand Herald

Ginger out

A NUMBER OF northern Forest and Bird branches helped launch a campaign in November to stem the tide of wild ginger invading our forests.

At Auckland's Aotea Square the branches created an enormous map of New Zealand on to which heaps of ginger were placed to denote the areas where infestation is worst.

The public was asked to phone in to "hot lines" to tell eradicators where the plants were. Forest and Bird members and others then moved in and put the plants in local council disposal facilities.

Plant shops were also requested not to sell ginger. Those that do not stock ginger and other noxious plants such as wandering Jew and old man's beard, are being presented with a "forest friendly" award.

The Noxious Plants Council is now being urged to declare wild ginger a noxious weed.

NZ Dotterel update

AFTER TWO SUCCESSFUL breeding seasons, Eastern Bay of Plenty Forest and Bird's dotterel project on the Ohope Spit has run into new problems. Forest and Bird members have protected the nesting birds from people with dogs and motorbikes through public education and a fence around the breeding area. But nest predation remains a problem, and this year it was much worse.

Wild cats and stoats live on the Spit, and plentiful rabbits were a major part of their diet. However, in the 1990 winter the native sand dune plant pingao was planted. Rabbits,

known to have a taste for pingao, were poisoned to protect the plant, but an unforeseen consequence has been a surge in predation of New Zealand dotterel nests by hungry stoats and cats. With the assistance of DoC, one of our chief dotterel protectors Adrian Harrison has set traps throughout the dunes, and built a low netting frame to divert predators into tunnels which conceal Fenn traps. So far he has caught feral cats, hedgehogs and rats, all of which eat eggs, but the wily stoats elude the traps.

As the summer advances, tracks indicate that the stoats are becoming fewer in number, perhaps moving away as the pickings get lean. No chicks had hatched by December, but re-nesting will occur and it may be second time lucky for the birds.

At the river mouth of the tiny settlement of Otamarakau, Forest and Bird member Bill Te Brake is keeping an eye on two pairs of nesting New Zealand dotterel and variable oystercatchers. At the start of December he phoned local Forest and Bird officer Basil Graeme, anxious that the oystercatcher nest had been nearly swamped by the high tide. The next tide was to be even higher, indeed the highest spring tide for three years, and he was sure the nest would be flooded.

Basil, a natural improviser, suggested he lift the eggs, build a mound of sand and driftwood, and re-fashion the nest depression and eggs on top. Bill did this and was delighted when the bird returned immediately and sat upon the raised nest! The following day revealed where the tide had flowed around the nest, but it remained secure (and the three chicks hatched).

Spring cleaning

SOUTHLAND BRANCH members turned out in force during October for the annual track and lodge maintenance weekend at Tautuku on the Catlins Coast.

Cold southerly rain on Saturday did not deter a keen group from clearing the walking track through the adjoining Lenz Reserve, although the task of spring cleaning the lodge was greeted with greater enthusiasm.

Sunday morning dawned with snow on the ground (at sea level!) but cleared enough to make the final track clearing a sunny and social occasion. And all were finally rewarded by the song of the first shining cuckoo of the season.



Southland branch members at the start of the track at Forest and Bird's largest reserve, the 550 ha Lenz Reserve.

Greening Marlborough

IF NOTHING ELSE, the 1990 commemoration will leave a legacy of thousands of trees planted around the country, thanks to generous funding by the 1990 Commission.

Marlborough branch members played their part through a "Greening of Marlborough Project." Areas adjacent to the main highway between Blenheim and Picton were planted with cabbage trees, akeake, kowhai, flax and other native plants. Pictured are Marlborough branch members Margaret Peace (left) and John Watson in an area of swamp whose native forest surround was logged out 40 years ago.

