

## The Banks Peninsula track

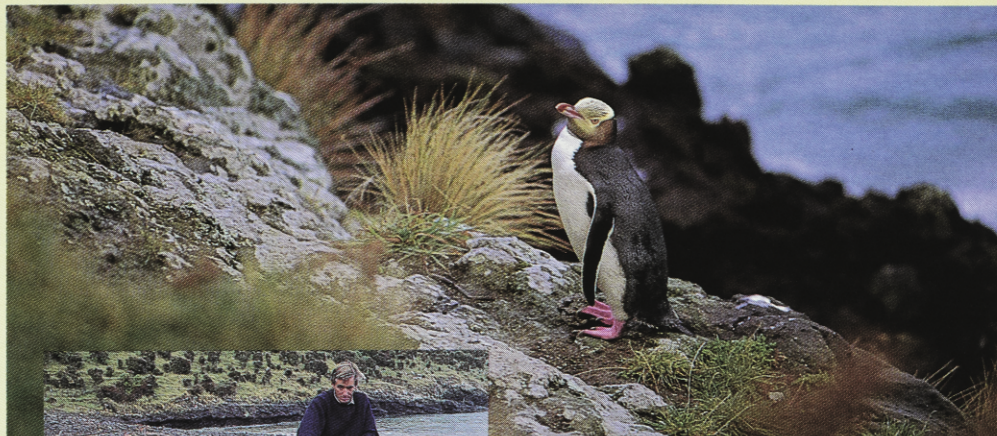
**B**ANKS PENINSULA has long been a special place for many New Zealanders, drawn to its two superb harbours and its picturesque rugged countryside.

First discovered in 1770 by James Cook and named after Joseph Banks, botanist on the Endeavour, it was thought to be an island until 1809.

Holiday-makers from as far away as Auckland spend their summers here, many of them in the charming seaside village of Akaroa, the town that so nearly became a French colony in 1840 and still quietly states its romantic past in street and family names, old grape vines and quaint, rose-covered cottages.

The south eastern corner of Banks Peninsula has always been the most remote; farmed by a handful of isolated families and, up until the last few years, seldom visited by outsiders.

When the whole east coast of New Zealand was hit by one of the worst droughts in living memory (1989), the rural populace had to look to diversification as a means of survival. Those separated from civilisation by high, rough and sometimes snow-covered roads were very receptive to



*Increasing awareness of the plight of the little blue and white-flipped penguins has several farmers out hunting ferrets. The results have surprised experts and added positive evidence as to why these birds are on the decline. Mustelids have taken up to 90 percent of chicks and 5 percent of adults in the colonies in the area this season.*

Photo: Lester White

*During the 89/90 season there was a 35 percent decline in numbers of yellow-eyed penguins on Banks Peninsula due to unidentified causes. Resting from breeding this season has enabled them to regain strength and condition, lifting hopes for 91/92. Photo: Lester White*

Gullies filled with lowland forest, small streams and waterfalls are very special features. One beautiful area of red beech is the pride and joy of that well-known bike-riding botanist and conservationist, Hugh Wilson of Hinewai. Not to be taken lightly, the track has some testing sections, so good boots and wet-weather gear are essential. Hut accommodation is provided.

In setting up the track, great care was taken to see that flora and fauna were not adversely affected by passing walkers.

The 1989/90/91 seasons were telling ones for local bird populations, with fluctuations in food supply, disease and predators all taking a toll. Despite this, the organisers are enthusiastically preparing for the track's third season, after seeing a number of positive benefits for walkers, farmers and wildlife. For contact details see advertisement on the Bulletin page. 🦜

**Mark Armstrong**



*Sadly, a common sight these days. Local DoC officer, Alistair Hutt, has been a tower of strength in working out strategies to combat this needless slaughter by ferrets. Trapping and poisoning programmes are underway. Ferret-proof fencing around one colony is a possibility. Photo: Lester White*

any ideas not involving travel. When a four-day walking track was mooted, ears pricked up and a business was on the drawing board. The result is a charming mixture of stock and horse tracks, open farmland, musterers' huts, old cottages and superb coastal scenery, all put together with the individuality of eight different landowners and mixed with a wonderful sense of history.

The 30 kilometre track has two shorter sections giving time for bird-watching, swimming, fishing and beachcombing.

## Kahawai update

**A**QUOTA FOR KAHAWAI was finally announced in October 1990, after years of controversy over whether commercial boats should be allowed to plunder kahawai stocks prized by recreational fishers. Amateurs have been furious about the continuing decline in kahawai numbers and the lack of action by MAF to control commercial exploitation (see *Forest & Bird* May 1990).

However, the amateurs are still not satisfied. The commercial quota of 6500 tonnes was a political decision by the Minister of Fisheries which lacked any scientific reasoning.

The kahawai quota of 6500 tonnes exceeds the commercial kahawai catch for every year up until 1987, when kahawai were already in trouble. The effect of a 6500 tonne quota is to sanction the continued destruction of kahawai stocks by the

three purse-seine companies (Sanford's is the largest). The commercial quota will also be shared amongst longliners, set netters and trawlers.

A total commercial quota of 4000 tonnes would be more sensible. No more than 1000 tonnes should be allocated to commercial interests off the northeast of the North Island (Quota Management Area 1), where there are nearly 200,000 recreational kahawai fishers. Recreational fishers could do their share to conserve kahawai stocks by adopting a four kahawai per person daily limit. The wasteful and indiscriminate practice of set netting for kahawai should be outlawed.

Another major problem is looming for the kahawai fishery. Many are caught as by-catch in the purse-seine jack mackerel fishery. Unfortunately, the Quota Appeal Authority recently increased the mackerel

quota for the west coast of both islands by a staggering 60 percent to 32,000 tonnes. This will lead to many more kahawai being taken as an incidental catch.

Recently a further 500 tonnes of kahawai was allocated as by-catch in the mackerel fishery. Recreational fishers are alarmed – they see no reason why this increase has been allowed. One solution to the by-catch problem in the mackerel fishery is to deduct the tonnage of kahawai caught from the operator's mackerel quota for the next season. A steep penalty for the dumping of kahawai would be required.

We are running out of time to save the kahawai fishery. If we don't act now our kahawai will do what they did in West Australia because of over-fishing – disappear. 🦜

**Mark Feldman**