



National Executive and Council meetings

THE FOREST AND BIRD

National Executive met in Christchurch on 15 November. The executive called on the government to seek a heritage protection order over the Kaimaumau wetland sold by Landcorp, recommended the protection of the Longwoods beech forest in Southland from woodchipping by inclusion in a conservation park and approved the nomination of the proposed Kaikoura marine reserve.

The meeting was followed by a Council meeting in Methven and a field trip to the Ashburton basin, the Rangitata River, "Erewhon" station, Lake Clearwater and Lake Heron. The council weekend was organised by field officer Mike Harding and members of the Ashburton branch. Councillors saw at first hand many of the problems of land degradation caused by grazing that affect the huge area (10% of New Zealand) covered by the high country pastoral leases, and visited a number of the lakes and rivers that are home to the endangered southern crested grebe and the rare wrybill plover. Councillors condemned the recent illegal drainage of one of the last remaining red-tussock wetlands in Canterbury and sought remedial action from the Canterbury Regional Council. The Minister of Lands, Rob Storey, addressed the council and supported land tenure reform in the high country to provide a mechanism to resolve conflicts between farming and conservation.

Labour Weekend Camp in Tongariro forest

TRAMPING, waterfalls, caving, white-water rafting and horse riding were some of the Tongariro forest attractions sampled by Forest and Bird members over the Labour weekend. Members learnt of the intertwined histories of the Whanganui River and the Tongariro forest that nourishes its waters.

The weekend provided renewed impetus to the six-year campaign for the creation of a Tongariro Forest Park to protect for all time the native forests saved from the Forest Service clearance in 1985.

The forest offers a pandora's box of unexpected adventures for trampers, trail bikers, and hunters. As the low altitude partner to Tongariro National Park, it languishes with tracks unadvertised, no sign posts and with pioneer Japanese honey-suckle threatening invasion.

The locals held an unofficial opening of a conservation park in December to publicise its attractions and to focus attention on the need for active conservation management for this major natural area of the King Country. At the unofficial opening, they were able to celebrate the Minister of Conservation's decision to proceed as soon as possible with the formal process of gazetting a Tongariro Conservation Park. (Many thanks to everyone who wrote to the Minister, and to Denis Marshall himself for acting on these letters.)

Forest and Bird are preparing a brochure about the tracks in Tongariro Forest. It will be available from Owango township, so visitors can enjoy this forgotten forest.

Basil Graeme

Kakariki and tuatara – who eats whom?

IN AUGUST 1990 we published a story by John Craig, *Islands: refuges for threatened species*, on the successes and failures of island bird transfers. One of the failures mentioned in passing was "the loss of Antipodes Island kakariki (parakeets) to tuatara predation" on Stephens Island. This set a cat among the parrots as it were.

Drs John Daugherty and Alison Cree of Victoria University fiercely disputed that tuatara were responsible for the decline in kakariki and claimed that the parakeets posed a considerable threat to species naturally on the

island and caused considerable damage to the remnant bush. They also claimed that the kakariki "were seen to kill at least two juvenile tuatara". On the basis of this letter we published a correction in the August 1991 magazine.

The conservation officer responsible for Stephens Island, Derek Brown, however, maintains the correctness of John Craig's original statement. While he knows of no evidence that Antipodes parakeets preyed on tuatara, he accepts that they "could be predators of juvenile tuatara while adult tuatara are almost certainly predators of the parakeets. The fact that the parakeets spend most of their time on the ground, and that tuatara prey upon very similar-sized fairy prions points very clearly to the reason why Antipodes parakeets failed to establish on Stephens Island."

Derek Brown does agree with Drs Daugherty and Cree on one point however. And that is that the introduction of the parakeets to Stephens Island was ill-conceived and inappropriate. He removed the last two survivors from the island in 1989.

New Zealand bird tapes

BIRD CALL recordings, the essential dictionary for birdwatchers, has received a welcome update with the completion of a series of new cassette tapes by Christchurch ornithologist, Les McPherson.

The tapes are the product of at least 20 years of recording, which began in 1969 with the recording of a house sparrow. The final result is seven cassette tapes containing the calls or songs of approximately 400 bird species found on the New Zealand mainland, territorial waters, offshore islands and the Ross Dependency. All but 14 of the species in the OSNZ 1970 checklist are included. Each species occupies about one minute of tape and is identified by name only.

The field recordings, half of which Les made himself, were not obtained without incident.

The Royal Albatross proved to be the most difficult, involving an expedition to Middle Sister Island in the Chathams group, then a jump from a small dinghy onto the rocky shore, and finally the scaling of a steep seaciff to reach the albatross colony.

Recordings of the rock wren, New Zealand's only true alpine bird, and the female blue duck, with the rushing water of its torrent home usually obscuring its soft growl-like call, were the greatest technical challenges.

The recording work nearly cost Les his life. On a night-time ramble on Banks Peninsula, while attempting to record spotted shags, a false step sent Les skidding off down a grassy slope to a cliff, and the shags, below. A tussock, on the edge of the 60-metre cliff face, fortunately arrested his fall.

The recordings are set out in a logical sequence on the tapes, with tapes five, six and seven containing most of the mainland New Zealand birds. Tapes can be purchased directly from the McPherson Natural History Unit. PO Box 21-083, Christchurch, for \$15 per tape including postage and packaging.



Les McPherson recording some of the bird calls featured on New Zealand Bird Tapes.