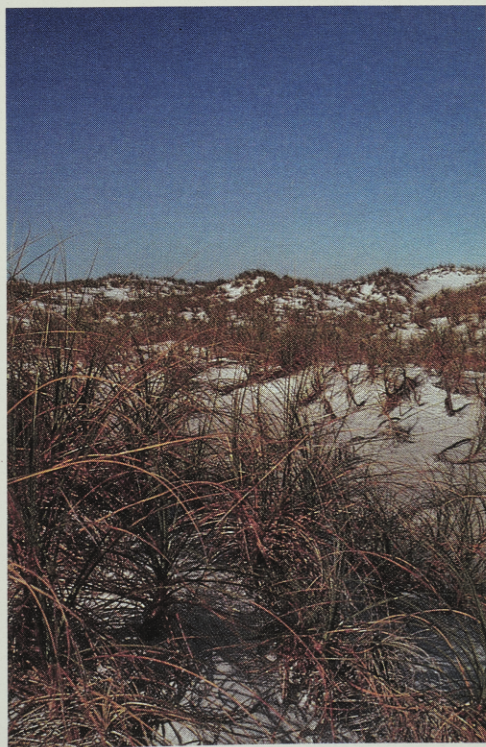




ROD MORRIS / DOC

▲ Caspian terns are one of the threatened species of birds that breeds each summer at the Parengarenga. Their nests are usually shallow unlined hollows in the sand near high-tide mark.



ALAN TENNYSON

Pingao on Kokota Spit. Te Hapua, home of the Aupouri community, is one of the major pingao weaving centres in the country.

for expansion over other areas of this harbour, and Houhora and Rangaunu harbours further south. In 1986 the Department of Conservation (with assistance from MAF, the Health Department and Forest and Bird) identified areas suitable for marine farms and areas of conflict with conservation values. If properly situated, oyster farms would have little conflict with potential recreational activities and would bring some employment to the Aupouri.

THE AUPOURI people are in a unique position to plan the future of their harbour and avoid the mistakes that have been made elsewhere. They have a low population density, lots of land and a harbour that could, once again, be a rich resource. By choosing their activities carefully, moving slowly, and planning ahead they can preserve the beauty of their home and still profit financially.

A low-intensity tourist industry based on camping, guided recreational fishing, bush tours, bird-watching and boat tours, a subsistence fishery, moderate numbers of oyster leases, low-impact farming tech-

niques, and restricted motel developments will bring the most financial gain with the least environmental damage.

But the lure of quick profits without adequate planning is a threat to future generations. Allowing a hodgepodge of old caravans, buildings and sheds to proliferate around the harbour will quickly destroy its beauty. Hunting makes the shore birds timid and unavailable for a tourist industry. Commercial fishing by pakeha or Maori will deplete the food supplies of the Aupouri people. Extensive oyster farms could destroy bird life and water quality.

There are many mistakes that others have made before. There is no need to make them again. The Aupouri people are custodians of a magnificent harbour. I wish them luck in the future. ❖



Mark Feldman is an American doctor with additional degrees in biology and zoology. He has held over thirty world and New Zealand fishing records and writes regularly about fishing and fisheries conservation.