

recovery programmes with just under half of the bird fauna endangered or vulnerable. Reptiles and freshwater fish groups also have a high percentage of threatened taxa while only five percent of all plants are threatened. All of New Zealand's frogs and bats are threatened. The small proportion of threatened insects probably reflects a lack of knowledge of this group.

The level of taxonomic distinctiveness of individual taxa is important in deciding where to put the conservation effort. If protection and maintenance of biodiversity is the goal we should be saving taxa with the highest level of taxonomic distinctiveness before those less distinct taxa. In other words a plant which is the only member of its genus has a greater priority than one which is one of 20 species in the same genus.

Our analysis showed that birds, followed by plants, have the highest number of taxa that are taxonomically distinct. Again this may well justify the disproportionate conservation efforts on birds in New Zealand. Birds, being at the top of the food chain, are also good indicators of ecosystem health.

ANOTHER GOAL of the SPRS is to identify major threats to taxa and how these threats might differ between groups. When we looked at threats of predation, competition and habitat loss on these taxa it is clear how much of a future problem exists to control and eliminate predators.

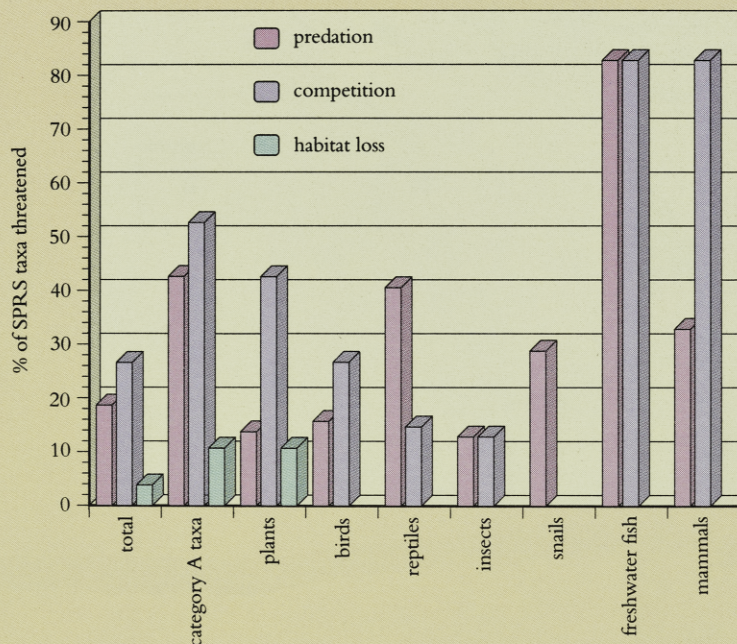
The analysis shows that predation and competition are the main factors that seriously threaten the survival of New Zealand plants and animals. Almost half of the category A taxa are affected in this way. It may seem surprising that habitat loss is less important but this is because 70 percent of threatened taxa are in habitats where we expect negligible change in the next ten years. While habitat loss has been a major cause in the past of the depletion and extinction of many populations, natural areas are now more secure with a large slice of New Zealand administered by DoC. However, the SPRS does not identify whether a plant or animal has sufficient stable habitat to survive in the long-term. All the taxa seriously affected by habitat loss are plants.

Predation is affecting the survival of a considerable proportion of mammals, freshwater fish, reptiles/amphibians and land snails, while competition is having its biggest effect on mammals and plants. The major factors are introduced animals (possums, rats, trout, deer, goats) and weeds, and the impacts of the fishing and farming industries.

GREG SHERLEY



The Akaroa weta, *Hemideina ricta*, is known only from one patch of bush on the Banks Peninsula. As DoC's Canterbury conservancy covers the Chatham Islands with its high number of threatened species, fewer resources are available for the mainland species.



Percentage of the 284 SPRS threatened taxa seriously affected by predation, competition and habitat loss. The main threats to these plants and animals comes from introduced predators and competitors.

MARK BELLINGHAM



The Te Paki kauri snail, *Paraphanta busbyi watti*, is gravely threatened as the few remaining populations are being ravaged by pigs. Pig and possum predation is threatening most large native snails.