



# TO SAVE A FOREST HERITAGE

*In the 1970s and early 1980s a circled sketch of two kahikatea was the grimly ironic logo of the Forest Service, a government department responsible for clearfelling and burning large areas of New Zealand's unique native forests.*

*In the 1990s these same kahikatea are a more appropriate symbol for the Forest Heritage Fund, a body established by government to work for the voluntary protection of native forest on private land. EUGENIE SAGE looks at the fund and its achievements.*

**T**HE LOGO may have been recycled but the resemblance with the Forest Service ends there. In its first two years of operation the fund had arranged the protection of nearly 48,000 hectares of forested land. The forests ranged from kauri stands in Northland to rimu and matai forest on Southland's Hokonui Hills, and they were protected at a cost of only \$8.6 million or an average of \$179 per hectare.

Less than a third of New Zealand's original forest cover remains. One sixth of this, an estimated one million hectares, is in private or Maori ownership. Much of it is vulnerable to grazing by stock and logging for timber, firewood or conversion to pasture.

The Forest Heritage Fund was set up by the former Labour Government in 1990 as part of what was to have been a

comprehensive Indigenous Forest Policy. A companion body, Nga Whenua Rahui, was established to work with Maori land-owners (see panel story). Forest and Bird applications were among the first grants approved by the fund in 1990. The funding covered fencing and survey costs associated with covenants to protect six areas totalling 350 hectares on the Chatham Islands.

The vision or kaupapa of the fund is "to protect through acquisition or agreement remaining indigenous forests and associated vegetation, particularly those containing old growth forest and forest of high ecological value". The kaupapa recognises the need to safeguard heritage values and preserve genetic diversity in flora and fauna. It also recognises the integral part that nature conservation on private land plays in a sustainable land ethic.

Both agencies have an independent