

70 years . . . 70,000 members

WHEN FOREST AND BIRD TURNS 70 next year it would be nice to celebrate with 70,000 members. Such growth would help maintain our leading edge among conservation groups as the grassroots movement which does most to preserve our wild creatures, special plants and natural habitats.

There are other groups which claim to be bigger but they don't have Forest and Bird's branch structure nor its active membership. Subscribing members are our strength. Gathered in 56 local branches and sections, they represent a very broad cross-section of New Zealanders. Their democratically elected branch councillors and executive councillors make policies responsive to that membership and guide the society's work.

When times turn tough we don't trim the ship by dropping issues overboard. Instead we find new ways of keeping up the largely voluntary efforts.

The campaign for 70,000 members may mean your asking a neighbour, a workmate, or someone from another social circle, to join Forest and Bird. Most New Zealanders have a soft spot for their outdoors and nature. Yet many don't know what they can do to protect their local environment, their fishing ground, beach or waterway, or a favourite holiday place. Forest and Bird membership provides them with a practical way of doing something.

Now is a good time for a personal effort to seek the support of such like-minded people. While disposable incomes may be falling Forest and Bird membership still represents great value. The magazine provides informative and attractive articles covering the whole field of conservation. It is now the only regular serious environmental journal in the country – sufficient inducement for many to belong.

There are local talks, field trips, youth groups, local conservation projects for those seeking a more active involvement. The society offers its members a cheap chain of excellent holiday lodges. Shortly we shall develop a discount system for the purchase of outdoor goods, building on our existing mail order service. Most of all there is the chance to do something, helping to save our environment and its special creatures, either actively, or simply by belonging.

It won't be easy to find 14,000 new members in these difficult times. Overseas and locally many conservation groups have suffered sorely through the economic downturn, dismissing staff and reducing their advocacy. Forest and Bird has had to tighten its belt too but we're continuing to keep up our conservation work, in large part because of our many volunteers and a loyal and generous membership.

Please try to persuade a friend to join the society in its urgent task of protecting the environment. It would be a nice gesture benefiting everyone to mark the society's 70 years in conservation.

Gordon Ell

National President



The opinions of contributors to *Forest & Bird* are not necessarily those of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

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