

## Branching out

Reports on some of the campaigns and conservation projects undertaken by Forest and Bird branches and field officers.

### Te Puke takes on the miners

IT WAS a daunting case for the Te Puke branch. In the face of ministerial approval they went to the Planning Tribunal to oppose a mining licence for a huge road metal quarry in DoC-owned forest.

For decades a small quarry had been worked intermittently on gorse-covered Crown land in the hills behind Te Puke. Then the operator applied for a further licence, to penetrate the beautiful Oropi forest on DoC stewardship land and extract up to 50,000 tonnes of road metal yearly. In 1990, against the advice of the regional DoC office and the department's policy guidelines, the then Conservation Minister, Philip Woollaston, gave his consent.

Our members built up a meticulous case to defend the forest and streams. They surveyed and described the forest and researched wildlife and geological reports. They explored the economies of roading in the Bay of Plenty and, in the deregulated market, found road metal both cheap and plentiful. They set out the difficulties of quarrying in steep, high-rainfall country,



KAREN BUDD

A Hochstetter's frog in the Oropi forest found by branch members while researching their case in the Planning Tribunal. This was the first record of this rare frog in the Te Puke area.

and the catastrophic effects likely on the network of streams and the native fish. Searchers even turned up a rare Hochstetter's frog, previously unrecorded from the southern part of the Kaimai Range, and brown kiwi were found in night time surveys.

The case was presented by the branch chair Malcolm Gray, committee members and

the society's regional field officer Basil Graeme. Their efforts met with only limited success. In November the licence was granted, although with both reduced term and area, and with stringent and restrictive conditions.

This is not an isolated case but a typical scenario for conservationists opposing mining applications. To the govern-

ment, DoC stewardship land is obviously the Cinderella of the conservation estate. Under the new Crown Minerals Act, however, DoC now has greater power to refuse access for mining on conservation land. All it needs is the fortitude to follow its own policy guidelines, and a Minister who is prepared to stand up to the mining industry.

### Marlborough branch 25 years

THE Marlborough branch celebrated its first 25 years with a dinner last year attended by over 50 people. Marlborough was the society's 25th branch and began life with 60 members. It now has more than 600.

The dinner was addressed by the branch's first chairperson, Stewart Kennington, and South Island field officer Mike Harding. Long-time stalwart Margaret Peace recalled a number of the branch's conservation projects and campaigns including the native tree plantings on Maud Island and the still unfinished battle for protection of the Wairau lagoons.

### A marine reserve for Whangarei?

FOREST AND BIRD members at Kamo High School have been busy over the last three years with a proposal they have developed for a marine reserve in the waters around Motukaroro Island in Whangarei Harbour.

The area proposed for the reserve is a fine diving area with abundant marine wildlife and is very accessible.

The students, with the assistance of their geography teacher Warren Farrelly, have put together a pamphlet outlining the proposal and circulated a questionnaire to assess attitudes to the idea within the Whangarei community. They have consulted with a number of local organisations including



WARREN FARRELLY

the port company, diving club and Maori groups.

The students hope that the reserve proposal can be formally distributed early this year.

A sea horse, hinamoki, one of the fish found in the proposed reserve. The sea horse coils its tail around seaweeds and feeds on small crustaceans.