

IF ENFORCEMENT and compliance can be effective in this instance, why don't we see more of it?

It may be that the public do not perceive the species to be actually under threat. Kereru being large and noisy birds often seem more numerous than they really are. Without public pressure it is perhaps understandable that a government department with considerable budgetary problems would give the difficult and culturally sensitive responsibility for enforcement a low priority.

Since its formation in 1987, the Department of Conservation has had a continual financial struggle to maintain and implement its statutory obligations. Despite these constraints, some threatened species such as yellow-eyed penguin, kakapo and kiwi now have the benefits of corporate sponsorship to assist DoC in well-publicised campaigns for their survival. How far should a species be allowed to decline before a rescue party comes to its aid?

There is a real need for an education and public relations programme to create an awareness of the problems and potential disaster facing the kereru in the 1990s. Enforcement alone will not solve the problems. Kereru poachers must be

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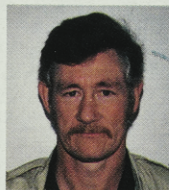
Mangamuka Gorge Scenic Reserve. Until recently the scene of large scale kereru killing, it is now effectively controlled by volunteer rangers and local DoC staff.

shown that not only are they wrong, but why the species is protected.

New Zealanders need to be made aware of just what is happening to the kereru before it too becomes endangered.

The kereru is now one of the few animals capable of ensuring the propagation of such trees as puriri, taraire, miro, and karaka. The decline of kereru in Northland is also a threat to the continuing survival of all those species.

There has been much said of the continuing cultural significance of kereru and the wishes of certain Maori in continuing to kill them. However the most important question that all conservationists need to address is that whether the cultural needs of some people outweigh the ecological needs of the bird and the forests. ♦



Ross Atkinson is a volunteer senior wildlife ranger in Northland.

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