

## Urban Conservation

I strongly agree with Kit Howden that a crucial battle facing Forest and Bird (and other like-minded groups) is to change the mind-sets of more urban dwellers — and above all the local authorities who are supposed to represent us (Dipping into the Future, *Forest & Bird*, November 1998).

As but one example, the Auckland City Council has been cutting its parks budget and staff while putting millions into dubious projects like the Viaduct Basin, which will mainly benefit a few millionaire overseas yacht owners.

Forest and Bird members need to look harder at their own attitudes too. It is fine to make bus tours to, or hold camps in, remoter and less spoilt areas but I feel we must do more in practical ways in our cities and towns. I was horrified that for a recent ACC so-called community planting in the Auckland Domain I was the only volunteer to turn up, though it was advertised in the Council's giveaway newspaper.

I realize fine efforts are being made by some, including KCC. But shouldn't we all be doing more 'hands on' weeding and planting where needed in our urban parks, and also pressing our local representatives harder to allocate more funds for parks and reserves, and conservation? Needless to say we must equally pressure central government and try to make MPs see the truth of Keith Chapple's warning: 'Without a sustainable environment there will not be an economy'.

Peter Russell, Central Auckland branch

## Gondwana/ Gondwanaland

I read with interest Shaun Barnett's photo-essay about the similar plant species to be found on the once-joined land masses that are now separate continents. (*Forest & Bird*, November 98).

Usually I teach this topic from an Australian point of view, focussing on the uniqueness of Australian marsupials or correlating fossil sites across the expanses of vast oceans, so I enjoyed the Kiwi perspective.

However, I am amazed that the term 'Gondwanaland' was used at all, let alone throughout the entire article. Gondwana is the correct term, replacing the out-dated and inaccurate 'Gondwanaland'. The reason for this is clear when you consider the meaning of the term Gondwana. The Gonds were a tribe of ancient people in what we now call India. Gondwana means 'land of the Gonds'. Obviously 'land of the Gonds' land' loses something in the translation. It makes as much sense as calling this country Aotearoaland!

Tess Riches, Hamilton

— *Tut tut! The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ecology gives us 'Gondwana', The Penguin Dictionary of Biology, gives 'Gondwanaland', 'named after a characteristic geological formation, the Gondwana'. Another case of Lake Rotorua redundancy, perhaps?*



## Seeing Crimson

Two years ago I was startled and affronted to see on a Project Crimson poster the introduced honey bee *Apis mellifera* being celebrated. Publicity has continued and now includes bumble bees (*Bombus* spp.). Both kinds of bee are naturalized in New Zealand and are native to Europe and there is no doubt we should celebrate them — I rate them as icons, alongside the brown trout and sheep, as adding significantly to the well-being of New Zealanders.

The genus *Metrosideros* (including rata and pohutukawa) occurs right across the Pacific and honey bees are probably important pollinators in all places *metrosideros* occurs. However, wherever *metrosideros* are found there are honeyeater birds equivalent to our bellbird, tui and stitchbird. These species, or their sorry plight, are more deserving of attention. The more humble pollinators such as gecko, native bees (*Leioproctus* spp.), flies and beetles have sadly

failed to be photogenic. Perhaps the concept of 'natural ecosystem integrity' could do with a little help to prove as successful as Project Crimson's objective of species restoration.

Since honeybees are so accepted in New Zealand, perhaps there will come a time when a small number of possums will be seen as adding significant charm to our rata forests.

Eric Edwards, Invercargill

## Bushy Park

I recently visited the Society's forest reserve at Bushy Park for the first time in three years. The difference was quite remarkable.

There has been an extensive possum poisoning programme and it appears to have been a great success. The bush is blooming and it was great to see the native clematis pushing through on the tops.

Bushy Park is well worth a visit and I recommend it to anyone travelling through the Wanganui district. The house and grounds are being exceptionally well maintained and the whole thing is a great credit to those responsible for managing the property on behalf of the Bushy Park Homestead and Forest Trust. David Underwood, National Treasurer

## Comparing areas

Prior to writing our various protest letters, about West Coast Timberland's plans, I converted their 98,000 hectares into something which is easier to perceive for the average human mind. If my calculations are correct, a square representing 30x30 kilometres placed on any map, shows the size of the operation. For those still living in pre-metric days that is a square of 20x20 miles, more than the surface area of Auckland. It surprised us, and I hope it may help wake up others.

Is it perhaps advisable to use more readily understood measures in future campaigns? This is not likely to be the last.

Hajo Topzand, Titirangi, Auckland.

— The conservation director comments: 'Point taken.'

## Pond Life

We endorse Clint McCullough's view on mosquitofish (*Forest & Bird*, November 1998). 'Damnbusia' are unnecessary in ponds.

We have a bush block near Warkworth, and three summers ago built two small dams to enhance its wildlife value.

The dams were constructed in swampy ground in a bush valley early in March. Within two weeks, as they were slowly filling, the surface of both ponds were black with mosquito wrigglers. It was tempting to add mosquitofish but we wanted to establish a natural pond ecology, so did nothing. There was no human habitation within 500 metres so we figured the 'mozzies' would not be a problem to anyone.

Within a few weeks backswimmers flew in, and diving beetles appeared. Although they were overwhelmed by the number of mosquito larvae that season, the following season was very different.

Early next summer, mosquito larvae again appeared. Diving beetles and their larvae, and large numbers of backswimmers, quickly gobbled up all the mosquito wrigglers in one week! That was two years ago and we haven't seen a mosquito wriggler in either pond since.

The ponds have settled down and now contain lots of native insects, snails, a few koura and several species of pond weed.

We have trouble with mosquitos at our residence in suburban Warkworth, but not at our bush block. It was just a matter of being patient for the first year then, once the natural pond ecology had established, 'mozzies' were not a problem.

Roger Grace, PhD, marine biologist.

P.S. Since first writing, frogs and tadpoles have arrived

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