

# mailbag

## Cursed lorikeets

Your feature 'The Curse of the Lorikeet' raises relevant issues about the release of caged birds, such as the rainbow lorikeet, into the wild. (*Forest & Bird*, May 1999). But with self-introduced birds the issue is not so clear-cut.

The author certainly doesn't make it any clearer. On the one hand he suggests that many of our bird species, now considered native, at some point came from elsewhere, filling some empty gaps. He then says we should be cautious in accepting self-establishing natives. Why now should we be selective, when this process has always been occurring? Is this not a contradiction?

If new birds are filling empty niches is this not a good thing, that nature is working actively to repair itself? Is it that there is a red patch on the neck of many conservationists that they think that heavy-handed control of nature is still the way? If it is successful and aggres-

sive or unattractive get rid of it?

James Drummond, an early naturalist, sums up the issue well, writing of introduced birds in 1907: 'Inquiries have failed to bring out any evidence of a determined or concerted plan on the part of the introduced birds to attack and drive away the native birds'. He goes on to say 'the native birds would have retreated in the same way even if English birds had not been introduced', and respondents to his questionnaire noted 'modern civilisation', 'bush clearing', 'rabbits, dogs, guns, cats and stoats and weasels' as the main reason for decline. *Scott Butcher, Christchurch.*

*The article raised questions which need debate: is a self-introduced species which destroys rare birds peculiar to New Zealand to be automatically protected or not? The problem occurs with other self-introductions, for example in the insect world, but unlike birds*

*these don't have automatic protection under statute. — Gordon Ell*

## Carving up the coast

Marine farming is also a form of 'Carving up the Coastline' (*Forest & Bird*, May 1999).

A place of unrivalled beauty, Golden Bay is cradled between the Kahurangi National Park, the Abel Tasman National Park and the Farewell Spit Nature Reserve. Given our surroundings, one would think our little patch of paradise was exempt from rampant industrialisation. Yet here, in the heart of the parks, we too suffer the same onslaught from coastal speculators wanting to amass thousands of hectares for commercial development.

Unlike land-based development, the target in Golden Bay is the intertidal and near-shore coastal marine area.

Mussel exports are the latest fisheries 'gold rush'. Nearly the whole of the bay is already dredged and

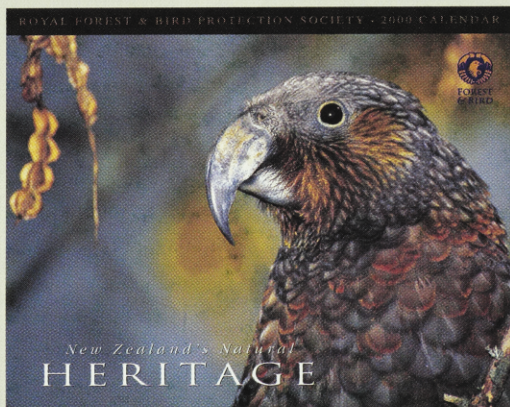
trawled regularly. Over 2000 hectares is already allocated to sub-surface spat-catching and mussel farms. Yet currently, an additional 1000 hectares are being applied for by the marine farming industry for standard mussel farm structures.

If approved, these farms will stretch many kilometres long, some within a mile of the coast. Thousands of black and orange buoys will litter the vast seascape, destroying the sense of remote wilderness. Industry will continue to cut into the very heart of Golden Bay's natural character.

The Tasman District Council recently made a sensible provision in our regional plan to keep all new marine farming three nautical miles from shore. Not surprisingly, this provision is being appealed by the marine farming industry. We are a small community, but we will continue to fight to preserve the natural character of our coastal marine environment.

*Michele Surcouf, Takaka.*

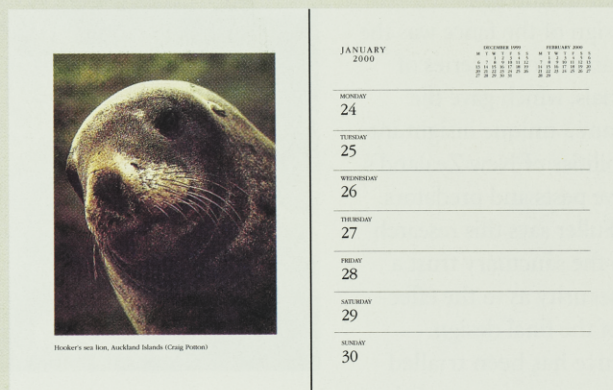
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