

# Birdlife International Meets

Two Forest and Bird members visited Malaysia in October to attend the first international conference since the Society became the New Zealand representative of Birdlife International.

Birdlife International is a global partnership of non-governmental conservation organisations focusing on birds. The purpose of the conference was to negotiate and adopt strategies and programmes to conserve birds and their habitats. The goal is to contribute to global diversity, conservation, and environmental sustainability. Such conferences are held every four-to-five years, and this time around 400 delegates attended.

Conservation organizations from 100 countries are either 'Partners' or working towards that status, as 'Representatives'. Forest and Bird was accepted as a Representative organization in May 1999, and the general manager, Lyn Bates, and Diane Menzies, formerly of the executive committee, attended the meeting. Their attendance was funded through Birdlife International and provided an opportunity to meet similar organizations, to gain ideas for conservation funding, and find out more about how Birdlife works.

The Global Partnership Meeting programme provided for 28 workshops on conservation issues, as well as training in subjects such as national advo-

cacy and networking, and corporate funding. Birdlife International encourages its successful partners to pass on their skills to developing groups and to tackle issues through networking. The workshops therefore generally began with brief presentations from a range of groups which had useful experience to share.

Of particular interest to New Zealand was the initiation of a small oceanic islands group, and a seabirds group, to tackle ocean long-lining and similar issues. The New Zealand representatives also took part in working groups on forest policy, and similar issues of interest to Forest and Bird.

The Birdlife Partners are organised in regions of interest and the meeting was the first opportunity for a Pacific Region group to form. The newly accepted representatives of Samoa, French Polynesia, and New Zealand, were able to discuss their priority issues for conservation, with the partner of the group, Birds Australia, and participants from the Solomon and Cook Islands. Alien predators are a critical problem that the Pacific region group shares, as well as loss of habitat and threatened species. The Pacific group developed an initial strategy, agreed to 'network' and to produce a twice-yearly newsletter. It also plans to expand membership, and to meet next year in Auckland. — Di Menzies.

A Global Partnership Fair, at which Forest and Bird displayed posters and material along with many other groups, was a focus for the Birdlife International conference in Malaysia. A former national councillor, Di Menzies of Christchurch (right), was one of the two New Zealanders invited. She is seen at the fair with Woei-horng Fang, vice-president of the Chinese Wild Bird Federation.



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