



Offshore Adventures with Forest and Bird

GORDON ELL finds many Forest and Bird branches are working to restore island habitats for nature.

The romantic vision of an island as a special sort of place is given practical form by many Forest and Bird members who are working to restore the habitats of islands around the New Zealand coast. As volunteers with community teams, and with branch projects, Forest and Bird members are making a difference in places as diverse as the Whangarei and Kaipara Harbours, the wilder shores of Wellington, and in Lyttelton and Otago Harbours. Others join as individuals in volunteer work with the Department of Conservation, at such distant places as the islands off Stewart Island and on the conservation islands of the north.

The fascination with islands is only part of the pull. The fact is that islands by their very definition are places where wildlife and plants can flourish undisturbed, defended by a natural moat of water. Forest and Bird people who work at restoring the nature of islands do so to create secure habitats for birds, lizards, insects and plants at risk on the mainland from pests and weeds. Their work ranges from eradicating pests such as rats, which threaten nesting birds and their young, to weed control, and gathering seeds and growing plants to restore the native cover of the islands.

Restoring islands has been part of Forest and Bird's practical work for a very long time: in his recent book *Kapiti*, Chris Maclean describes how Forest and Bird's founder Captain Val Sanderson visited that island in the mid-1920s endeavouring to get rid of goats. Similarly, physically active Forest and Bird members have taken their place alongside other volunteers working with the old Wildlife Service, (and latterly DoC), in projects ranging from cat eradication on Little Barrier Island, the nature sanctuary in Hauraki Gulf, to capturing rare and