



to Court for Nature

Forest and Bird members fight for the environment

Nationwide, hundreds of Forest and Bird members are engaged in Resource Management advocacy. Some cases go to court but most of the work happens behind the scenes. The variety and depth of cases is huge: here are a few examples of branch advocacy.

- At Mapua, near Nelson, members are involved in cleaning up one of New Zealand's worst dumps of toxic substances.
- Efforts are being made to protect important stream habitat in the Waitakere Ranges, and to oppose plans allowing clearance of native vegetation including kauri and other mature trees.
- Pests are the target of four appeals to the Environment Court, in Western Bay of Plenty, Rotorua, Thames-Coromandel and Carterton. In Northland a successful Court case involved policies and methods about the effects of pests and the spread of new pests.
- Controls on marine farming are being pursued in Marlborough as well as Nelson.
- Controls over deer farming and goats are being sought in the Western Bay of Plenty.
- In Wanganui, branch members have influenced plans involving forest clearance rules, riparian management and significant natural areas.
- In Southland the High Court agreed with Forest and Bird's contention that submissions to planning committees should not be read with absolute inflexibility.
- The Hauraki Islands branch is financing judicial-review proceedings against the Auckland Regional Council, after a four-year battle over reserve land that an applicant wants for a second airport runway.
- Advances have been made to protect remaining wetlands in Taranaki.
- Covenants have been successfully negotiated to protect wetlands and indigenous vegetation in other regions.
- In other cases, protection has been secured for archaeological sites, coastal access, connecting walkways, wildlife corridors, and even single trees standing in paddocks.
- In Gisborne, an appeal has just been heard against a consent to allow vegetation clearance in an area recommended for protection.

The value of this effort by branch volunteers can in part be measured. If Forest and Bird had to 'buy' this expertise on the open market its annual expenditure would increase by at least \$100,000-\$150,000.

— Keith Chapple, National President.

Lake Heron is the largest of the high-country lakes in the Ashburton Basin. It is regarded as the most important lake/wetland complex for wildlife anywhere in the eastern South Island high-country. Present protection includes only the lake and a 40-metre strip around its shore. Forest and Bird is hoping that stronger land-use controls incorporated into the district plan, following an appeal to the Environment Court, will better protect the natural values of the whole Ashburton Lakes area.

The Act can also be used to safeguard the margins of rivers, lakes and the coast, and to preserve the natural character of the coastal marine area out to a distance of 12 nautical miles.

Important gains for conservation have resulted. Councils have responded to submissions presented by Forest and Bird, the Department of Conservation and others, by sometimes amending their plans to better recognize and protect natural values. They do this through measures such as rules controlling the drainage of wetlands