

branchingout

Enjoying the Aramoana salt marsh

Aramoana, at the mouth of Otago Harbour, is a peaceful spot despite the tragedy associated with the name. Almost closing the Otago Harbour entrance, Aramoana is a sandspit with long beaches and a small settlement of houses. From it, the distant white dots of nesting albatrosses can be seen on Taiaroa Heads, across the harbour entrance.

Inland of the spit is an extensive salt marsh; haven for kingfishers, godwits and other waders, and the habitat of some dozen plants that relish the salty environment — *sarcocornia quinqueflora*, shore pimpernel, saltmarsh musk, sedges, jointed rush and others.

This was the area which, in 1981 sparked a 'war' between environmentalists and the 'developers' who saw it as the site for a large aluminium smelter with a deepwater jetty. Not even the threat of setting up the 'Independent State of Aramoana' deterred them. The plan was finally scotched by an independent economic study showing up the financial absurdity of the venture.

The very sensitive environment is indicated by a few vehicle 'wheelie' scars still there years after they were made. Some years ago, the Dunedin

branch of Forest and Bird proposed a board walk with descriptive plates, so that the marsh could be appreciated without wear and tear from wandering feet. The Department of Conservation, the local runanga and the Aramoana inhabitants were keen, and generous finance was made available by the Marjorie Barclay Trust.

Now at last, with regular prodding from Forest and Bird, DoC has completed a very satisfying approach track and board walk. At the opening ceremony a large crowd of locals and interested people listened to Dunedin's mayor Sukhi Turner, Jeff Connell (DoC), Alan Mark (Forest and Bird), Edward Ellison (for the Otakou runanga), and Gordon Johnston (for the local inhabitants). They spoke of the unique scientific, aesthetic and social values, and expressed their relief that this local asset had been saved from economic 'progress' and made accessible to visitors and school parties. The ribbon was cut by Rosina Scott-Fyfe and Ruth Walker of the Kiwi Conservation Club, and the afternoon ended with a sociable gathering in the Aramoana community hall.

— John Dawson.

Dunedin's Mayor, Sukhi Turner on the new boardwalk at Aramoana, Otago Harbour.



This sculpture, inspired by a tin of Kiwi-brand polish, was the winning entry in the Wanganui branch's 'Kiwis for Kiwis' art award. The winner is Lance Hayes, seen here with Forest and Bird's national president, Keith Chapple (right).

Wanganui's kiwi art show

The Quay School of the Arts gallery played host to the Wanganui Branch's major project for the year — a 'Kiwis for Kiwis' art award. The exhibition featuring the plight of the kiwi, was mounted by Quay School students and invited Wanganui-based artists.

Keith Chapple, Forest and Bird's president opened the show with a sober reflection on kiwi mortality in the Wanganui region, and a call for a major boost in funding to save the kiwi.

'This is the second year we have run an exhibition to feature the natural heritage of the

district and we are pleased with the support and publicity it has generated,' says chairman Brian Milham.

The exhibition was judged by Jill Pettis MP, Forest and Bird committee member Ray Hutchison, and a student, Teresa Goodin.

'A message of concern that time is running out for the kiwi came through very strongly. We found this work powerful and creatively brilliant,' the judges commented.

The winner was Lance Hayes with a sculpture 'Neutral Tan' which he based on a Kiwi polish tin.

Repairing Wairarapa Wilderness

Two projects of Wairarapa Forest and Bird aim at restoring natural values in the area.

A 'pest eradication assistance programme' is run in partnership with the local branch of Ducks Unlimited. The scheme targets the mustelids (ferrets, weasels and stoats) which are such serious predators of native birds. Under the scheme, Fenn and Timms traps are hired to local farmers, and others, along with advice on how to get rid of pests. Funds for the traps came from successful grant applications.

A second project seeks to raise 40,000 native seedlings; a symbolic number representing a tree for every resident of

Wairarapa. The trees are to be planted out this year and next.

The community at large, including schools, will be encouraged to become involved in the planting of selected sites. It is hoped the endeavour will focus attention on the tremendous loss of indigenous flora and fauna through the last 150 years, and the imperative for a better environmental ethic in the next.

Five previously unemployed people are involved under an employment promotion scheme funded by the Masterton District Council and Work and Income New Zealand. There has also been support from the Lottery Millennium Fund.

— Chris Peterson