

Keeping Lake Taupo Clean, Blue



GORDON ELL, BUSH FILMS

Ways of preserving the traditional values and cleanliness of New Zealand's largest lake are currently under discussion in Taupo. The issues include contamination from lead weights, jet-skis, sewage from boats, fluctuating water levels, lake weed, contaminants in the storm-water entering the lake, black swan numbers and their excreta, and the future threat of nutrients from farms converted to dairying.

A group of people concerned about Lake Taupo, and members of the public who may join them and speak at the group's monthly meetings, contribute knowledge, skills, concerns and problem-solving guidance to the Taupo Lakes and Waterways Action Group. This is one of three groups formed by the Taupo District Council in 1997 in response to the needs of the council's strategic plan and the wishes of the community it

serves.

Many of the values the community wishes to preserve are fairly obvious — waters must be clear, safe to drink and swim in, and free of weeds. High-quality rivers and streams must sustain Taupo's world-renowned trout fishery. It is essential to preserve lake-margin wilderness, the high-quality foreshore reserves, a wide range of recreational opportunities, and diverse natural habitats. The cultural significance of some areas must also be allowed for. Unique geological features need to be protected.

Guided by these values and needs, many of the organizations involved, and concerned local citizens, meet at monthly evening forums. They include representatives of Forest and Bird who join with people from the Department of Conservation, fishing guides, forest managers, district councillors and officers,

Environment Waikato, Taupo Civic Trust, Federated Farmers, Maori trusts, hydro-electricity generators, and the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Science, to mention many of them.

So valuable has the action group's contribution become, that the district council has now formalized recognition of the group and the work it is doing. It has also reinforced the Council's ongoing secretarial role by ensuring that such work is built into their officer's job-specifications in future — to guarantee an uninterrupted succession of action-group administration if an employee leaves.

The group has no statutory obligations, nor power to enforce solutions to problems. So it is pleased that the council will take up one of its early recommendations — that Lake Taupo be declared a 'National Treasure' (or 'Asset' or 'Icon'). Another of its initial sugges-

The 'clean-blue' image of Lake Taupo is the concern of a broad group of community organizations advising the Taupo District Council, through the Taupo Lakes and Waterways Group. The forum identifies problems and suggests solutions regarding the maintenance of water quality and habitat about the lake.

tions that key stake-holders in the continued health of the Taupo environment should come together and pledge themselves to a Lake Taupo Accord is on hold at present.

If implemented, those two suggestions will do wonders for the ever-burgeoning Taupo tourist industry. And yet the industry appears to believe the place can never deteriorate — that its 'use-by date' is stamped 'indefinite'. Three annual Tourist Industry Forums called by the district council's marketing arm failed to mention any concern for the environment. So it was good to hear the incoming Minister of Tourism, Mark Burton, at the fourth forum in January this year, underline the necessity for environmental care and enhancement if we are to sustain Taupo's clean-green and clean-blue image.

— John Parsons.

Native Plants for the Wellington Region

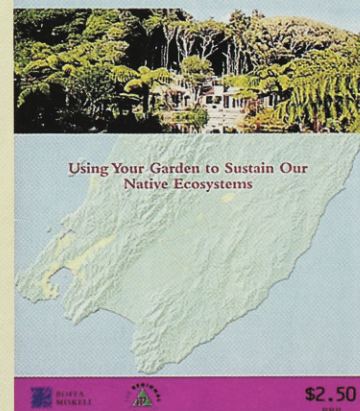
Following a recent Northland initiative, the Wellington Regional Council has now produced a native-planting guide for local conditions, which is even more useful. Taking the approach of 'using your garden to sustain our native ecosystems' the *Wellington Regional Native Plant Guide* is a 32-page booklet containing a wealth of valuable information. It divides the region into 16 planting zones, extending from the exposed and rocky coastal strip, to the Otaki-Waikanae alluvial terraces, the inland Wairarapa hill country, and the mountain ranges of the southern North Island.

The guide lists plants suited to local conditions, matching species with various environments. It offers plants that encourage native birds to visit the garden, and plants that keep streams and wetlands healthy. The gardener picks the likely zone from a locality map but can check in finer detail by consulting a list of suburbs to confirm the choice. From there, a zone page recommends what to plant. These include 'heritage' trees — the potential forest giants — and smaller trees with likely sizes indicated; also shrubs, climbers and scramblers, grasses, sedges and rushes, and ferns.

Each zone page includes an interesting list of environmental factors which will influence the plants. There is also an indication of past landscapes, describing lost habitats and the kinds of plants which distinguished them. Several pages also carry colour pictures of outstanding species. A 'main list' includes all the plants in the book, marked with environmental symbols for those wanting to know what other species to consider for their locality: it also includes lists of scientific and Maori names.

There is an amazing amount of helpful detail crammed into this little book. Copies are available at

Wellington Regional Native Plant Guide



\$2.50 each from a number of specialist shops — the telephone lists at regional council offices have a list of these outlets to help enquirers.