

wildlife too. Even the exotics such as tree lucerne offer excellent habitat for outstanding populations of tui, bellbird and kereru — up to 50 pigeon have been seen in a single flock!

Some locals and holiday-makers were initially opposed to the 'closing' of public access to the island, but that view has largely been overtaken by an understanding and even a pride in its current conservation values. Limited numbers of open days and controlled tourist visits have benefited in raising awareness of the island's role and of conservation in general. Many a visitor has gone away beaming at the experience of having a fearless takahe stroll across the track in front of them, or of being photographed holding a giant weta. As islands such as the open sanctuary of Tiritiri Matangi have shown, first hand experiences are crucial for developing conservation awareness amongst the general public.

The DoC Nelson-Marlborough Island Strategy outlines a commitment to keep a permanent staff presence on the island, and identifies possible future introductions including mohua (yellowhead), short-tailed bat and South Island saddle-back. Although these are exciting prospects, the current suite of species by themselves justifies the Department's continued management effort. Maud has been staffed full-time since 1984, and the three successive caretakers, Selwyn Bucknell, Dave Crouchley and Brian Paton, along with the fulltime 'kakapo minders', have all put a lot of their lives into the island.

Maud was privately owned and could easily have been sold to the highest bidder. Nowadays its commercial value would be in the millions of dollars. For conservation, however, it is priceless. Without too much stretching of the imagination, Maud



could now be a foreign-owned resort, like several other areas in the Sounds. We owe a lot to the wisdom, dedication and generosity of Jack Shand, and to the vision, commitment and exceedingly hard work of Maud's 'pioneer workers' such as Brian Bell and Don Merton. The support of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society members was clearly crucial in securing the purchase of the island. Twenty-five years on, Forest and Bird can justly take credit for making such a 'sound' investment.

DEREK BROWN was formerly responsible for threatened species protection in the Marlborough region.



Takahe

NZ Mountain Safety Council

Bushcraft Video

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