



Two-spot demoiselle schools swarm around the reefs at the Poor Knights Islands.

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The Pohatu Marine Reserve at Flea Bay, Banks Peninsula has protected the penguins as well as the marine life. The local white-flipped variant of the little blue penguin and the yellow-eyed penguin are thriving there. The combination of a marine reserve providing food and the predator-free area surrounding the bay, created by local farmers, has been successful. (See 'Helping the Penguins', *Forest & Bird*, February 1999)

Marine birds and mammals can benefit from the protection of marine reserves, as well as their food source. Large numbers of sea birds feed on small fish in unprotected coastal waters. The proposed addition of several species of baitfish to the fisheries Quota Management System can only put more pressure on the birds, marine mammals and fish that rely on those baitfish schools for food.

Other habitats, such as the 800 seamounts in New Zealand's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) also need protection. (See 'Exploring our Underwater Mountains', Jo Mackay, *Forest and Bird* May 2000.) Many of these seamounts have already been devastated to exploit the fish stocks that surround them. Little is known about the non-target species that shared the seamount habitats – some of which may have vanished before they were even named. Destroying the habitat is hardly sound practice for sustained management of the fish stocks.

The Tasmanian Seamount Marine Reserve was created to protect 20 percent of the seamounts south of Tasmania. The reserve, an area of 370 square kilometres, protects a region that has not been

trawled and is in pristine condition. The protection is from 500 metres depth to the seabed. A large number of species new to science covering eight genera have been discovered on the seamounts around southern Australia. (For more information on Tasmanian seamounts see www.ea.gov.au)

New Zealand must follow that lead and protect more of the undamaged seamounts in its EEZ. (The first recognition of our seamounts occurred late last year, when 19 seamounts covering 2.5 percent of the EEZ were protected.) Failure to protect more seamounts can only result in the loss of irreplaceable ecosystems.

A look at a map of New Zealand's marine reserves shows some massive gaps with no protection. Some schools visit marine reserves or cover them as part of Seaweed or Conservation Week, but often

Visitors mingle with blue maomao near Goat Island Beach.



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it is up to teachers whether marine reserves are studied. There must be funding to show the benefits of protecting representative parts of marine ecosystems. Children are the future owners of our marine heritage and those who visit Goat Island go away asking why there aren't more marine reserves.

The target of 10 percent protection of New Zealand's waters must be the goal of everyone with an interest in the marine world and should not be compromised to achieve political targets. New Zealand's marine reserves currently protect everything within their boundaries and any change to that philosophy would be a step backwards.

Forest and Bird's Shopping List of Marine Reserves

Forest and Bird has been actively involved in promoting marine reserves, largely at branch level and in many communities. Presently it has four applications with the Minister of Conservation – Te Matuku at Waiheke Island in the Hauraki Gulf, Wellington south coast, north Nelson, and Kaikoura.

Discouragingly, the process of obtaining protection can extend beyond a decade, even when advocacy is in the hands of the Department of Conservation. Hopefully, changes to the Marine Reserves Act due shortly will speed up the process.

Work is proceeding in conjunction with local branches in compiling a list of marine areas deserving complete protection. As part of this exercise, branch councillors at the Wanganui council meeting last November were invited to identify their favoured areas for protection.

Marine reserves are now a major concern of the Society nationally, with such projects as a Fiordland marine park likely to be priority campaigns in the coming year. (See 'Preserving Fiordland Underwater', *Forest & Bird*, August 1999.) — EDITOR