

Mailbag

Reafforestation

A letter in the May 2003 issue of *Forest & Bird* asked why intensive plantings by people are required in the re-colonisation of open spaces in the cities. Whilst I agree wholeheartedly that in Auckland weeds are a significant problem to native plant species getting firmly re-established, another real problem is the lack of seed sources and the lack of particularly different bird species to disperse seeds in the urban environment.

In many areas, the plants which would usually provide the source of seeds for natural regeneration are absent, having in the most part been cut down and removed altogether from the area. Often too the species of birds required to distribute seeds have also disappeared in large numbers.

— ANNE FENN *chair, Central Auckland Forest and Bird*

Lake Omapere

The Lake Omapere article (Feb 03) was short on facts. The article failed to mention that the lake was initially drained and lowered by several metres to develop dairy farms. The pasture shown in the photograph is on the old lake bed!

Denuded of its riparian vegetation, awash with stock effluent and the fertiliser runoff from the surrounding paddocks, aquatic weed species flourished in the now shallow lake.

According to the February article, the 'white knights' to the rescue are 20,000 introduced grass carp.

Grass carp are just one more abuse in the history of this lake. Their first preference is for native and usually uncommon aquatic plants. Less palatable introduced weeds will only be eaten after palatable native plants are cleaned out and mob

stocking forces the fish to feed on weeds. The habitat of native invertebrates, whitebait, fish and wildfowl is destroyed.

Forest and Bird has consistently opposed the introduction of grass carp.

These fish pose a threat to vulnerable native wetland and drain habitats should they escape or be dispersed by rogue fish fanciers. Containment has failed at least twice and, while they are not supposed to breed in New Zealand, they have bred overseas where they were not expected to.

Grass carp do nothing to fix the enrichment of the lake. Riparian retirement would help.

— BASIL GRAEME *Tauranga*

Tree Carvings

You are correct with the comment that few rakau momori (dendroglyphs) remain

on the Chatham Islands and now over 100 out of less than 200 are in the J.M. Barker (Hapupu) National Historic Reserve. Our family was approached shortly after the Second World War to preserve the carvings but we had not been able to do this due to financial restraints. Our gift of the 40-odd hectares at Hapupu was negotiated with the Crown and it was several years later that I learned Forest and Bird put money into fencing. In short I feel Forest and Bird make a lot of their donation for fencing. This may be a small matter but we are proud of what we saved at Kaingaroa in what is a fascinating and isolated place.

— STEPHEN BARKER *Christchurch*

The deadline for letters for our November 2003 issue is August 31, 2003.

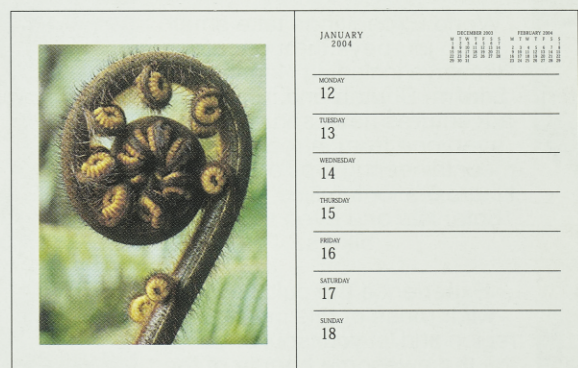
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