

# Mailbag

Forest & Bird welcomes brief comments or criticisms about items or issues in the magazine. We reserve the right to edit letters for length. The deadline for our February 2004 issue is November 20.

## Saving Our Birds

As an ordinary New Zealander, I have been fortunate to witness what few of us ever have — the dramatic revival of our native birds. These include threatened species; kiwi, kokako, weka, brown teal and New Zealand dotterel in over 7000 hectares of diverse protected habitat in Northland and central North Island.

May 2003 kiwi 'call counts,' on six sites monitored around Russell Peninsula, Bay of Islands were up an average 170 percent over 2002 counts. All this has been achieved with a good dollop of community support and tiny pest management budgets.

I have become increasingly concerned of late at our inability to halt the decline of our biodiversity and the remedies proposed. I attribute success protecting native birds to the unglamorous mantra of

sustained, effective diligent, rat control.

The black ship rat is the driving force behind the destruction of our forest ecosystems (with possums chipping in) directly through predation of nests, and indirectly by competing for food and most seriously by ensuring a healthy food supply for stoats.

Ignoring rats will fail the birds miserably as stoats are notoriously difficult to trap. (Okarito and the plight of kiwi there are a prime and recent example of this.)

Project Nest Egg, hugely expensive predator fences and relying on offshore island havens are symptoms of defeat. We should not give up on the mainland. The Russell Peninsula shows it can be done.

— LAURENCE GORDON, *Haruru Falls, Bay of Islands*

## Lovely Lindis

I was very disappointed to read the caption to a photograph of the Lindis Pass ('Lindis Pass is one of the most striking tussock landscapes in Otago') in the May issue. In fact, the tussock landscape of the Lindis Pass is quite degraded — even idly looking out a car window one can tell that the tall tussocks are restricted to patches in the wetter areas, there is little in the way of herbs and the ridges and convex slopes are dark grey, indicating bare ground or hieracium.

The geomorphology and emptiness of the Lindis definitely makes for a grand landscape but we should be careful to be scientific in our assessments of the vegetation, and not repeat urban myths about the high country.

— MARY RALSTON, *Methven*

## Regional Bird Guide

The Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (known as Birds Australia) raises the \$A1 million needed to compile each volume of *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Your article (August 2003) only mentions the publisher, OUP.

Maori names of New Zealand Birds are listed in Appendix III of each volume — on page 1220 in Volume 6 just after Appendix II — the Aboriginal names for Australian birds. The placement of these names in these two appendices was an early editorial decision for Volume 1, and has been retained for consistency.

— SID COWLING, HANZAB, *Manager, Australia*

For responses to letters about the Society's position on genetic engineering see *Comment*, opposite.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISK MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

ERMA  
New Zealand

NGĀ KAIWHAKATŪPATO WHAKARARU TAIAO



## Managing Genetic Modification in New Zealand

→ understanding the issues → making it work



You are invited to come along and participate in the areas that interest you.

The public session on day one (3.30 to 7pm) is your opportunity to come along to meet members of the Environmental Risk Management Authority and Ngā Kaihautū Tikanga Taiao.

Ask questions directly in an informal setting and visit the ERMA New Zealand Gallery to find out who we are and what we do.

### November National Roadshow

- 4-5 November:** Hamilton Quality Hotel | 100 Garnett Avenue, Hamilton
- 6-7 November:** Auckland Centra | Cnr Kirkbride & Ascot Roads, Mangere, Auckland
- 11-12 November:** Palmerston North Quality Hotel | 110 Fitzherbert Avenue, Palmerston North
- 13-14 November:** Wellington Convention Centre | 111 Wakefield Street, Wellington
- 18-19 November:** Christchurch Holiday Inn | 356 Oxford Terrace, Christchurch
- 20-21 November:** Dunedin Public Art Gallery | 30 The Octagon, Dunedin

#### ► Day One

**Session One | Making it work: The impact of amendments to the law (HSNO Act)**  
This session focuses on informing those who will be directly affected by the legislative changes.

#### **Session Two | Understanding the issues**

This session is designed for public participation and focuses on understanding how HSNO works and how the Authority deals with the issues: listening to public concerns and answering questions.

#### ► Day Two

#### **Session Three | Hands-on delegated decision making for IBSCs**

Designed for applicants. This session is focussed at details associated with application and decision-making processes for low risk Genetically Modified Organisms.

#### **Session Four | Meeting with local iwi**

Designed for applicants, IBSC members and ERMA New Zealand staff.

For more information enquiries should be directed to:

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