

# A Living Legacy

In 1992 Mary and Bill Cole from West Auckland died within a few months of each other. Both were longstanding members of Forest and Bird. They shared a keen love of the outdoors and, in particular, of the native forests of the Waitakere Ranges.



In their will, the Coles made a generous bequest to Forest and Bird to assist the Society's conservation work in the Auckland area.

They requested that the enhancement of Forest and Bird's Matuku Reserve in the Waitakere be one of the projects funded by the bequest.

Enthusiastic supporters of the branch's Matuku Reserve project, the Coles had watched it grow from the original 50 hectares of goat-infested native forest and wetland alongside the Waitakere River, purchased in 1979. Led by John Staniland, the branch further extended the reserve and actively managed it for conservation. The goats were removed, possums trapped and invasive weeds eradicated.

The Coles and other branch members enjoyed the spectacular regeneration of native plants and the flourishing of native wildlife. Funds from the Cole Bequest, supplemented by \$35,000 from the

Nature Heritage Fund, were used to purchase an additional adjoining 20 hectares of native forest and wetland. The enhanced reserve is of significant ecological value. School groups, scientists, branch members and others all frequent the trails developed in the reserve and enjoy today the native forests and birds Bill and Mary had cared for so passionately.

Their legacy lives on beyond Matuku, however. The Society's Auckland branches formed a committee in 1993 to determine the best way to allocate the remainder of the bequest funds. A memo calling for project proposals from the Society's then northern conservation officer, Jacqui Barrington (who has since died, leaving Forest and Bird her own bequest), noted it was the Coles' wish that the money be spent wisely on conservation projects benefiting nature in the Auckland area.

Since then the Cole bequest has helped fund the purchase of Whakanewha Reserve on Waiheke Island, now a regional park managed by the Auckland Regional Council. Other Cole Bequest projects have included fencing of the Colin Kerr Taylor Reserve in Waitakere and the initiation of the proposed Te Matuku Marine Reserve at Waiheke Island.

Bill and Mary Cole have indeed left a living legacy that has made a significant and lasting contribution to the protection of the native plants and wildlife that had enriched their lives.

## You too can leave a living legacy by remembering Forest and Bird in your will



South Auckland Forest and Bird Branch members enjoying a rest stop in the Matuku Reserve

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