

# Major High-Country Reserve Established in Mid Canterbury

The Nature Heritage Fund has purchased some 10,000 hectares of Clent Hills high-country station, in the inland Ashburton district, in partnership with three adjacent high-country farmers. The arrangement will ensure that land with conservation values is protected while the cultivated flats and terraces can be managed as farm land.

Strategically, the new reserve links with a number of other public conservation areas, enabling a large conservation park to be established, extending from the foothills of the Canterbury Plains through to the Main Divide of the Southern Alps.

The area is in the Lake Heron

basin, an area previously featured in detail in *Forest & Bird*. A number of small lakes and tarns are located in this landscape with Lake Heron as the centrepiece.

Clent Hills extends from the shores of Lake Heron, and includes low flats, terraces, fans, tarns and prominent low hills, dominated by the rugged Taylor and Mount Somers ranges. This sequence of land systems will protect the biodiversity of the Lake Heron basin from 691 metres to Mt Taylor at 2333 metres.

The areas being protected include a vital buffer zone around the Lake Heron Nature Reserve, which is one of the most important unmodified



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The 10,000-hectare Clent Hills reserve surrounds the Lake Heron Nature Reserve in the Ashburton high country. The lake is home to 99 of the remaining 270 southern crested grebe.

lake/wetland complexes remaining in the South Island. It is home to New Zealand's largest remaining population of the endangered southern crested grebe, which is restricted to the South Island and totals only 270 adult birds. A national grebe survey in January found 99 adults on Lake Heron.

The purchase will be

managed by the Department of Conservation. Access to the area is from Mt Somers on the edge of the Canterbury Plains, and up the Ashburton Gorge by the Lake Heron road which runs along the edge of the new reserve. A variety of recreational opportunities will be available including fishing, birdwatching, tramping and mountain biking.



my point of view



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