

**Forest and Bird
(Dunedin Branch)
Newsletter – May 2002**

Annual General Meeting

Please do come to the AGM of Forest and Bird (Dunedin Branch) at the Otago Museum at 7.45 pm on Tuesday 18 June. The meeting will be followed by a talk from Neville Peat on braided rivers.

Chairperson's report

As we approach five years of operation for the Branch's wilding tree group, I am devoting a large section of this report to a review of the group's activities. The project had humble beginnings in June 1997, when we were awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Lottery Grants Board to purchase chainsaws and protective clothing for use on control of wilding trees in Dunedin and the surrounding districts. Additional funding has been provided from the Lottery Grants Board, the Les Hutchins Conservation Foundation, the Dr. Marjorie Barclay Trust, the Otago Regional Council and donations from property owners. The wilding tree project was the brainchild of Paul Gasson, who coordinated the group until late 1997, when he left

Dunedin. Dave McFarlane has been at the helm ever since, and the success of the project owes much to the enthusiasm and expertise of both Dave and an army of volunteers.

By the end of 1998, 26,000 wilding trees had been destroyed by the group, 12,000 of these from a single site at Post Office Creek on the western foothills of the Maungatua Range. Work here was extremely character building, with dense groves of trees and considerable expanses of gorse to contend with. The Blue Mountains have been another testing site, with steep slopes and dense scrub making things arduous for the workers. Currently, the group is making second sweeps of both these areas to mop up small trees and seedlings that were missed earlier. As I write, the cumulative total of wilding trees destroyed is 64,711.

The project has not been restricted to the physical business of felling invasive trees. The advocacy of Alan Mark and Dave McFarlane has seen many letters sent to those who bear responsibility for the wilding tree problem or who might benefit from the Branch's expertise in tree control. A workshop held in late 1997 discussed a draft Wilding Tree Accord and this was subsequently

ratified by most parties. The group has worked constructively with the Department of Conservation, Regional and District Councils, forest owners, and landowners with wilding tree problems, and has been a particularly important component of the wilding tree operations organised by Environment Southland at Cattle Flat Station near Mid Dome. The recent decision by the Otago Regional Council to list *Pinus contorta* as a pest plant was a reversal of their stance in 1997 and probably owes a lot to the Branch's activity and advocacy over the intervening years. The Branch is currently working on a contract from ORC to control *Pinus contorta* at several sites in Otago.

In my view the wilding tree project has been a great success for the Branch, and has been extremely important in helping to prevent the massive invasive tree problems we see in other areas of New Zealand occurring here. We must not, however, rest on our laurels. Some heavy infestations still remain, and maturing plantations of Douglas fir are likely to provide invasive trees on neighbouring lands, particularly in wetter areas. Continuing the Branch's advocacy and activity will help to ensure that the hard work over the last five years is not wasted.

As reported in the previous newsletter, the Branch applied to the Les Hutchins Conservation Foundation for funding for interpretive panels to be placed at a variety of sites of conservation significance in Otago and Southland. I am pleased to report that the Branch was granted \$5,000 to provide interpretive panels in Southland, and an additional benefactor has donated \$10,000 to the Branch for a similar purpose in Otago. Branch members and the wider public can look forward to these displays, which should greatly assist appreciation of the conservation values present.

Two meetings of southern region branches have been held during the year, the first in Dunedin and the most recent in Lumsden. Both meetings provided a valuable opportunity for branch representatives to meet and discuss issues of common concern. Among issues discussed at the recent meeting were how best to protect the Fiordland marine environment, conservation of North Island Hector's dolphin, high country tenure review, and use of 1080 poison. Upper Clutha Branch intend to support the Federated Mountain Clubs appeal to the Environment Court on the decision by the Queenstown Lakes

District Council to approve construction of a private lodge and associated helicopter activity on the Albert Burn saddle, immediately adjacent to Mount Aspiring National Park.

The Branch has welcomed the decision of the New Zealand Native Forest Restoration Trust to establish its first South Island reserve. The Trust is seeking funds to purchase an extensive wetland area at Maungarakau near Kahurangi National Park. A donation was sent to the Trust, and the Branch hopes the Maungarakau reserve will be the first of a wider network of South Island reserves. We support the Trust's objectives because the national office of Forest and Bird is reluctant to establish further reserves of its own, and the Department of Conservation, due to resource constraints, cannot always reciprocate support given by the Branch for reserves under its management.

Local conservation areas have continued to prosper due to the efforts made by volunteers under the supervision of Ken Mason. Ken and his son Brett have recently produced an excellent and informative leaflet about Moore's Bush. The Branch has printed copies of the leaflet and these will be made available to members of

the public visiting the reserve. Fencing issues have also been a concern to the branch. We contributed funds for fencing to keep wandering stock out of restoration areas on Quarantine Island, and have been advocating for better fencing for covenanted restoration areas at Tomahawk Lagoon. At Caversham Bush, young trees planted by Branch members are doing well, and recent felling and clearance of much of the exotic plantation has provided a considerable area requiring revegetation with local native plants. During the Dunedin City Council's annual planning process, the Branch advocated for a feasibility study into a 'mainland island' restoration project for the city, citing the Leith Saddle area as a potential site.

The Branch continues to involve itself heavily in public processes where our advocacy can promote conservation objectives. Many submissions have been written during the year, involving high country tenure review, national park management plans, public access, resource consent applications, district and regional plans and conservation advocacy directed to a range of land managing agencies and individual landholders.

The Dunedin Kiwi Conservation

Club is one of the most active in the country and their coordinators provide a superb range of activities for local children. The environmental education provided by KCC is very important in fostering conservation awareness at an early stage in life. On behalf of the Branch I would like to thank the KCC coordinators for their sterling efforts. Thank you also to members of the Branch management committee for their considerable work on behalf of the Society, and to all our members for their support over the past year.

Kelvin Lloyd, Chairperson.

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For wilding tree team activities,
phone
David McFarlane, phone (03)
4737-259,
email: miniwaka@xtra.co.nz
Resource management workshop

Want to learn more about the resource management act and environment decision making locally? Forest and Bird are running a series of free public workshops on the RMA around the country, to give people practical skills to influence positive environmental management in their area. A workshop will be run in Dunedin on 21 July at the

Conference Room in Dunedin
Public Art Gallery from 9.30am-
5pm.

The workshops, and the free RMA training booklet made available to all participants, explain the RMA's principles and processes, and aim to improve community participation in local environmental decision making. They are designed for individuals and organisations who may not have had much experience of the RMA process. Attending a workshop will give you the skills to make persuasive, focused submissions on resource consents or plan developments. The workshops are funded by the Ministry for the Environment's Education and Advisory Services Fund.

If you want to come along or for more information, contact Forest and Bird, Box 631, Wellington, 04-385-7374, email: office@wn.forest-bird.org.nz Full information is also available on <http://www.forest-bird.org.nz/RM/workshops.asp>

Otago Conservation Day

Conservation Day is on Saturday 8 June. DoC Conservation Corps have organised

a Conservation Expo in the Octagon from 11 am to 3pm. As our contribution to the day, we are holding a working bee at Caversham Bush from 9 a.m. to 12.30 on 8 June. For further information, phone Alan Mark at 476-3229.

2002 International Science Festival

As our contribution to this festival we are co-presenting two activities:

Firstly, on Saturday 29 June, beech and robin habitat restoration. Silver beech remnants along Flagstaff Creek are being expanded and protected from invading exotics by young conservationists to add to the biodiversity of a production exotic forests. A beautiful walk with a chance to leave your mark. Meet at Taieri Lookout on Three Mile Road at 1 pm.

Secondly, on Sunday 30 June, Quarantine Island restoration. Explore the island with the young people carrying out the restoration and research work – even get to pop in a tree yourself to help things along. Meet at Portobello Marine Studies Centre Wharf at 10 am.

For further information on either

activity, phone Ken Mason at 476-7100. For regular field trips, and for indoor meetings, see our branch programme.

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Want to help with filing at the Southern Regional Office, Dunedin? Please ring Sue Maturin, phone (03) 477-9677, email suem@earthlight.co.nz

We have a few old (mostly 1970s) Forest and Bird magazines to give away. If interested contact Paul Star 478-0315.

A weekend trip to Manapouri

Our Forest and Bird group of ten, led by Kelvin Lloyd, reached Manapouri Camping Ground on Friday 15 March.. The next morning - which was wet - our first stop was to view a wetland owned by Fish and Game on the Waiau River. Here Kelvin introduced us to the name “ballerina sedge” for *Carex secta*. Its earlier name is best not printed!

Soon we were following the pylons along the Borland Road to Borland Saddle. The cloud had lifted and we could see the amazing undulating landscape created by the largest landslide in New Zealand - and above it all the first of many rainbows. We walked up the

Mount Burns track, between stunted silver beech trees covered in spectacular lichens and emerging onto a boulder ridge of sub-alpine vegetation. We identified plants as we walked to the tarns, and gained views of Island Lake and Green Lake.

Our next stop was the Grebe Valley look out - and what an amazing vista of the Grebe River, bordered by beech trees, snaking through a vast wetland. Then back up the zigzag bends of the Borland Road to a side track leading to a small A frame shelter – room only for two bunks and a visitors book . Some opted for a short walk in the forest, which was carpeted in mosses . Others went further, down a boulder slope of Hebe odora onto a vast red tussock flat. We eventually reached the bright green margin of an until then unnamed lake, to see at first hand Alan Mark's special grass, *Deschampsia caespitosa*. We all walked right past clumps of it, until Kelvin pointed them out and explained how unusual it was to see so many clumps in one area. On the far side of the lake there was a crested grebe.

Off to Borland Bog next, where several metres of peat have formed from the rush *Empodisma minus*.

Many of the small bog pines, *Halocarpus bidwillii*, were covered in tiny black and dark brown fruits, and the delicately patterned coral lichens, *Cladia retipora*, were a stunning. We also heard whistling frogs.

Highlight of the day? For Judy Russell, the colours of the tussocks on the walk to Lake Mark, for Francie Beggs, looking down on Grebe Valley; for Andy Mack, the coral lichens; for Paul Star, seeing a *Ranunculus* named after J D Enys; for Ivan Cammut, the Mt Burns track; for Joanne Harrison, inspecting mosses; for Janet Ledingham, Borland Saddle; for Moira Parker, walking through red tussock; for Nola Walker and Kelvin, the rainbows.

Early on Sunday morning at Manapouri there was yet another rainbow, this time the prelude to a sunny day. Some took a quick peep at the variety of native plants in the Marks' garden. We then all gathered at Pearl Harbour under the beech trees around a very old sign board, which described how young beech trees invading the kanuka would eventually replace them. Succession had occurred as predicted, for there was no kanuka.

Our next stop was Rainbow Reach on the Waiiau River, where we

crossed the swing bridge and followed the Kepler track through beech forest parallel to the river. We saw a variety of fungi and noticed the tree dimples that persist after a mature beech tree falls. We then drove on to Te Anau and along the lake shore to Ten Mile Bush and a small but delightful area of lake shore turf vegetation below the zone of jointed rush. We had a spectacular view across to the lake to Takahe Valley.

Back at Te Anau we had a good browse among the natural history books in the DoC Centre, then we drove to the takahe enclosure where we lunched watching the adult birds. From there we drove to Te Anau Wilderness Scientific Reserve, which at first sight appeared to be bog pine "islands" in a "sea" of moss. But looking closely we found much more, including the orange berries of a dwarf heath, *Leucopogon fraseri*.

At the takahe rearing centre at Burwood Bush our guide, Rachel, gave us a very informative tour and did her best to entice two ten-week old takahe chicks into view. We had a glimpse, but those chicks can move fast and they were keen to stay close to the hebe. Their outdoor pen had several electric fences and was

ringed with No 6 Fenn traps in tunnels for cats and mustelids. Across the road was a 80ha pen where the takahe are transferred as they got older.

As for us, we transferred back to Dunedin after a great weekend. Many thanks to Kelvin for introducing us to so many fascinating places. Moira Parker.

Community Conservation Nursery

Dunedin Environment Centre (Box 5067) would like to notify the community and especially land owners that their existing nursery has been expanded to provide management support and plants at cost for conservation projects. Government funding has enabled them to employ a part time co-ordinator for their new initiative. Hendrik Koch is an experienced nurseryman and conservation project organiser. He is available to make site visits within the Dunedin district to provide advice, project planning and ongoing assistance. In return the Centre request a donation to cover transport, telephone and the material costs of plants required.

It is their hope that the service will be ongoing, but future funding depends on the need for their assistance. They welcome all enquiries. Phone Hendrik Koch at

work 477-4938, or home 478-0311. or e-mail dect@ihug.co.nz
The nursery is at Shetland Street, Kaikorai Valley, adjacent to Araiteuru Marae.

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Kiwi Conservation Club

Dunedin Kiwi Conservation Club ran eighteen trips over the last 12 months, usually with about 25 participants. Enthusiastic KCC'ers placed penguin boxes with the dawn tide, braved snow on Quarantine Island, hail and storms at Nugget Point/Tokata; and sunburn on a North East Valley bottle-drive. Revegetation trips included Moores Bush, Quarantine Island, Nugget Point/Tokata and assisting Kati Huirapa Runanga on Huriawa Peninsula. Education took members to Akatore rock-pools, glow-worm viewing, snorkelling in the warm (!) waters of Harwood, spotting alpine plants in the Botanical Gardens and on Mt Swampy, and to a dairy farm to learn about water care. Mind those cows, kids.

For fun members fetched Xmas trees from Rabbit Is. (thus saving rare coprosmas), became yellow eyed penguins for a book launch, and set up three worm cans for the "Wild Wonderful Worm Project". This promises to be a loan out

library with a difference!

We aim to provide a high quality, diverse and enjoyable range of conservation experiences for our young members and their families. This year continues with a Fossil Trail tour, penguin box building, pikao planting, a family weekend at Tautuku with Riverton KCC, a Quarantine Is day for the International Science Fair, and more besides. Dunedin KCC coordinators are Jimmy Fyfe and Carol Scott (phone 473-8414), Kristin Bracey, Chris Brown and Helen Trevethan. Our thanks to F&B, the Hilary Commission, and the many great people from DCC, DoC, ORC, local Runanga, Uni of Otago, YEPT and elsewhere who have shared their time and knowledge with our group. Carol Scott.

Environmental education

Late in 2001, ECOtago was established. This trust is seeking to promote environmental education in Otago through organising events and providing resources about the environment. It has recently held two very successful workshops for Otago primary and secondary school teachers, spreading and sharing ideas on how to nurture an awareness of the environment in school children. For further

information, e-mail
Rosemarie.Patterson@dce.ac.nz or
phone 479-3760.