



# Forest & Bird

DUNEDIN BRANCH | *Giving Nature a Voice*



BRANCH NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2017

## Challenges in an Election Year

2017 is already shaping up as a critical year for conservation in Aotearoa New Zealand. Within the last month Forest & Bird has been in the high court on behalf of wider New Zealand, speaking up to ensure conservation land in specially protected categories cannot be downgraded and should not be sold or exchanged. This is the latest chapter in the ongoing saga of water and dams for irrigation in the Hawke's Bay. And of course late last month we were 'given' a new definition of swimmable water in Aotearoa!!!! Ahead of us there is a general election, further changes to the Resource Management Act, and continuing pressures on our national parks through more relaxed management plans and strategies.

There is a lot to be done, and your work and commitment is crucial and very much appreciated.

Regards,

Mark Hanger

President, Forest & Bird and co-chair Dunedin Branch

## LATEST NEWS

**Sandymount Successes and Threats** Late last year, as a part of our Otago Seabirds Project, a search of the Sandymount region utilising a tracker bird dog confirmed colonies of Titi (Sooty Shearwaters) in the reserve. Since then cameras have been installed on site and trapping has been initiated to begin to try and reduce the numbers of would-be predators. The three photos below show Titi activity and introduced predators (rat, possum, cat) as recorded by two remote cameras situated within the remnant Titi colony.



**Save Our Southern Seas** Forest & Bird members and supporters sent in 1200 web submissions on the South-East Marine Protection Forum proposals for new marine reserves in Otago, Southland and South Canterbury. This is in addition to many comprehensive submissions made by branches and individual members. In total, 2800 submissions were received by the Forum. Thanks to everyone who added their voice to Forest & Bird's call for meaningful protection in our south-east ocean.

The Forum will now deliberate on its final recommendations to the Government. We will keep you posted on developments!



Photo: Roy Johnstone, South Otago F&B

### A Joint Effort at Lenz Reserve, Tautuku

Twenty Volunteers from student environmental groups got together with Dunedin and South Otago Forest & Bird members to work on reserve maintenance and trap monitoring in the Tautuku Lenz Reserve at the beginning of this month. In a short space of time the long track was cleared of overhanging vegetation, nearly 100 metres of netting relaid to make boardwalks less slippery along the tramline, and traps for predators alongside the Fleming River were checked and reset.

### Withdrawal from Land and Water Forum

The Government's proposed freshwater standards, released in late February, largely ignore the consensus recommendations of the Land and Water Forum, of which Forest & Bird was a part. The Government announced its decision on swimability by stating that 90% of rivers would be swimmable, whilst at the same time lowering the swimability standard. Reaction to the announcement was strong and condemning.



**In putting the Forum's recommendations to one side, the Government has undermined the good faith and trust that New Zealanders and Forest & Bird put in the Forum to help address the freshwater crisis facing all New Zealanders.**

To continue our involvement with the Land and Water Forum would have given the impression that we considered the Government's latest freshwater proposals satisfactory. We did not. We have shown considerable goodwill towards the intent of the collaborative governance process, and towards fellow Forum members who we have worked alongside over the last nine years. But good faith from the Government is an essential component that is required for this process to work. Without

that the Board considered we were left with no choice but to withdraw. We withdrew from the Land and Water Forum on Monday 6 March.

## DUNEDIN EVENT

### Environment in Crisis, Heroes Needed

Kevin Hague (CE Forest & Bird), in conjunction with Branch AGM - **Tuesday, May 16 @ 5:30 pm**

*Benham Seminar Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor room 215, Zoology Benham Building, University of Otago, Great King St*

Nibbles and drinks will be available, with a gold-coin-minimum donation requested from attendees. Please be on time as we have to hold the door open.

New Zealanders love nature, and want to see it protected. So how come political parties mostly ignore conservation when it comes to General Elections? In this talk Kevin Hague will dispel some myths, lay out Forest & Bird's election year priorities and ask the public to help make conservation something politicians can no longer afford to ignore.

Nominations for the Branch Management Committee:

- Chairperson(s) and/or Deputy Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Committee members

would be welcome and **should be sent no later than May 12<sup>th</sup>** to the secretary, Janet Ledingham, at [Dunedin.Branch@forestandbird.org.nz](mailto:Dunedin.Branch@forestandbird.org.nz) (ph. 467 2960) or posted to Forest & Bird Dunedin Branch, PO Box 5793, Moray Place, Dunedin 9058

## Let's hear it for liveable rivers - By Jane Young, South Otago Branch



Photo: Craig McKenzie

Remember Forest & Bird's 2014 'On the Block' campaign? Just one more skirmish in the ongoing battle to save our natural resources, especially fresh water. More recent campaigns aimed at protecting fresh water have jumped on the 'Swimmable Rivers' bandwagon. But is this the objective that we should be stressing? Or are we just focusing on our own interests? Lincoln University's study: 'Public Perceptions of New Zealand's Environment: 2016' showed that people rate our environment highly compared to that in other developed countries. They consider that we have adequate-good management of the New Zealand environment, especially of native bush and forests. Although people saw climate change as the main global environmental issue, they once again identified water-related issues as the most important ones facing New Zealand. During the last six years, the number of people who perceive rivers and lakes as being in bad or very bad condition has steadily increased. And by 2016, 47.2 per cent of

respondents thought that management of rivers and lakes was poor or very poor. More than half the respondents considered that farming is one of the main causes of damage to freshwater.

Ok, so people are becoming more concerned, but the Lincoln study shows that, over the same period, there was very little change in their actual participation in environmental activities such as being involved in consent processes, an environmental organisation or a restoration project. Perhaps this is partly because, although we recognise that there are problems with freshwater management, we tend to be much more optimistic about the overall state of biodiversity, despite the fact that 45 of our 71 different rare ecosystems are classified as threatened. How many of us are aware that most of our vertebrate species, including 72 per cent of freshwater fish, are facing extinction?

Appealing to people's self-interest in order to change their behaviour has now become a big part of environmental advocacy: "If we don't halt climate change we won't be able to go skiing in the future." "If we use this bee-killing insecticide then our crops won't get pollinated." Or, "If we don't clean up this sludgy, polluted river our children won't be able to go swimming."

"Swimmable Rivers" may be a proxy for "ecologically healthy rivers", but there's the risk of narrowing the focus and making it easier for the government to get away with leaving the majority of smaller rivers and streams unprotected. So let's not lose sight of "Liveable Rivers". Liveable for water snails and koura and mayfly larvae and lacewings and copepods and caddis flies and hydra and crabs and galaxids and amphipods and water fleas and eels and horse hair worms and stoneflies and flatworms and diving beetles and oligochaete worms and hydroids and sponges and rhabdocoels and bryozoans. And that's only the animals.

In this complex, fascinating, fragile world that we share with a multitude of other living things, we need to remember – it's not just all about us.



**Closing date for submissions on the government's new Clean Water Standards is Friday, 28 April.**

<http://forestandbird.org.nz/saving-ourevironment/fresh-water/clean-watersubmission>

## Logging native trees

The Grey District Council is seeking public submissions to allow logging of indigenous podocarp forests on three blocks of council land. Mayor Tony Kokshoorn believes that more productivity should be extracted from council land and that it is possible to carry out sustainable logging of native trees. Forest & Bird field officer Jen Miller commented: "It seems insane to consider deforestation for financial gain. I thought we had won that battle." (In May 2000, the Government agreed to pay \$120 million in compensation to assist the West Coast economy when it ended native timber logging)

**Submissions close on Friday, 5 May.**

## IN BRIEF

**New President - Mark Hanger, Dunedin Branch** Andrew Cutler, the society President, has tendered his resignation to the Board taking effect at New Year. For nearly a decade Andrew has devoted his time, his skills, his leadership, and energy to Forest & Bird at a national level. In that time the society has grown considerably, has had a number of major conservation successes, and as an organisation is now much better placed to meet conservation challenges in the future.

The Board resolved that Mark Hanger, currently Deputy President, will fill the President role through to the AGM and Council meeting in June, and that Kate Graeme will step into the deputy position. Mark will be the first South Island president for over a decade, and the first from the deep south since Sir Alan Mark.

With the additional resignation of Marc Slade in October the Board has co-opted Tony Dunlop (Far North) and Ines Stäger (South Canterbury) back onto the Board until the June AGM and Council meeting.

**Predator Free Dunedin** In late March, Mark Hanger and Sue Maturin attended the official launch and signing of the Predator Free Dunedin pledge. The Prime Minister, Bill English and the Minister of Conservation, Maggie Barry, attended the function at Orokonui Eco-sanctuary. Most environmental groups in the Dunedin area were present and signed up to the baseline commitment to work together to rid the Dunedin region of introduced pests and predators.

We are still none the wiser as to how the government is going to roll this out, or how funding of peri-urban pest and predator eradication may impact on the landscape scale predator control occurring in key national parks, reserves and biodiversity hotspots around the wider country.

**Speights Foundation Funding** Each year the Speights Foundation donates money to qualifying conservation projects in the Otago area that relate to water. Trustees, Carolyn Burns, Dave Cull, Stuart Mclachlan, and Stephen Woodhead presented the Dunedin branch with funding of \$11,250.00 the purchase of traps for the Tautuku Project. The traps will bolster the trapping already being carried out along the riparian areas of the Fleming River in the Lenz Reserve, Tautuku Bay. This funding will greatly assist the plan of the branch to make the river region predator free to enable species such as pateke (brown teal) to be re-released back into the reserve; and enhance survival chances of other threatened species in or by the river such as long finned eel, koura, and long tailed bats.

**Branch Committee wish list** Finally a plea from the committee. It is much easier and cheaper for us to communicate with members by email. If you are receiving Branch newsletters and programmes by ordinary mail but have an email address, please consider switching to 'email' as your preferred communication option. Just email us at [Dunedin.Branch@forestandbird.org.nz](mailto:Dunedin.Branch@forestandbird.org.nz). That also means you will receive monthly reminders for talks and indoor meetings and anything else of interest that may arise.

Secondly, we always welcome enquiries from members who would like to become more involved by joining the committee—just let us know!