



Forest & Bird®
GIVING NATURE A VOICE

highlights

Forest & Bird

Fighting for nature can be an uphill battle during an economic recession. The government's purse strings draw tighter and investment in our natural resources is too often seen as an unaffordable luxury.

Cutbacks at the Department of Conservation put added pressure on the environment and the duty fell to groups like Forest & Bird to step up.

Despite the challenging climate, Forest & Bird grew in fortitude as New Zealand's largest independent voice for nature.

Our membership and wider support base increased and we continued to advocate strongly by engaging with policy makers, community groups and playing a part on numerous forums.

We were quick to challenge through the courts, actions that threatened our unique landscapes and wildlife, especially on the West Coast's Denniston Plateau and Mokihinui River. We took on the fishing industry and pushed for greater sustainability and better protection of our marine creatures and seabirds. We joined the collaborative negotiations to stop intensive farm development in the Mackenzie Country.

Our members remain the lifeblood of the Society and the value of their passion, dedication and commitment to conservation cannot be overestimated. It is their work that ensures Forest & Bird's core objectives are realised in communities around the country.

More and more New Zealanders are choosing to support Forest & Bird. The battle for conservation may not be easy. But with 70,000 supporters and a strong, credible voice reaching all corners of New Zealand we remain steadfast in our commitment to protecting and preserving our natural treasures

Annual Report

For the year to 29 February 2012



Forest & Bird on land

Possums, rats and stoats have done their best to decimate our forests and native birds. We're winning battles against introduced pests as branches manage some 10,000 traps. However the war is not yet won.

This year, we continued to advocate better pest management on a national level and in February 2012 we hosted a workshop to discuss the idea of a predator-free New Zealand.

We remained committed to keeping the Mackenzie Country brown. The iconic landscape faced dual threats from privatisation through tenure review and large-scale land intensification for agri-business.

We made submissions on some key tenure review proposals in Canterbury and Otago and have been an integral part of the Upper Waitaki Shared Vision Forum. The forum is working towards an agreed solution for the long-term sustainable management of natural resources in the Mackenzie Basin.

We worked to increase the population of critically-endangered fairy terns, launched our Save the Shorebirds programme in the Bay of Plenty and supported recovery groups for kiwi, kakapo and whio. In February, over 1100 people participated in the Kiwi Conservation Club's (KCC) first ever nationwide survey of kereru.

We relentlessly monitored resource consents and plans going through the Resource Management Act around the country. We advised, made submissions and challenged consents through the courts.

Our members did a heroic job at a community level by helping restore and enhance our natural spaces. Whether riparian planting on private farms in Golden Bay, weeding Wellington's coastlines to support little blue penguin recovery or trapping pests in the Kaimai Mamaku ranges, they created more and healthier habitats for our native flora and fauna to flourish.

Forest & Bird and freshwater

The state of our waterways continues to look grim. More than 90% of our lowland rivers are unsuitable for swimming and about two-thirds of our native fish species are threatened with extinction.

In 2011 we launched our *Freshwater for Life – wai maori, wai ora* campaign, through which we highlighted the threats to our waterways and possible solutions. We joined appeals against decisions to irrigate in the Mackenzie and to protect the Manawatu and Whangarei rivers. We were active defending Water Conservation Orders and proposing new ones to protect our most precious waterways.

Forest & Bird also achieved greater legal protection of wetlands on the West Coast, Waikato and Northland.

Our case against Meridian Energy's proposal to dam the pristine Mokihinui River gained momentum throughout 2011 as we prepared our major Environment Court appeal case. Our e-card campaign saw over 3000 New Zealanders encouraging Meridian Energy to withdraw its proposal, while a targeted appeal raised over \$14,000 in two months.

We also recognised the need to work with others and played an active role with groups such as Fish & Game Councils, iwi and hapu, the Mackenzie Sustainable Futures Trust, Waituna Lagoon Group and Canterbury Water Management Strategy.

We made a significant contribution to the Land and Water Forum, which in 2011 laid the groundwork for a subsequent report that advocated "hard" limits for water quality through a National Environmental Standard.

We have also been involved in the renegotiation of the successor to the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord, while helping to develop a similar accord with the sheep and beef industry.



2012 nature numbers

53,000+

Best Fish Guides distributed around the country

4

more kokako and whiteheads introduced into Auckland's Ark in the Park

50

\$113,160

raised in our Denniston campaign appeal



Over **67,000**

plants propagated with the help of Forest & Bird members

10,000

predator traps set and monitored

7851

votes in our annual Bird of the Year poll



Forest & Bird at sea

We launched the fifth edition of our Best Fish Guide in February. At least 53,000 wallet guides were distributed and numerous more downloaded through our website and as a mobile phone application. The guide put the spotlight on New Zealand's commercial fishery, particularly the issue of by-catch and the inability of the Quota Management System to manage a fully sustainable industry.

The impact of squid fisheries on New Zealand sea lions remains a major concern, particularly with new research that estimated the population would be functionally extinct by 2035. The government threatened to remove any limit on the number of sea lions that can be killed in the squid fishery. Forest & Bird tackled the issue through the media, public displays and submissions to the Ministry of Fisheries.

We were also a voice for the world's rarest dolphin, the Maui's dolphin. We advocated greater protection measures to stop both Maui's and related Hector's dolphins from being accidentally caught in gill nets.

On the seabird front, we joined forces with BirdLife International and made a strong submission to the Ministry of Fisheries, which saw its weak Seabird Policy dropped in favour of revising the National Plan of Action for Seabirds. We co-ordinated the establishment of the new Black Petrel Action Group and continued mapping Important Bird Areas for seabirds, including developing a seabird database, which will help inform and guide future advocacy work.

We also worked hard to prevent the destruction of the feeding grounds of 50% of New Zealand's fairy tern population in Mangawhai Harbour.



Save Denniston Plateau

Forest & Bird continued its high-profile public campaign to stop an Australian mining company from open-cast mining on the Denniston Plateau. Mining the plateau would wipe out this ecologically diverse landscape and its endangered native wildlife. The impact would be devastating and permanent. Instead we proposed a 5900-hectare reserve on the plateau.

The mining company was granted resource consents in August 2011 and the following month Forest & Bird lodged an appeal in the Environment Court. However, the internationally unique landscape is part of public conservation land and it is now up to the Department of Conservation to permit access and concession agreements.

Support for our campaign was staggering and grew throughout the year. Nearly \$100,000 was raised in a fundraising appeal and thousands of people signed our petition and lobbied MPs to protect the plateau.

Esteemed ecologist Sir Alan Mark and wildlife photographer Rod Morris were integral in generating media interest and raising public awareness.

New Zealand has already lost significant parts of the nearby Stockton Plateau to mining, and we are not prepared let Denniston suffer the same fate. In November, the accidental death of 800 giant land snails removed from Stockton before mining demonstrated the fallibility of relocation efforts, and strengthened our case to save the plateau.

Denniston was designated Forest & Bird's priority campaign for 2012.

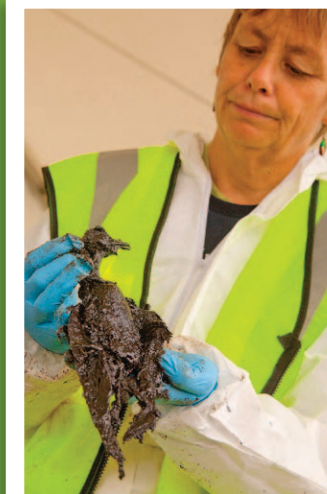


Rena oil spill

On October 5, Greek-owned container ship *Rena* struck Astrolabe Reef about 22 kilometres off the coast of Tauranga. Around 350 tonnes of oil and many of the ship's 1300 freight containers spilled into the sea. Former Environment Minister Nick Smith described the event as "New Zealand's worst maritime environmental disaster", as oil and debris devastated the plethora of wildlife in the area.

Forest & Bird staff members assisted the frontline response team. Karen Baird worked in the mortuary and animal feeding area of the Oiled Wildlife Response Unit. Al Fleming helped co-ordinate Forest & Bird members who volunteered to join the wildlife recovery and beach clean-up teams.

Two-thousand dead birds were collected following the grounding. However, research suggests this represents only 10% of actual birds killed from a large oil spill. Many more are likely to suffer long-term effects of poisoning, habitat loss and species population decline.





President's report

I'm writing this report shortly after receiving news that the Mokihinui River has been saved from hydro development. This is a victory all Forest & Bird members can be proud of, and shows that we can win major conservation battles against wealthy and powerful business interests.

Achieving victories like Mokihinui requires significant resources, including lawyers and advocates, field officers, communications and marketing staff. To ensure we have these resources, the national organisation has focused on reversing a long-term decline in membership through a recruitment campaign, which has already added over 3000 new supporters to the Society. As a consequence of running both the recruitment campaign and our existing conservation campaigns, we have run a large deficit in the past year. As new supporters continue to increase, this deficit will reduce significantly in 2012-13, and we are projecting a surplus in 2013-14.

The Executive has spent considerable time debating this approach and has decided to 'bite the bullet'. Although it is financially challenging, we believe it is essential for the future of the Society to invest now in new supporters and income streams. If we don't, the Society's ability to resource campaigns like Mokihinui and Denniston will erode over time. From my meetings with branches and members over the past year, I know that many of you agree we have to act now.

All these changes are focused on one end – protecting our natural environment for its own value and for future generations.

Having an opportunity to meet so many members and see and hear about the projects is simply the best part of the President's job, and the most inspiring and humbling. Over the past year the work of branches together with our national advocacy campaigns have made a significant difference to many issues and enhanced our reputation as New Zealand's leading conservation organisation. As today's decision on the Mokihinui shows, we are making a difference.

Andrew Cutler

Nga mihi nui
Andrew Cutler,
Forest & Bird President
22 May 2012

Strengthening nature's voice

Our face-to-face recruitment programme was hugely successful and this year brought in 3222 new supporters.

We hope the influx of new, enthusiastic supporters will give branches a much wider network for future project work and greater long-term financial stability for the Society. We held extremely successful new member events in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin.

In November, we distributed 8000 posters encouraging people to Vote For Nature in the general election, while 18 branches held public meetings with their local MP candidates. The success of our campaign was reflected in a pre-election TV3 News poll in which voters considered the natural environment the most important election issue.

The younger generation will one day become the guardians of the environment. So it's encouraging that KCC reached more young New Zealanders than ever, with 1310 new members over the year.

Our growth in social media allowed us to reach even more people, more quickly. We gained 1750 followers on Twitter and with the evolution of smartphone technology, communicated live from events. Forest & Bird's Youtube channel proved a valuable platform to deliver and share video footage.



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