Ecological Society Newsletter

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FROM THE EDITORS

Given the positive response we got from readers to our editorial in the last issue, we decided to expand on the mentoring theme and specifically talk about what formal mentoring opportunities there are for ecologists in New Zealand. Our editorial considered careers in ecology, but mentoring can provide guidance with the development of any skill. Finding a mentor can be difficult for a variety of reasons. In this follow-up we give you some tips for finding a suitable mentor.

Think about what you want

The first thing is to consider the aspects that you want to develop. Be honest in your self appraisal—it will help you identify your ideal mentor(s) and be able to clearly communicate your goals. Careful consideration of these things can put you in a mindset to see things in other people that you might not have otherwise ensuring that you find a mentor that has the set of skills that you are after. It is important to note you are not seeking a "life coach" but someone with a particular set of skills or attributes that you feel you can learn from/desire. Also when you are doing this self appraisal—be realistic; you might be able to have it all, but you probably won't be able to get it all at once!

Where can you go to find a mentor?

Once you have done your self appraisal, be proactive in seeking a mentoring relationship:

- Consider people who are not the obvious choice; your mentor doesn't have to be an ecologist! There may be someone who is not in your field but has qualities that match specific areas in which you want to improve. You can also get different things from different people—consider multiple mentors;
- With this in mind, chat with as many possibilities and pursue conversations with people with whom you feel comfortable
- Take advantage of any connections you have, and make new connections wherever you can (e.g. attend conferences, get involved in activities outside your usual circles)
- Consider setting up a mentoring scheme yourself, or consider people who are in other locations, mentoring via e-mail (e-mentoring!) is a viable option. Look at mentoring systems that are already in place, e.g., AWIS, and in house mentoring systems
- Consider a less formal mentoring situation, e.g., create a comfortable group environment or support system with like-minded people. The right atmosphere of encouragement and appreciation can be great for confidence.

INSIDE:

Qualities to look for in a mentor—what can you expect from them

Apart from your desired skill set, there are particular qualities that you should look for in a mentor.

- Look for a person whose personality is appealing and comfortable to you. Sometimes the mentoring relationship requires honesty and exposure or vulnerability on your part, therefore you must feel you can trust that person
- When looking at potential mentors consider the time they have available and interest in developing a mentoring relationship
- Look for people with high expectations of themselves and others, they will encourage and push you to get what you want
- The best mentors are generous with praise and have excellent personal and communication skills

How to get the most out of the mentoring relationship

Once you have established a mentoring relationship—do your part. Be enthusiastic and work hard towards your goals. The mentoring relationship will also benefit from feedback to your mentor, most people are not formally trained as mentors so the mentoring skills come from personal experience and observation. The best results will be achieved when you push to make the changes you want. For example, some of the best things you can do to get the most out of a mentoring relationship (and this is sort of from the academic perspective) are to publish, be courteously proactive in overseeing your own career path, broaden your specialisation; do different things, network in a variety of professional organisation and with other scholars from related fields, and find a balance between work and play.

Don't forget, having a mentor in one aspect of your life/career doesn't mean that you can't be a mentor to someone else!

Ruth Guthrie & Hannah Buckley
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If you have comments or questions about our editorials, we encourage you to put it in the form of a letter to the editors.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Replies to editorial, newsletter #112

Dear Editors,

Thank you for your editorial about mentoring in Newsletter No. 112. I am a female PhD student in the field of Molecular Ecology. I am feeling disillusioned about a career in science due to the same reasons you highlighted in your editorial. The imposter syndrome you mentioned also describes me well! It seems to me that to have a good scientific career huge sacrifices are expected of women in their relationships and ability to be mothers. Some of my colleagues and I have talked about the need for mentors to show us that this need not necessarily be the case. The difficulty is in finding a mentor, especially outside of academia. It would be great to meet a woman with a good career in this field that also has a balanced life and family. How can we find such people that are prepared to be mentors? Thanks again for raising such an important and relevant issue.

Anonymous

Dear Editors,

In response to the editorial in the March NZES newsletter 112, we would like to make the point that the number of women ecologists in local government in NZ does not necessarily seem to reflect what was found for Academic/Research institutions. Of the members of the Local Government Ecologists Network 75% of us are woman! Local government does have responsibilities for protection and monitoring of biodiversity and often supports ecological research. But does not often spearhead research itself. This may indicate that women ecologists (and associated professions) are better represented in careers that involve applying ecological research and being practitioners of ecology.

We note, however, that the gender ratio of women to men employed at local government level is not so rosy! In some councils it is starting to change. For example, in the Auckland Regional Council there are currently more women than men employed with the gender ratio in 2004 favouring woman at 51:49. However, in the ARC in 2004 the gender ratio of women to men in management positions was 63:37 in favour of men. In Greater Wellington Regional Council only 7% of managers are female (with 35.7% of all staff being female).

It may be that academia has barriers to women ecologists that other career paths don't (or don't to the same degree), and perhaps the universities need to look at their equal opportunity policies. It could also be a representation of an earlier era, as the uni stats show men dominating at the higher positions mostly occupied by older people. There may well

be a pulse of women moving through from junior lecturer to professor positions that will even up those stats. Or maybe us girls just like to be at the applied end of things, where we are more capable of making a difference on the ground!

We fully support the mentoring concept, and found the uni stats interesting, but we would be interested in seeing the net cast wider with a survey of the gender of ecologists from all organisations including independent contractors. The NZES membership would be a useful source of such information.

Shona Myers
Karen Denyer
Melanie Dixon
Kate McNutt
Andrea Julian
Members of Local Government Ecologists

Editors reply: These interesting statistics are consistent with those in our original editorial; we showed that the 'drop-out' rate of women from academic ecology (presumably mostly into applied ecology careers) is much higher than for men.

Reply to letter to the editors, newsletter #112: Should sustainability be a filter for ecological significance?

We are very pleased to see a response from the "Local Government Ecologists' Network" to our Forum article on criteria for assessing ecological significance under the Resource Management Act (which was based on a 1999 report to Ministry for the Environment (Norton and Roper-Lindsay 1999)). We all need to discuss these matters, and bring out different perspectives, if biodiversity management is to advance under RMA.

It is perhaps important to say at the start, that when published originally in 1999 the criteria were very much a draft proposal. It was always intended that they should be applied and tested in the field (and in the Council chamber) to develop them into a workable set that could be used throughout the country. The draft criteria have been used and adapted to local situations by a number of territorial local authorities (TLAs) over the last 6 years, and were never intended to be the final word.

"Sustainability" was always going to be the tricky criterion, given that it was the concept that made the criteria under RMA different from the well established criteria of PNAP and earlier surveys. But, remember, "sustainable management" is one key difference between the Resource Management Act and the Reserves and Conservation Acts. Further, our collective understanding of the complexity of the term has developed in this period and the need to be more explicit according to context.

We wonder if the heart of the difference of opinion between ourselves and the LGEN is a basic difference in our interpretation of the role of Section 6(c) in a territorial local authority's management of biodiversity in its area? And following from that a different perception of the significant natural areas that might be identified under Section 6(c)?

And to what extent the difference in opinion is also coloured by our own experiences dealing mainly with small District Councils in the South Island compared with the LGEN authors' main experiences with large Regional Councils in the North Island?

In an ideal world, we believe that sites identified as being ecologically significant under Section 6(c) (an "SNA" in shorthand) should be the cream of the District or Region's biodiversity values—the best areas containing high biodiversity values and exhibiting a good range of healthy ecosystem processes. The threshold for each criterion should therefore be high. Accordingly there may be very few or even no sites identified as SNAs on private land in an area where there has been widespread and intensive damage or loss of biodiversity values (such as the Waikato, perhaps?)

BUT (and it is a big BUT)—this approach to SNAs MUST be accompanied by a more comprehensive system for protection and management of biodiversity values by a territorial local authority such as that now possible under Section 31 (1) (b) (iii). That system needs to protect the places or sites that do not meet the "significant" criteria, as well as the things that are not site-specific such as networks, connections, processes and ecological functions and services that support biodiversity (and human populations). This all-encompassing approach would enable TLAs to meet their wider RMA Part II responsibilities as well as ensure that more sites move into the "significant" category over time.

So we conclude that "sustainability" remains a valid criterion if you approach the assessment of ecological significance under Section 6(c) from the "cream" philosophy. However, we agree that it needs more field and planning testing and feedback, to ensure that it is applied in a practical, consistent and nationally appropriate manner. We also believe that the actual word "sustainability'" may be inappropriate because it has proved open to wide interpretation—perhaps "viaibility" is better? Essentially we still believe that ideally, the value of a site should be judged on its ecological functioning—what name this is given, or whether it can be assessed under "ecological context" is matter of detail.

The alternative approach seems to be to have a lower threshold for achieving "significance" and therefore a larger number of sites in the SNA category. The corollary of this seems to be that TLAs looking for

minimal interference will think that their biodiversity responsibilities have been met through protecting specific sites, and that they will have no interest in management of areas outside the sites.

In the real world of New Zealand 14 years on from the introduction of the RMA, Sections 6(c) and (more recently) amended Section 31 this seems to be the case. These parts of the Act are not considered in tandem, so that areas that are not identified as "significant" are seen as not important, and are dispensable, so are not managed in an ecologically sound manner. It seems to be for this reason that ecologists try to identify large numbers of SNAs—to ensure that a large proportion of a District or Region has good management of biodiversity values believing that the rest will not be managed well. Given the extent of modification of much of lowland New Zealand, many of the remnants do not exhibit healthy ecosystem processes, and therefore would not meet a "sustainability" criterion.

In this case, the issue of ecological functioning must be addressed at the second step under Section 6(c)—what does a TLA actually DO with the SNAs? The Act instructs TLAs to provide for their protection, which generally is interpreted as controlling activities to varying degrees which could stop further decline in ecological functioning.

We hope that all ecologists providing advice to local authorities under RMA are taking advantage of the 2004 Amendment to Section 31 (1)(b)(iii) to develop a more comprehensive approach to biodiversity management. We believe that this offers TLAs more open ways to encompass the historic, scientific, cultural and social/community values of areas of indigenous flora and fauna that often fall through the 6(c) net. Through this they can also develop processes to get the "community buy-in" that the LGEN seeks, and work with landowners on property or landscape management without the focus on site protection which often proves confrontational.

We all share the LGEN's concerns about managing biodiversity and the need to work with landowners to do this.

At the same time, discussion amongst ecologists about ecological criteria to ensure that assessment focuses on ecological matters and not management or politics is good and we hope that the Society can facilitate this through the pages of the newsletter, workshops and conferences.

Judith Roper-Lindsay and David Norton.

IS THE MARSDEN FUND CURRENTLY WORKING IN THE INTERESTS OF NEW ZEALAND ECOLOGY?

New Zealand ecologists have several potential sources to target for research funding, but only one of these, the Marsden Fund, is explicitly intended for fundamental (non-applied) ecological research, or the sort of ecological research that we routinely see published in such journals as Ecology, Oikos and Ecology Letters. Since this is New Zealand's sole source for funding this type of work, it is important that this fund is capable of targeting, and funding, the best possible ecological research being done by New Zealand ecologists. In the first 8 or so years since the fund started in 1995 it would appear that this has generally been the case, and we have seen the Marsden Fund support excellent ecological projects on a range of topics including metapopulation dynamics, tree deciduousness and ecophysiology of honeydew production to name a few. However I suggest that there have been some disturbing developments in relation to the Ecology, Evolution and Behaviour (EEB) panel (the panel that considers ecological proposals) in the last couple of years, and which I believe may work to the disadvantage of ecological science in New Zealand. I identify two related issues.

The first of these is the trend of the EEB panel to become heavily stacked with those whose work is strongly molecular, at the expense of all other branches of ecology, evolution and behaviour. Whenever a non-molecular panellist has left the panel in the past two years, s/he has been usually replaced by a researcher whose work is heavily molecular. The net result is that of the 9 current EEB panellists, five work mostly with molecular approaches, and another frequently incorporates molecular approaches into his work. Of the remaining three, one is a reptile physiologist, one works on bird behaviour, and one is a marine ecologist. A large range of terrestrial community, ecosystem, environmental, soil, and plant-related work is therefore excluded. If we consider all the leading international journals that specialise in (non-molecular) fundamental (non-applied) ecology of the sort that Marsden is intended to support (i.e., Ecology, Ecological Monographs, Journal of Ecology, Journal of Animal Ecology, Functional Ecology, Oikos, Oecologia, American Naturalist and Ecology Letters), then only one panellist has published more than once in them in the past 10 years, and only one other has published once in them.

Most ecologists (worldwide and in New Zealand, including those who are members of the Society, and those who submit proposals to Marsden) are not heavily molecular in their research, and it would seem that there is a dearth of expertise on the EEB panel to assess the type of work that most of us do. This

should be of concern to ecologists and to the Society. Marsden panellists get to rank preliminary proposals, choose referees, and determine which full proposals are ultimately funded. While I have do doubt of the ability of the panel to adequately rank heavily molecular proposals, I have little confidence their ability to rank other ecological proposals, particularly those focused on terrestrial systems. I am also not persuaded that such a panel would be sufficiently knowledgeable about many branches of ecology to know which scientists are doing the best work in those areas and would therefore be the best choices as referees (note that Marsden is placing increasing emphasis on panellists choosing referees not nominated by the applicants). This issue helps explain the rather bizarre choices of referees made for several ecological proposals in the 2004 round; some reports that I have seen clearly could not have been written by referees with international standing in the subject. Given this problem we appear to be approaching a situation in which the evaluation of (non-molecular) ecological proposals is precariously close to functioning as a lottery.

The second issue relates to conflicts of interest of panellists who also submit proposals to the same panel. Here the panellists 'leave the room' when their own proposal is discussed, but despite attempts by the Manager of the Marsden Fund to assure us otherwise (see October newsletter of the Marsden Fund), significant conflicts of interest remain. Firstly, when only a tiny proportion of proposals are funded by EEB (as in 2004), any panellist who has a proposal under serious consideration would probably be aware that they could greatly elevate the probability of their own proposal being supported simply by arguing against support for one or two other highly rated proposals that are in direct competition with their own. Second, panellists writing a 'full' proposal would have a better idea than non-panellists as to what other members of the panel are looking for and the way that they think, since they will already have spent a day with the other panellists evaluating preliminary proposals. Third, a variant of the 'friendship bonus' syndrome (see Wennerås and Wold 1997 Nature 387, 341–343) may operate, in which panellists may be more sympathetic to a proposal from a fellow panellist that has just left the room but with whom they have just been discussing other proposals, rather than a proposal from someone else. It is not possible to demonstrate the extent to which these factors have operated or not. However, for those Standard Proposals submitted to EEB in the 2004 round, just 4% of proposals with non-panellists as PIs were successful. Meanwhile, 3 proposals submitted by panellists as PIs were successful, and since at least some panellists did not submit proposals as PIs, the success rate for panellists was probably over 50%. One might question as to whether proposals submitted by panellists were sufficiently superior to those from other leading scientists (some of whom are themselves former panellists) as to justify such a discrepancy. If the panellists are mostly heavily molecular in their work, then we should expect molecular proposals to feature disproportionately in the types of projects funded at the expense of other branches of ecology.

The Marsden Newsletter of October 2004 tries to give the impression that it is not possible to operate the evaluation process without having panellists submit proposals. Here, I invite comparison with recent developments in the Swedish science funding agency FORMAS. Sweden, like New Zealand, is a small country, and has the same plusses and minuses as New Zealand in having a community of ecologists in which everyone seems to know everyone else. Until this year, FORMAS panellists could also submit proposals, and during panel meetings panellists would leave the room when their own proposal was discussed, just like with Marsden. Last year, 63% of proposals from panellists were funded, versus 20% from non-panellists. Although this disparity is less extreme than the EEB result from 2004, it nevertheless attracted interest from Sweden's media, and one of Sweden's main national newspapers recently devoted an article to highlighting this outcome in an unfavourable light. While I could not imagine the New Zealand print media showing much interest in running a similar story about Marsden (given its usual lack of interest in science), the Swedish example is one that Marsden could learn from. As a result of the recent bad publicity, this year FORMAS is instituting a new procedure in which panellists are appointed for four years, and in any year in which they submit a proposal, they must stand down from the panel; in these years another leading scientist is co-opted to stand in for them. In New Zealand, most scientists do not submit as a PI to Marsden every year, and I cannot see why Marsden could not try to implement a similar system.

I believe that the problems identified above merit debate and discussion. These concerns (and related ones such as the exclusion of Landcare Research from the current EEB panel) have been brought up with Marsden by various folk on various occasions but it appears that absolutely no attempt has been made to address them. I also believe that the greater ecological community would stand to benefit by any changes in Marsden that involved making the process of selecting panellists more transparent and ensuring reduced conflicts of interest. Ideally this would involve greater input from those ecologists (and evolutionary and behavioural biologists) whose work is of relevance to the EEB panel, as well as key Universities, CRIs and Societies such as the New Zealand Ecological Society. It is only through such change that we will ensure that the best fundamental ecological research in this country has a fair chance of getting the support that it deserves.

David Wardle,
Landcare Research, Lincoln, and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Umeå, Sweden.

53RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE NEW ZEALAND ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The AGM of the NZES will be held during the annual conference: Tuesday 30 August, 4.30 p.m., Rutherford Hotel, Nelson. Room to be advised. All members are urged to attend. The minutes of the 52nd AGM can be found in the December 2004 issue of the newsletter http://www.nzes.org.nz/newsletter/no111.html. Members are reminded that notices of significant motions that are to be put by members need to be submitted to council at least 28 days prior to the AGM. After that time, following the society rules, no new motions may be proposed, discussed or put to vote except by consent of more than two-thirds of the members present.

President's Annual Report

It has never been easier to obtain information about New Zealand's biodiversity and ecology via the internet, publications and books, and through talking to 'experts' in councils, central government, consultancies and community groups. Yet decisions are still being made about the management of New Zealand's natural resources that call into question whether ecologists are doing enough to advocate for New Zealand's indigenous ecology. The promotion and transfer of our ecological science is imperative. Native ecosystems in New Zealand are still under threat and declining despite ever increasing interest from community restoration groups and government agencies.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was published recently by the United Nations. This report was prepared by 1,300 experts from 95 countries. It stated that sixty percent of the ecosystem services that support life on Earth, such as fresh water, capture fisheries, air and water regulation, and the regulation of regional climate are being degraded or used unsustainably. This degradation of ecosystem services is a road block to the Millennium Development Goals agreed to by world leaders at the United Nations in 2000. Ecosystem changes that have contributed substantial net gains in human well-being and economic development have been achieved at growing costs in the form of degradation of other services.

The NZES has an important role to play in providing expert information for use in decision making about ecology, and also advocating for ecological research and information to be used to support sustainable management of natural resources. This is the responsibility of ever Society member. But how can we ensure ecology is given the appropriate billing by decision makers?

The Society must think beyond its traditional annual conference and look to improve interactions between researchers and decision-makers that influence management of land and water (including politicians and corporations). This could be achieved through workshops and gatherings or alternative ecology publications or bulletins targeted at 'un-converted' audiences. We must showcase the value of ecological science and perhaps even 'pare down' our science depending on the audience. Do we even know who makes the most influential decisions about New Zealand's ecological management?

We must also know what we want as a Society, what we see as the desirable future for New Zealand. Should New Zealand have national policy on ecology and what should it be? What is non-negotiable with regard to protection of New Zealand's ecology? What are we not willing to see deteriorate through the impacts of pests and continued development? What ecological environments do we want to protect so that they are there to be studied and appreciated in 20, 50 or 100 years?

Vital debate happens at our conferences and in our journal but does that impact on day-to-day management decisions affecting indigenous ecology? Do members of the Society currently work with Fonterra, BP and Carter Holt Harvey to ensure appropriate use of current ecological science? As the pre-eminent ecological science organisation in New Zealand, we must put ecology and sustainable management of resources on the political agenda and that may require proactive intervention in Wellington and at the headquarters of all the main corporations. The vital role of ecological systems and ecosystem services is being consistently undervalued and we need that to change. As prescient economist David Ricardo said in 1817 'if nature pays, who then will pay for nature?' What value an ecological system?

With that in mind, and building on the success of the on-line Journal, this year the Society has bid to the Biodiversity Advice Fund to prepare 'Ecology Fact sheets' to raise awareness of ecological issues amongst audiences that may not be aware of the facts and the importance of their actions, such as politicians, landowners and territorial local authorities. This is a tiny step but one that I hope will lead to larger programmes of ecological science transfer.

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand with its new Chapter in New Zealand has launched a Certification Programme for environmental practitioners (CEnvP). The ecological profession in Australia is showing a keen interest in this programme. For the first time in New Zealand, it is now possible for ecologists to seek certification. This is a major step forward for recognising the skill and competency of Society members. I urge you to support this certification scheme that, over time, will develop the skill base here in New Zealand.

Early in 2005 the Australian Ecological Society and the New Zealand Ecological Society made a joint bid to hold the 2009 Intecol conference in Brisbane. This bid was successful and will provide New Zealand and Australian ecologists a chance to showcase the unique

ecology of our countries and also to promote the work that ecologists are doing in this part of the world. It will also provide another opportunity to forge ever stronger links with our counterparts in Australia.

The work of the Society continues and thanks must go to my colleagues on the Society Council. In particular Shona Myers (Secretary) has managed a huge work-load throughout the year. Jon Sullivan has continued to provide his time and expertise as Webmaster of the Society website. The new newsletter editorial team of Ruth Guthrie and Hannah Buckley have done an excellent job picking up seamlessly where Alastair Robertson left off. I also thank those of you that have been supporting the Society through writing for the newsletter and attending this year's annual conference in Nelson. Simon Moore has been 'our man in Nelson' and has been the Societies main voice in organising the joint conference with the Limnological Society.

This Society is about people undertaking ecological research and disseminating and applying ecological knowledge. As we build to next year's (2006) joint conference with the Australian Ecological Society in Wellington, please think about how you can collaborate and interact with your community, your territorial local authority, your neighbour to ensure natural resource decisions that affect our ecology are built on the knowledge that the Society has created and continues to create. I encourage you to use your voice and your writing to make people know the importance of our precious environments.

John Sawyer
President

Membership and Subscription Annual Report

The following table shows the total number of members in different categories as at 28 April 2005. The total count of members includes those in arrears for this year (we assume they will eventually pay) but not those owing for the previous year. The table provides a comparison with membership as at 8/7/04 last year. It shows that membership has dropped marginally from 2004 (by 9%). Total membership is still increasing, however, from previous years. For example it has increased by 9% from 2001 (542 members in 2001). There are a significant number of members (157) who have not yet paid this years' subscription (26% have not yet paid). Reminder notices will be sent out and the conference will also act as a reminder. So please pay your subs (a big thank you to those who have)—it helps the society and the promotion of ecology. The unwaged fraction of membership has stayed a similar rate as 2004 (22%), possibly reflecting the numbers of ecology students in NZ. NB: Full and joint members pay at the full rate, unwaged members get a discounted rate, overseas members pay the full rate plus an overseas postage surcharge, and honorary members are not charged.

MEMBERSHIP OF NZ ECOL SOC AS AT 28/4/05
(with data for 8/7/04 in brackets for comparison)

Category	Paid	Arrears this year	Total	Arrears last year
Full	284 (323)	84 (40)	368 (363)	12 (8)
Joint	41 x 2 (39)	8 x 2 (5)	49 x 2 (44)	1 x 2 (2)
Unwaged	77 (103)	59 (39)	136 (142)	23 (10)
Overseas	20 (20)	6 (3)	26 (23)	1 (1)
Honorary	11 (9)	n/a	11 (9)	n/a
Total	**442 (535)**	**157 (92)**	**599* (627)**	**37 (21)**

* includes 9 newsletter subscribers

Journal subscriptions as at 28 April 2005 totalled 117 (of which 110 are paid up for the current year). This compares to 120 (118 paid) in 2003 and 108 (95 paid) in 2001. There has been a slight drop in journal subscriptions from 2004, however, subscriptions still remain higher than they were in 2001, reversing the decline in the 1990s.

Significant changes this year have included providing members with the option of receiving the newsletter by email. The majority of members have responded favourably to this option. The website allows free access to current and back issues of the *Journal of Ecology* and to newsletters. The Council is reassessing this free access. Restricted access would again provide this as a major incentive for membership of the society. On line membership payment is also being investigated.

Shona Myers
Secretary

Treasurer's Annual Report

Shown below are the audited statements of financial performance and financial position for the New Zealand Ecological Society for the 12 month financial year ended 31 December 2004 (values in this report are GST exclusive).

Financial performance

The Society made a profit of $12,980 in the 12 months ended 31 December 2004. This profit is again up on last year's and is mainly attributable to another successful conference run in Invercargill last September.

Financial position

The level of cash reserves at 31 December 2004 was up again from the previous year at $80,867 which is substantially above the desired minimum level of reserves agreed to at the 1999 AGM at Blenheim (i.e., one year's expenditure which is approximately $44,000).

Based on input from society members at last year's conference, Council is reviewing spending initiatives that further the aims of the Society.

Overall the society is in a sound financial position. Thanks are due to the secretariat, last year's conference organisers and to members for renewing their memberships promptly.

Rachel Keedwell
Treasurer

NEW ZEALAND ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY (Inc)

Statement of Financial Performance

For the Twelve Months ended 31 December 2004

	12 Months Dec 2004		12 Months Dec 2003
	$	$	$
INCOME			
Members Subscriptions	29,208		29,232
Interest	1,648		2,419
Publications	168		150
Journal Subscriptions	12,949		11,880
Reprints and page charges	3,006		3,603
Conference - 2003	–		8,981
- 2004	9,342		
Sundry Income	263		155
Journal online	8,667		10,000
		65,251	66,420
EXPENDITURE			
Journal Production	27,496		28,712
Newsletters	3,552		4,340
Secretariat	8,453		7,485
Subscriptions	2,742		1,746
Council Expenses	3,059		338
Administration	3,055		3,656
Audit Fee	700		300
Awards	–		436
Web Site	505		470
Tui time	845		-475
Journal Online	1,332		10,036
Conference	532		–
		52,271	57,043
NET SURPLUS		12,980	**9,376**

Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2004

	Dec 2004		Dec 2003
	$	$	$
FUNDS & LIABILITIES			
ACCUMULATED FUNDS			
Balance 31 December 2002	67,888		58,511
Add Net Surplus	12,980		9,376
		80,867	67,888
LIABILITIES			
Advance—membership	–		270
Advance—journal subscriptions	556		489
Accounts payable	18,715		12,111
Kauri Fund	3,597		3,587
		22,868	16,457
			84,344
ASSETS			
Westpac Cheque Account	29,335		49,965
Westpac Term Deposit	55,000		20,000
Kauri Fund	3,597		-
		87,932	69,965
Arrears—membership	1,686		894
GST Receivable	3,079		1,255
Sundry Debtors	10,888		12,080
Stock—Journals	150		150
			84,344

Journal Editor's Annual Report

Journal production has continued relatively smoothly despite having changes in editors over the past year, and continues to attract submissions from a wide range of ecologists in New Zealand. The production cycle for volume 29(1) is progressing smoothly, thanks largely to the technical editing efforts of Roger Dungan. Both issues in 2004, and the first issue in 2005 each contain 15 papers. Volume 29(1) will be ready to send to the printers by the end of May, and should be printed and posted by the end of June. Roger has also addressed other issues with the journal: for example, wasted blank pages in .PDF copies of Journal pages by removing these before copies are sent to authors and posted on the web pages; also, the process for issuing invoices for page and offprint charges has been clarified. I think a hearty thank you is in order to Roger for so smoothly carrying out technical editing tasks for the Journal, and putting his talents and energy into maintaining high standards for the journal!

There has been some progress in making the evaluation process for manuscripts electronic. Most (ca. 90%) of authors now submit papers in electronic format, typically as microsoft word files; this has facilitated review and evaluation, particularly for editors and reviewers who are overseas. There is a need however to create a manuscript template for potential authors that will contain styles and technical information for formatting papers prior to submission. In addition, the journal style guide needs to be updated to reflect these recent shifts to electronic media. I will endeavour to update the style guide once Peter Bellingham takes over the reins as editor in the next month or two.

We received a grand total of 31 submitted manuscripts in 2004. This is down from a total of 54 submissions in 2003, but is more typical of submission rates in previous years. Currently, 23 manuscripts are under review, 7 manuscripts have been returned to authors for revisions, and a further 10 manuscripts are "inactive", i.e., rejected but the door left open for resubmission. Volume 29(2) currently has 5 accepted manuscripts to date.

The Editorial Board currently includes Doug Armstrong, Kay Clapperton, David Coomes, Ian Jamieson, Gábor Lövei, Chris Lusk, Mike Winterbourn and David Wardle. Catriona MacLeod continues to serve as an interim member of the board when other board members have been unavailable. Graham Hickling is no longer on the board and those manuscripts he was handling have been transferred to alternative members of the Editorial Board. Peter Bellingham and I are considering taking on a replacement member of the Editorial Board who has expertise in the area of mammal ecology or entomology to replace Dr Hickling. Overall, I wish to thank the board members for their excellent job and efficient handling of manuscripts over the past year. Also critical to the success of the journal has been Jenny Steven who has done an excellent job as Technical Editor, and made a smooth transition for Roger Dungan. The efforts of both Jenny and Roger are greatly appreciated and are absolutely critical to maintaining the quality and efficient production of the journal.

John Parkes has been in contact with me about preparing a special issue of the journal based on papers prepared from the Nigel Barlow symposium late in 2004. John is guest editor for this issue, has financing in hand for publishing this special issue, and will oversee the normal review process for these manuscripts, however, Peter Bellingham and myself will give the final approval for all manuscripts. Technical editing for this issue will be contracted out to Landcare Research staff editors to avoid burdening Roger Dungan with an extra issue's worth of manuscripts to process! We thank Landcare Research for making available these additional editorial services at no cost to the Journal. We anticipate this special issue will be ready for publication in late 2005.

Duane Peltzer
Acting Scientific Editor
New Zealand Journal of Ecology
29 April 2005

NZES Website Annual Report

The numbers

The society website (www.nzes.org.nz) continues to grow in popularity. Monthly visitor numbers to the website are up on average 204% (range 148%–260%) from their corresponding months the previous year (following an 65% average monthly increase over the year before that). As an example, 2214 different computers visited the website in April 2005 compared with 849 visitors in April 2004. That's not bad for a society with just over 600 members! March and April 2005 were the heaviest visited months ever, each exceeding 2,000 visitors and 7,000 page views.

The huge leap in popularity over the past year was driven by heavy use of the New Zealand Journal of Ecology back issues (http://www.nzes.org.nz/nzje/). This service was launched at the 2004 annual conference in Invercargill at the end of August (and created with funds from the NZ Government's Terrestrial and Freshwater Biodiversity Information System, or TFBIS). Over the past year, more than 11,000 computers arrived at our site by searching for "NZ Journal of Ecology" or equivalent in a search engine like google (www.google.com). Since the launch of the NZJE back issues service, more than 38,000 NZJE page views have made, accounting for 69% of our total site usage. That is a substantial increase from the previous year when 21% of our overall page views were of the more limited NZJE webpages.

The other most popular areas of the website over the past year were the links page (note that I recently fixed a number of outdated links—please let me know if you find these), the meetings/conferences pages, our (small) education webpage, and the newsletter back issues. The HotScience webpages, which identify and summarise NZ ecology published in the international literature, remain well used with just under 3,000 visited pages in the past year

Two thirds (64%) of the overall visitors to our website come from NZ computers. This is the same as last year (65%), indicating that the recent large growth in site popularity has been fueled equally by local and international visitors. Since I took over as webmaster in May 2002, 38,266 different computers have visited our website and viewed 145,666 pages. These are great signs of the continued relevance of the NZ Ecological Society and its publications both nationally and internationally.

The web statistics are provided (for free) by www.webstat.com.

New developments

As mentioned, the back issues of the *NZ Journal of Ecology* went online at the end of August 2004. This was the culmination of a massive amount of work by many people. It is great to see the site being so well used.

Our *NZJE* full text project and website are being used as the model for similar full text back issue projects by the NZ Entomological Society and the NZ Ornithological Society, also funded by TFBIS. Full text back issues of the *NZ Entomologist* were launched at this year's conference in Napier in April (http://www.ento.org.nz/nzentomologist/). I modified our NZJE dynamic website structure for use on their site and built a search engine to run on it. This saved them time and money and will have the added benefit of allowing us to build a joint search engine that includes both journals. The NZ Ornithological Society is considering adopting our website structure also, which will allow for a fantastic degree of information flow among the three sites.

Roger Dungan (one of our two *NZJE* technical editors) and I have worked together over the past months to now offer "in press" pre-publication of papers as soon as they become available. This means that authors with papers accepted to *NZJE* can now have a fully formatted PDF file of their paper available on the *NZJE* website months before the print version is posted. This will help shorten the time between submission of a manuscript and the distribution of the science to users. We hope this will make the journal (even) more attractive for potential contributors.

Some of you may have noticed a few hidden rough edges in the *NZ Journal of Ecology* site. These will be smoothed out by this year's conference. The figures still need to be inserted into *NZJE* volumes 1–8, I need to correct a list of minor errors in PDF files identified by users since the site launch (thanks!), the Occasional Publications PDF files need to go online, and an advanced search function will be provided (I built a fully functioning version of the search engine for the NZ Entomologist and will pop it into the *NZJE* site soon).

I set up an electronic resources area this year (www.nzes.org.nz/e_resources.html). It currently contains the significant natural areas workshop notes from last year's conference, edited by Judith Roper-Lindsay. This has had 516 page views. There is potential to greatly expand this area to include things like past conference abstracts, conference PowerPoint talks, symposium summaries, and historical documents from the society.

Still to come

A few other long planned improvements to the site are now in the works. The priority additions, other than the *NZJE* improvements listed above, are the HotScience webpages (which need upgrading to be made more flexible and editable) and the long promised on-line membership service (join the society, pay your subs, update your postal address, change your password to access member only services, etc.). As always, suggestions and help are appreciated.

Jon Sullivan, Lincoln University
webmaster@nzes.org.nz
1 May 2005

ECOLOGY STUCK ON THE WEB

Part two: Invertebrates on the web

In the last newsletter, I introduced some of the plant identification resources available on the web, including Landcare Research's excellent Flora series (http://floraseries.landcareresearch.co.nz). Since then a major new resource for insect ecology and identification has been launched. This makes it timely to introduce some of the New Zealand invertebrate information now available at our finger tips.

All back issues of the *NZ Entomologist* became available on the web (http://www.ento.org.nz/nzentomologist) at the annual conference of the NZ Entomological Society in April. Big thanks go to Steve Pawson and Raphael Didham for making this happen and to TFBIS for funding it. (TFBIS is an acronym that takes a paragraph to expand so let's stick with TFBIS.) TFBIS also funded the back issue project of *N.Z.J.Ecol.*, indisputably the best journal on NZ ecology in the universe and on the web at http://www.nzes.org.nz/nzje/. Blatant acts of propaganda aside, note that the *NZ Entomologist* goes all the way back

to 1951 and contains a small mountain of ecological, taxonomic, and natural history information.

Ho hum, you may think. What's the fuss? I could have walked over to the library anyway. Ah, but one of the marvels of these online journals is full text searching (and small journals like *NZ Entomologist* are not covered by the traditional abstract citation search engines). Searches that would have been impractically time consuming can now be achieved in milliseconds. You can find in an instant every *NZ Entomologist* article ever that used the word "pollination". Or, search on "pollinat*" and you'll get all articles that contain words that start with "pollinat...". You can then download and read each one (and search inside it for your keyword). Try it with your favourite insect. You know you want to!

There are no NZ insect identification resources as complete as the Flora series online (the excellent hardcopy Fauna series has a limited presence online). However, there is a lot else to be found. The best sites can be found on the NZ Ecological Society links page (http://www.nzes.org.nz/links.html#inverts). If you know of others, pleas tell me and I'll add them.

One site I particularly like is Landcare Research's NZ Lepidoptera type specimen web pages (with the ungainly web address of http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/biodiversity/invertebratesprog/lepidoptera/). This is one of several excellent online invertebrate resources on the Landcare Research website based around the National Arthropod Collection. You can use these webpages to see a photo of the type specimen of a species whenever some clever taxonomist in a waistcoat tells you about a NZ moth, or when you read about a species in an old NZ Entomologist article. The screen is split so you can compare two moths side by side. It's a great way to put wings on a name but the site won't allow a lowly plant ecologist to identify an obscure moth from scratch (the DNA folk are working towards a gadget that will do that).

Te Papa also has a growing amount of insect information online based around its collections. These webpages give you an overview of many invertebrate groups in NZ and identify key references (these are often NZ Entomologist articles!). The Te Papa site includes the Spiders of NZ website which contains lots of information and great photos for a small number of common spiders (this has another paragraph long web address, http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/TePapa/English/CollectionsAndResearch/Collections/InsectsSpidersAndSimilar/Spiders/Spiders_Web/).

Te Papa spiders segue into my closing remarks. Last month, somebody in Germany (!) emailed me to point out that a number of the links on the NZ Ecological Society links page were not working. Yikes! I went through and tested them and, sure enough, I had to update a surprisingly large handful of links that worked fine just 1–2 years ago. It wasn't that small amateur sites had disappeared or moved, it was that large institutions like Te Papa (including the Te Papa spider site), government sites, and a few universities and CRIs had scrambled their websites in the name of progress. Redirecting people from old pages to new pages is technically a simple thing to do but must be time consuming with large sites. Still, I've never figured out why this effort is not made when an institution decides to make a different kind of spider omelette with its website.

Jon Sullivan
Lincoln University
NZES Webmaster webmaster@nzes.org.nz

"IN PRESS" ARTICLES NOW ON THE WEBSITE

The *NZ Journal of Ecology* website (http://www.nzes.org.nz/nzje/) now includes "in press" articles as soon as they are formatted. At the time of writing, four articles that will appear in issue 29(1) are already available for download on the website. These are fully formatted PDF files that will be identical to the final paper except for their lack of page numbers.

Note that you should cite these articles as "in press" until the hard copy journal issue is printed and distributed. The Society's aim in making these articles available immediately is to use our website to minimise the time between the submission of manuscripts and the availability of the resulting article.

Jon Sullivan (*webmaster*) and
Roger Dungan (*technical editor*)

ECOLOGICAL MISCELLANY

Using non-destructive sampling methods for invertebrates

Although broad spectrum techniques for arthropod monitoring, such as Malaise and pitfall trapping, ensure rapid acquisition of substantial collections, these lethal trapping techniques may prove counter-productive when investigating sites or taxa of conservation importance. Such methods indiscriminately collect a wide diversity of taxa, which is useful for biodiversity studies, but often a researcher only requires a single species, family or order. Non-lethal survey techniques, such as timed hand searches and transect sampling can be useful in assessing populations of large, active, readily identified insects such as butterflies (Lepidoptera) and dragonflies (Odonata). Another group of non-lethal techniques that can provide standardized arthropod samples are 'artificial retreats'. These shelters range from 'cryptozoa boards', to sample soil surface arthropods,

through to commercially produced insect houses to attract beneficial predatory and pollinating insects (*e.g.* Coccinellidae, Hymenoptera and Neuroptera) and endangered species (weta and ground beetles). Artificial retreats have provided a useful method for studying populations and behaviour of weta and have also been used for translocating individuals between sites. I describe two artificial retreats, one for monitoring soil surface invertebrates (wooden discs) and another for arboreal invertebrates (weta motels), which have been successfully used for monitoring, restoration and advocacy purposes:

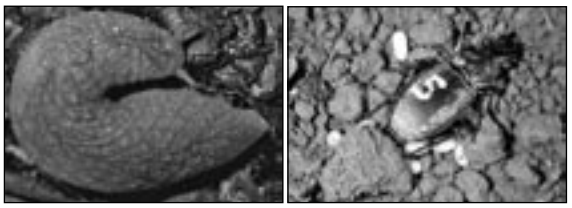
Wooden discs

Discs (40–60 cm in diameter and 10–15 cm thick) cut from untreated pine, macrocarpa or other woods can be used to sample soil surface invertebrates. It is important that discs are placed directly on to bare soil rather than on grass or thick leaf litter as this creates conditions preferred by invertebrates. Populations of invertebrates can be monitored by carefully lifting the discs and counting the individuals beneath.

In my restoration work on Quail Island, commonly found endemic taxa under discs include snails, ground beetles, spiders, flatworms, slugs, harvestmen, worms and litter hoppers. Wooden discs were useful for finding species not found using other techniques such as pitfall trapping. For example, finding *Selenochilus piceus* under a wooden disc at Ahuriri Scenic Reserve was significant because very few specimens of this carabid have been collected on Banks Peninsula in recent times. Species that have bred under the discs include the leaf vein slug *Pseudaneitea maculata*, and the Banks Peninsula endemics, the trap door spider *Misgolas borealis* and the carabid *Megadromus guerini*. *M. guerini* have been found on several occasions 'guarding' its larvae in depressions under discs. These discs have been used to provide refugia and a sampling technique for *M. guerini* and *P. maculata* when translocated to Quail Island for restoration purposes in 2004. (For those vertebrate ecologists amongst you, skinks and geckos have also been found under the discs.)

For more information read: Bowie, M.H. and Frampton, C.M. 2004. A practical technique for non-destructive monitoring of soil surface invertebrates for ecological restoration programmes. *Ecological Management and Restoration* 5 (1): 34–42.

Wooden discs used for monitoring invertebrates.



Left: leaf-vein slug *Pseudaneitea maculata*. Right: carabid *Megadromus guerini* with eggs.

Weta 'motels'

Artificial shelters have been used to monitor weta for over a decade (Ordish, 1992) and come two broad types, single-hole motel or the larger roost/condominium style that contain several holes and galleries. Whatever the design, the shelters are made of wood (preferably untreated), have an entrance hole no larger than 14mm diameter (to exclude mice) and are usually attached to trees. These artificial shelters simulate the cavities, cracks and holes found in older trees that are hard to survey without causing undesirable damage to the trees. A long-term study using weta motels in Canterbury has found a large diversity of endemic spiders, cave and tree weta, leaf vine slugs and other invertebrates use these refuges. One interesting find in motels at Travis Wetland in Christchurch were the first New Zealand specimens of the carabid *Dromius meridionalis*. Some species of spiders and slugs have laid eggs in the motels. The range-restricted Akaroa tree weta *Hemideina ricta* has been successfully surveyed using the motel design (below) and was used to 'catch' and translocate a population to Quail Island recently. By using the same motel that they 'choose' themselves to translocate the weta, they are less likely to get stressed during the restoration process and are more likely to continue using their refuges that contain familiar odours.

Although these monitoring methods may not be suitable for some research purposes, they allow small samples to be taken resulting in minimum impact.

Left: weta motel. Right: tree weta *Hemideina femorata* in motel.

Mike Bowie,
Lincoln University

HOTSCIENCE

Efford, M. G.; Cowan, P. E. 2004. Long-term population trend of *Trichosurus vulpecula* in the Orongorongo Valley, New Zealand. In: R. L. Goldingay and S. M. Jackson (eds.) The biology of Australian possums and gliders. Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton. Pp. 471–483.

Browsing by introduced brushtail possums has been predicted to shift the species composition of native forests away from palatable species, and thereby to reduce the density of possums those forests support. We tested this prediction with data from a population of possums monitored by capture–recapture over 35 years. Annual density varied within a relatively narrow band (6.5–13.7/ha) and the overall trend was slightly positive (+0.04 ± 0.025 /ha/year), despite the decline of some 'preferred' plant species. We speculate that possum carrying capacity was buffered against the loss of palatable plants because these were replaced by more resilient and fast-growing palatable species.

Willis, T. J. & R. B. Millar (2005) Using marine reserves to estimate fishing mortality. *Ecology Letters 8*: 47–52.

The pervasive effects of fishing mean that what is generally seen on our coasts is not 'natural'. Here we demonstrate how no-take marine reserves, where all forms of human-induced disturbance are forbidden, can be used to estimate fishing mortality independently of the fishery. We suggest that reserves can be used to estimate other important population parameters in exploited marine species. Reserves can be used to combat the 'shifting baseline' syndrome and provide controls for determining what is natural in the oceans.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meaning and design of nature for the built environment

24–26 August 2005, Christchurch Art Gallery

The year 2005 has been designated as "The Year of the Built Environment". It is an opportunity for New Zealanders to celebrate the buildings, spaces, places and structures in which they live, work and play. For the 87 per cent of us who live in cities and towns, the built environment is an even more familiar and immediate part of our daily lives.

But what do we know about the Built Environment? In this conference we will explore aspects of nature in cities and towns. We will address questions such as: What role does nature play in our lives? How do we incorporate nature in our urban design? How do we manage our built environment for wildlife? Are we maintaining functioning ecosystems? How do we enhance indigenous biodiversity in cities?

For general enquiries contact: Lincoln University Professional Development Group:

shrewsbh@lincoln.ac.nz
Phone: 64 3 325 3849
http://events.lincoln.ac.nz/urban/default.htm

NZ Plant Conservation Network conference 2005

12–14 August, Christchurch

This will be an exciting event for anyone interested in protecting, growing or studying New Zealand's native plants. The registration form for the conference is now available from the Network website at: http://www.nzpcn.org.nz/Documents/NZPCN-05-conf-reg.pdf

Speakers at the conference will include Prof. Ian Spellerberg (Lincoln University), Hugh Wilson, Brian Molloy, Gerry McSweeney, Colin Meurk and Peter Heenan (Landcare Research), Jorge Santos, Nick Head and Anita Spencer (Department of Conservation), Mike Peters (New Zealand Ecological Restoration Network) and Rick Menzies (Banks Peninsula Trust).

There will also be a series of plant conservation workshops including one on threatened plant propagation.

David Given will present a public lecture on the future of the native plant life of Canterbury on the evening of Friday 12 August.

The inaugural Network plant conservation awards will be presented on the evening of Saturday 13 August. Sunday 14 August will be a full day field trip to Kaitorete Spit and Motukarara Nursery.

Email: info@nzpcn.org.nz

Association for Women in the Sciences 2005 Conference

5–8 July 2005, Hamilton

Historically, AWIS conferences have generated a unique atmosphere for women working in science to network, share experiences, learn—and have a great time. The theme selected this year is "Science Fever," and there is an exciting programme of invited speakers, mini-symposia and professional development workshops designed to generate an atmosphere of enthusiasm and excitement for women in science.

Information and programme: www.awis.org.nz
AWISConf@awis2005.co.nz

2009 INTERCOL Congress

It is confirmed that the 2009 INTERCOL Congress will be held in Brisbane—a first for the southern hemisphere. It was recognised that support from NZES did assist with the bid.

In confirming the venue for the Congress Professor John Lee (INTERCOL President) highlighted several factors that helped the board decide on Brisbane: 1. No INTECOL congress had ever been held previously in the southern Hemisphere; 2. The Brisbane bid came with the full support of two national ecological societies (The Ecological Society of Australia and the New Zealand Ecological Society); 3. Brisbane had great potential for field excursions associated with the Congress.

MEETINGS DIARY

New entries are marked with an asterisk.

*** 30 June–July, 2005**
Oamaru Penguin Symposium 2005.
Contact: A.G. Hocken: agh@ihug.co.nz.
Details: www.penguin.net.nz/events

*** 5–8 July, 2005**
Association of Women in the Sciences (AWIS) 5th National Conference 'Science Fever".
University of Waikato. Contact: Liz Carpenter awisconf@awis2005.co.nz
Information and registration brochures: www.awis.org.nz.

27–29 July, 2005.
The National Education and Training Seminar (NETS) conference of the NZ Biosecurity Institute
In association with the Vertebrate Pest Management Institute of NZ, Christchurch.
www.biosecurity.org.nz

*** 15–19 July, 2005**
International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) Meeting "Complex Forest Ecosystems (Measurement, Models and Analysis)
Cairns, Queensland, Australia.
Contact: Prof Keith Rennolls, k.rennolls@gre.ac.uk.
Details: http://cmc1.gre.ac.uk/conferences/iufro/cfe/

23–26 August, 2005.
4th International Marine Bio-invasions Conference
Wellington. Co-hosts are Biosecurity New Zealand (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry) and the MIT Sea Grant Program (USA). The meeting will be held in conjunction with the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society. Conference website available soon.

24–26 August, 2005
Meaning and design of nature for the urban built environment
Christchurch. http://events.lincoln.ac.nz/urban

28 August–1 September, 2005.
New Zealand Ecological Society annual conference
In conjunction with the NZ Limnology Society, Rutherford Hotel Nelson. Details this newsletter

12–18 September, 2005
World Conference on Ecological Restoration
Zaragoza, Spain. www.ecologicalrestoration.net

*** 17 November, 2005**
Royal Society conference: Security and Biosecurity
Wellington. Contact: Gill Sutherland, gill.sutherland@rsnz.org. Details: http://www.rsnz.org/

29 November–2 December, 2005
Ecological Society of Australia annual conference
University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane.
www.ecolsoc.org.au

6–10 December, 2005
Australasian Ornithological Conference
Blenheim. http://osnz.org.nz/conference.htm

11–13 December, 2005
Australasian Shorebird Conference 2005
Nelson. http://osnz.org.nz/conference.htm

3–6 March, 2006
Second International Meeting on Physiology and Pharmacology of Temperature Regulation
Phoenix, Arizona. Contact Karla.Scarf@chw.edu, www.FeverLab.net

18–21 April, 2006
Australasian Plant Breeding Conference (APBC)
Christchurch. http://events.lincoln.ac.nz/apbc/

CONFERENCE BAGS: FOR WHAT?

Every day, on average, about 900 conferences open around the world, and conference attendees are presented with about 450,000 conference bags. These come in a vast array of types from simple jute sacks to multi-pocketed bags with many zips and tags. The vast majority of these are made in China and Vietnam. So what happens to these bags once the conference is over? Surveys show that about 15% are never given out (i.e. more are printed than are finally needed), 10% are left in hotel rooms or lost on the way home from the conference, 5% are thrown out within a month, 8% are used to store dirty items in the boots of cars, 7% are given to childcare centres for children to use in papier mache constructions, and 55% are piled in a cupboard somewhere with a stack of other conference bags because the owner has no real use for it but thinks it is too good to throw away.

Actually I just made up all those numbers. I don't know how many bags are made and what percentage of them have long and happy lives being used as bags. What I do know is that I have been given a lot of conference bags, and almost without exception I didn't want them, have no real use for them, but would still feel bad about throwing them away. So they pile up in my cupboard (except the obviously completely useless ones such as plastic folder type things). The photo/photos show a selection of those I had lying close at hand. They are a wide range of colours, sizes, and types. A few I use for grocery shopping (though even here, four different bags are competing for this menial task). Most are just lying around in corners, reminders of this bizarre practice of giving away conference bags.

So why do conference organisers give out bags? Is it possible that someone actually likes getting these things? I guess at the first conference you ever go to, you probably feel a bit pleased to have been given something for your money, unless the bag in question happens to be one of the more plainly useless ones (e.g., what on earth is the function of those flat ones like an overgrown clutch purse with the only strap being a 5 cm long loop on one end?). But the key point here is that it is your money. You have paid for this. More than that, you have just contributed to the consumer society, helping move resources from the raw state through an asian sweatshop to a landfill in the shortest possible time. Actually, I feel fairly bad about that. Probably I worry more than I should, but then I am an ecologist.

So why do ecologists, in bulk, do this? The only reason I can think of is that other conferences do this, so we imitate them. But I think there is a crucial difference here. Some professions, especially medics, have conferences where large amounts of booty is given away, all paid for by sponsors, who do this to get the right to put their logo on things. So those bags, while almost certainly all thrown away quickly, are at least not paid for by the folk throwing them away. You can debate among yourselves whether that is better, or worse. But for ecological conferences, such sponsorships are very rare, and I suspect never go towards funding the throwaways. We are paying for these ourselves.

So why don't we stop? Why don't conference organisers just tell people to bring their own bags? They could even have a competition for the oldest conference bag, or most distant conference. Anything, except give me another bag I don't need.

What do you think? Any contrary views please send to the newsletter editors. And anyone wanting a nice, clean, unused conference bag—just drop me a line.

Dave Kelly
Biology, University of Canterbury

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Postgraduate study opportunities in Avian Conservation Biology at University of Otago

Expressions of interest are invited from students interested in pursuing MSc/PhD studies in the follow topics. Our research is part of a long-term study of the behaviour, ecology and genetics of recently re-introduced threatened forest species of birds on Ulva I. (Stewart I.), Doubtful Is. (L. Te Anau) and Motuara I. (Marlborough Sounds). Specific goals are to examine the effects of inbreeding and loss of genetic variation of island populations of threatened bird species (saddlebacks and robins), and to determine if and why some family lineages are more successful than others in establishing and dominating in new populations. Either field experience in handling birds or laboratory experience in molecular genetics (or both) is preferable. A similar project on population genetics and modelling of endangered takahe is also available.

Funding: All research costs are covered. Recommend that New Zealand MSc / PhD students apply for Univ. of Otago Scholarships ($13,000–$25,000 per annum plus fees covered), or Tertiary Education Commission 'Bright Future' Scholarships ($25,000 per annum) www.tec.govt.nz/funding/scholarships/index.htm

For further information contact:
Dr Ian Jamieson
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PO Box 56, Dunedin
ian.jamieson@stonebow.otago.ac.nz
www.otago.ac.nz/zoology/staff/academic/jamieson

PhD Scholarships: ARC-NZ Research Network for Vegetation Function

The Vegetation Function Network can arrange 3-year scholarships for PhD research undertaken at Macquarie University in association with the Network. One scholarship (RAACE) is for Australian or NZ citizens or permanent residents, another (iMURS) is available for international students and provides for their tuition fees as well as for sustenance. Strong Hons 1 or equivalent is required. If you know of people who would be excellent PhD students and who might be interested, please invite them to contact rdelves@bio.mq.edu.au. Feel free to circulate this message as appropriate.

The Vegetation Function Network www.bio.mq.edu.au/ecology/vegfunction/ operates by bringing together scientists from many countries for intensive working groups to develop new data analyses, theory or research proposals. So PhD students associated with the Network will get exceptional opportunities to mix with leading ideas and leading scientists while pursuing their project.

Some details about RAACE and iMURS scholarships are at www.ro.mq.edu.au/HDRU/scholar.htm. However, potential students should contact the Network first. We will discuss potential research areas with them, choose which among the applicants we want to sponsor for the scholarships, and complete much of the paperwork.

NEWS FROM COUNCIL

Editors note: edited and abridged minutes

Minutes of New Zealand Ecological Society Council Meeting, 6 May 2005

Treasurers Report

Rachel's report was presented by John. The finances are very healthy with the cheque account balance at $52,968, and a further $56,194 on term deposit. The surplus as at 31 December 2004 is $80,000.

A discussion on options for spending this surplus was discussed. Options included:

1. Additions to the Kauri Fund
2. Presentation of new awards at the conference, e.g. dissemination of science award
3. Providing cheaper membership fees and conferences. Subsidising the upcoming 2006 joint NZES and Australian Ecological Society Wellington Conference was suggested.
4. Using Society funds to produce 6 x factsheets on topical issues in ecological science—if NZES bid to DoC Biodiversity Advice Fund for $30,000 is not successful

Journal editors report

Peter Bellingham presented Duane's report. Journal subscription rates are back to where they were in 2002. Volume 29 (1) will be ready to send to the printers by the end of May 2005. The wasted blank pages in PDF copies has been addressed, as has also been the process for issuing invoices for page and offprint charges. Most authors (ca. 90%) submit papers in electronic format. There is a need for a manuscript template, and for the journal style guide to be updated to reflect shifts to electronic media (to be updated when Peter takes over). A total of 31 submitted manuscripts were received in 2004 (down from 54 in 2003) but more typical of previous years. Currently 23 manuscripts under review, 7 returned for revisions, and a further 10 rejected, but open for resubmission. Volume 29 (2) has 5 accepted manuscripts to date.

Graham Hickling has left the editorial board, with Catriona MacLeod serving as an interim member when other members are unavailable. Considering taking on replacement member of board with expertise in mammal ecology or entomology to replace Dr Hickling.

John Parkes is preparing a special issue of the journal based on papers prepared for the Nigel Barlow symposium in late 2004. John is guest editor of this issue, and technical editing will be provided by Landcare Research staff editors, at no cost to the journal. This issue should be ready for publication in late 2005.

A hearty vote of thanks to Roger Dungan as technical editor for smoothly carrying out technical editing tasks for the journal.

Web masters report

Jon presented his report. The Society website continues to grow in popularity—more than twice the use in the previous year. The huge leap in popularity is due to the availability of NZ Journal Ecology back issues, with 11,000 computers visiting the site over the last year by searching for the journal. Two thirds of visitors to the website are NZ computers (same as last year), indicating that the recent growth has been fuelled equally by local and international visitors. The education page Tui Time is still getting use.

The need for figures to be inserted into PDF journal articles on the web was discussed. Moved (Dave) that Jon spend up to $1,000 to employ a student to do this, seconded John, carried.

Education

A discussion on the education role of the society and the content of the website followed.

1. Website content

John proposed that there is still a need to put the popularised version of ecology on the web (as compared to the journal). He pointed to the popularity of the NZ Plant Conservation Network website (130,000 visits per year). John suggested NZES make a bid to the next TFBIS (20th May 2005) for producing web-based information on NZ ecology—e.g. key ecosystem types.

Shona suggested using the priority threatened ecosystems identified in the NZ Biodiversity Strategy and producing information on these, e.g. lowland and coastal forests, riparian ecosystems, dune systems, kahikatea forests. Kate also agreed there was a lack of understanding of our threatened ecosystems.

Dave questioned who the audience was. Community based restoration groups, councils, landowners, Enviroschools were identified as key audiences.

Other suggestions included:

- press releases of journal articles
- hiring a part time media person to write popular articles on journal science.

Ideas for possible writers were discussed.

Overlaps with proposal to produce factsheets was discussed. John explained the difference between the need for web based information as well as factsheets on topical research issues.

Putting an electronic copy of the Natural History book on the web was suggested as a solution. However, John and Shona confirmed that there was still a lack of basic ecological science information available on the web.

2. Ecology Factsheets

The NZES bid to the 2005 DoC Biodiversity Fund for production of 6 x factsheets on ecological science was discussed. The popularity of the 1990 A3 factsheet on "Sustainability" was discussed. It was agreed that a trial factsheet on 1080 would be produced by August 2005, outlining costs and benefits, and would be scientifically reviewed. Dave to action.

A gap analysis of information on ecological science could also identify gaps in research, and priorities for funding and support for future research topics, e.g. through Kauri Fund.

Awards

Alison reported that there have been no nominations for the Te Tohu Taiao award. Is there a need to broaden the criteria and open it up to non members of NZES? It was discussed that while there are still a lengthy list of high calibre ecologists who would be eligible for the award there is a need to open it up to non member ecologists. The promotion of excellence in ecological science is the main aim.

Moved (Alison) that Te Taiao Tohu award would be opened up to non members of the NZ Ecological Society, seconded Ingrid, carried.

Alison reported that there have been two nominations for best publication by a new researcher. Moved (John) that the award be increased to $500, seconded Shona, carried.

Ideas for additional awards to be presented at the Conference were put forward.

1. "Most cited paper award"
2. Award for promotion of ecology

The need for an award for recipients outside of academia (e.g. councils, landowners, community groups, individuals, NGO) for the dissemination, advocacy and promotion of ecology to a wider audience was discussed. Moved (John) that a new award be set up called "ecological science in action", seconded Shona, carried.

The criteria for this would include excellence and best practice in the promotion of ecology, including communication, transfer of ecological science to the grass roots, education, advocacy. It was agreed that $500 would be provided to the recipient to donate to a restoration project of their choice, and $500 would be provided towards airfares for attendance at following years NZES Conference.

Conferences

1. August 2005 Joint NZ Ecological Society–Limnological Society Conference, Nelson

John reported that the conference organisation is on track with $12,000 sponsorship received.

2. NZES Conference Pack

Kate has put together a very comprehensive conference organising pack from her experience at Invercargill. This will be put on the website.

3. International Congress of Ecology (Intercol) 2009 Brisbane

Kate reported that the joint Australian Ecological Society and NZ Ecological Society bid to host this conference has been confirmed. Kate to inform other people and agencies about this (e.g. Landcare Research, RSNZ, DoC). Ingrid has also been in contact with Australian Ecological Society and will write a piece for their newsletter.

4. 2006 Joint NZES and Australian Ecological Society Conference

John reported that organisation of venue (Victoria University) has been confirmed in principle. John to finalise before next meeting.

Environmental Certification Programme

John reported on the certification scheme for environmental practitioners—accreditation for ecologists. Australian Ecological Society is adopting it. Discussion followed on whether NZES should formally adopt it. It was agreed that it could be promoted to our members (e.g. via website) and discussed at the AGM. John to talk further with Australian Ecological Society about why they have adopted it.

TFBIS proposal for Biodiversity Recording Network

Jon discussed this bid to TFBIS by Colin Meurk, Landcare Research to develop a web based database for natural history observations, and recommended that NZES support it.

Date for next NZES Council meeting: 2 p.m. Sunday 28 August 2005, Nelson

ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY E-MAIL LIST SERVER: DID YOU KNOW YOU AREN'T ON IT ANY MORE?

Well that got you reading. You may have been subscribed to the NZES listserver, but I have to do a lot of housekeeping on the list and have to remove about 2–3 addresses a month because they are generating error messages. These errors could be because people have moved and not changed their address; sometimes because they are over quota and the inbox is full (especially on hotmail-type accounts), and so forth.

So if you haven't had the odd email now and again (there is not a lot of traffic, about 1–2 messages a month perhaps) it might be worth checking if you are still on. You can do this by sending a new "subscribe" command, and if you are already on the list it will tell you so and do nothing else.

Also please note that if you send a message to the list itself for circulation, as sender you will get back in response the current list of error messages for all dead addresses I have not yet tidied up. Sorry these will come to you, but you can just delete them.

About the List Server

Now some background on the listserver (this summary below is also on the web pages)

What is a listserv?

A listserv (short for List Server) is a centralised list of e-mail addresses of subscribers. Anyone who is subscribed to the listserv will automatically receive all emails sent to the listserv, and can send emails to all subscribers via the listserv. You can subscribe and unsubscribe from a listserv at any time.

The NZ Ecological Society listserv

By subscribing to the NZ ecosoc listserv, you will receive emails about meetings, seminars, jobs, and issues in New Zealand ecology. You will also be able to post emails that will be received by most practising ecologists in New Zealand.

Subscribing to the NZ EcoSoc listserv

To subscribe to this server, e-mail a message to the automatic Mailserv processor at:

nzecosoc-request@it.canterbury.ac.nz

Include nothing in the e-mail except the following text in the body of the e-mail:

SUBSCRIBE NZECOSOC
END

To unsubscribe from the listserv, send another email to the above address, but this time use the following text:

UNSUBSCRIBE NZECOSOC

Once subscribed, you will receive instructions on how to send messages, unsubscribe etc. PLEASE READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS AND FOLLOW THEM.

Sending list messages

To send a message to everybody on the list, use the address, nzecosoc@it.canterbury.ac.nz. Only people subscribed to the list are able to post messages on the list. If you are not on the list and don't want to subscribe, but want to send a message, send it to Dave Kelly (Dave.Kelly@canterbury.ac.nz) to forward on.

Messages on the list should follow these simple rules:

- NO ATTACHMENTS!!!
- Put the info in plain text in the message
- If there is bulky or graphic material some people may want, put a web address in the message that people can click on if they want, or give a contact email address where people can ask for it
- Only send stuff that is likely to be of general interest to NZ ecologists

Replying to list messages

To reply to a list email, you have two options. You can either hit reply and this will reply to everybody, or you can reply to the author only (e.g., a new e-mail with the author's personal e-mail address). If you want to reply to the person who sent it, please be careful that your reply goes to the person, and not to the list (to be bounced out to everyone!). In other words, double-check what "To:" field your reply has picked up before you press "send".

If you change your email address

If you change your email address, you have to unsubscribe from the old one, and subscribe from the new one. If you changed address but forgot to tell the server, we start getting error messages from your old address and have to unsubscribe you manually, so make my life easier and do this yourself. If your email address has problems (e.g., messages rejected because your inbox is full) for more than a few weeks we will also unsubscribe you. If you are not getting any messages and wonder if you are still on the list, just send another subscribe command. The easiest way to unsubscribe your old email address is to send a message while you are logged on as that user; if the old email address is dead you may not be able to unsubscribe it because the system sees you as someone else, if you see what I mean. In this case send the details to me and I can delete the old address.

For information on the listserver contact me, Dave Kelly (Dave.Kelly@canterbury.ac.nz).

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(Effective from 14 September 2004)

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Contributions for the newsletter – news, views, letters, cartoons, etc. – are welcomed. Please e-mail to editors (newsletter@nzes.org.nz) with document attached (Word formatted for Windows) or post. If posting, if possible, please send articles for the newsletter both on disk and in hard copy. Please do not use complex formatting; capital letters, italics, bold, and hard returns only, no spacing between paragraphs. Send disk and hard copy to:

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the society is open to any person interested in ecology and includes botanists, zoologists, teachers, students, soil scientists, conservation managers, amateurs and professionals.

Types of Membership and Subscription Rates (2005)

Full (receive journal and newsletter) .. $75* per annum

Unwaged (with journal) ..... $45* per annum
Unwaged membership is available only on application to Council for full-time students, retired persons etc. Unwaged members may receive the journal but must specifically request it.

Joint..... $75* per annum
Joint members get one copy of the journal and newsletter to one address.

Overseas Full ..... $95* per annum

Overseas Unwaged ..... $65* per annum

School ..... $12 per annum

Educational institutions may receive the newsletter at the cost of production to stay in touch with Society activities. By application to Council.

There are also Institutional Rates for libraries, government departments etc.

Overseas members may send personal cheques for their local equivalent of the NZ$ amount at current exchange rates, for most major overseas currencies.

For more details on membership please write to:

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* There is a $10 rebate for members who renew before Feb 15 each year, and for new members

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