

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 1989

### Overview

The period of review and introspection which characterised the Society's activities last year has, this year, formed the basis of several important and far-reaching initiatives. It has prompted a redefining of the Society's roles in promoting the interests of ecology and ecologists and contributing an ecological perspective to issues before society in general. Coincidentally it has brought into stark relief the need for your Council to be more expansive in its activities and to seek greater involvement of Society members in its initiatives.

Perhaps the most far-reaching initiative this year has been the preparation and adoption by Council of a management strategy to guide its activities and define the roles of Councillors. There is an understandable tendency for new Councils to at least in part reinvent the wheel, and for key initiatives from one era to barely feature in the next. The roll-over system of Councillor election, introduced two years ago, and the new management strategy should together ensure a greater continuity of effort and approach. In my view time will show these initiatives as being landmark changes in the Society's operation, and most of the credit has to go to Vice-President Judith Roper-Lindsay for having promoted them.

Initiatives stemming from the review of our publications are now materialising. The New Zealand Journal of Ecology will, from 1990, be published twice a year. This change will enhance the profile of the Journal and provide increased publication opportunity for Society members. The faster processing of manuscripts to publication is also likely to attract an increased number of submissions. This initiative comes at a time when government-funded scientific journals face threats of demise unless they can be self funding. Without doubt, two journals a year will cost more than one, and modest page charges are likely to be introduced to balance the increased cost.

Our newsletter has changed in format, thanks in no small measure to the corporate support of Ecology Division, DSIR and it should evolve into a more newsy and article-dominated publication. The Society does not have the financial funds to provide a separate forum for matters of applied ecology, and it is hoped that the newsletter will eventually evolve to partially fill this need.

Your Council has also decided to promote occasional publications of particular merit. The presentations from the 1986 symposium on Moas,

mammals and climate have been published as a supplement to the Journal, while the presentations from the 1988 conference symposium on managing the natural estate will appear as the first of a new series called 'Occasional Publications'. This introduces a new flexibility to our publishing endeavours.

Without doubt the arena with greatest demand for ecological input at the present time is legislation. Far-reaching reviews ranging from science management to natural resource exploitation are proceeding at a frenetic pace, and your Council has not been able to respond to all of these despite the herculean efforts of Councillor Vicki Froude. Whereas the Resource management Law Reform exercise by the Government made a conscious effort to involve the New Zealand community, other issues have been captured by vested interests and partisan departments of state. The need for independent advice to the Government was graphically illustrated by the fate of the Science and Technology Advisory Committee's proposals for the reform of science management in New Zealand. Far-reaching and laudable proposals to improve science management and funding, and to promote a better deal for scientists outside of the larger science agencies, were compromised by vested Departmental interests. If we are serious about wishing to ensure an ecological perspective pervades our society we have to commit time and resources to the legislative and political process.

It is pleasing to report the Society is in good heart. Membership is at an all-time high thanks to the recruitment into our ranks of increased numbers of ecological practitioners, while at the same time retaining a hardy core of ecological researchers. This association of two perspectives is a most encouraging development, and the challenge ahead is to maintain and strengthen that relationship while at the same time not losing sight of the specific needs which each perspective engenders.

As this is my last report as President, I wish to record my appreciation of the opportunity to have acted in this capacity. I also record my appreciation of the very considerable endeavours of fellow Councillors and Officers - their voluntary efforts have been quite remarkable given the personal demands placed upon them in these rapidly changing times.

Murray Williams  
President

## Membership

The Society membership at 31 March 1989 was 483.

## Council Activity

The Council (including core council meetings) met on 6 occasions during the year. Full council meetings were in Wellington except for one, based on conference-call communications, which was held in association with a core council meeting in Christchurch.

Councillors responsible for subcommittees were:

- Nigel Barlow, Journal Editor;
- Murray Williams, Royal Society representative;
- Judith Roper-Lindsay, Management Strategy and Ecological Affairs;
- Murray Potter, Membership Directory;
- Bill Lee, Awards;
- Vicki Froude, Legislation;
- Gavin Daly, Education;
- Paul Blaschke, Conference 89

Other councillors supported these or were involved in other matters.

## Editor's Report

Volume 11 was 50 pages shorter than in the previous few years, but this reflected more the size of papers than the number submitted or published.

Negotiations were held with the Australian Ecological Society and Blackwell Scientific Publications over publishing the Journal, and the option they initially offered was a merger with the Australian Journal of Ecology. However, their Society's current council felt that this would be difficult without a merger of the societies, so at this stage it was decided to continue publishing in-house but maintain a dialogue with the Australian Ecological Society.

Over the next couple of years the Journal will see some major changes and gain a new lease of life. There will be a new editorial system, a change of two issues a year from 1990, the inclusion of a forum section for debate, and an upgrading of the Journal's profile through advertising in New Zealand and overseas, and the use of more international referees.

Some of these changes have already happened. We now have a board of editors, each of whom is appointed for two years, has full editorial responsibility and deals directly with authors and referees. An editor-in-chief liaises with the printers and coordinates timing and standards. At present the board consists of Bill Lee, Ralph Allen, Gillian Rapson, John Parkes, Eric Spurr, Mike Fitzgerald and myself as initial editor-in-chief.

I would like to take the opportunity of thanking John Gibb, David Towns and Peter Johnson, who stand down from the present board after considerably more than two years of invaluable support.

I would also like to urge members to contribute provocative and contentious letters to the forum section, addressing published papers on matters of general interest. The two issues will appear in May and November, initially with December and June deadlines. So more papers would be welcome. I believe the Journal has a reputation for quality, it will shortly offer a better turn-round time, and we aim to increase its international circulation - which already exceeds that of some other comparable journals.

Nigel Barlow

## Newsletter Compilers' Report

The Newsletter got off to a slow but effective start in its new format. The application of desktop publishing technology, and the corporate support of Ecology Division, DSIR, should - in theory - make its production a relatively painless exercise. As newsletter editors everywhere will attest, their production is always a larger task than initially contemplated, particularly when one is getting to grips with a new system. Copy for the newsletter is as usual, quite hard to come by, and invitations to comment on different themes have gone largely ignored, except by a small number of dedicated individuals. My special thanks to those people, and to those here in Wellington who have helped with mailing, etc. Particular gratitude to Tony Pritchard for layout.

We hope to build on the new format and to provide commentary on matters ecological and issues of the day. With members' full support the newsletter potential will be realised in the coming year.

Rod Hay

## Membership Directory

The membership directory was initiated to gather information about the range of interests and expertise of members. It is also intended to complement the management strategy by providing a membership resource base and helping to identify the direction toward which the Society should be moving.

To date, 222 replies to the membership directory questionnaire have been received. This represents about half the membership. While grateful to those who have replied, I would like to encourage the rest to do so as soon as possible. Copies of the questionnaire are available from the Newsletter Editor. We hope to have a preliminary analysis of results available at the conference in August.

Murray Potter

## Legislation

Over the last year the Society made several submissions on the Resource Management Law Reform (RMLR) and the draft Maori Fisheries Bill. The submission on RMLR covered a number of issues, including the need for new legislation to have appropriate objectives: the need for geothermal legislation to better provide for the conservation of geothermal fields, for there to be better linking between land and water legislation, and for coastal management to retain a major Crown involvement.

The submissions on the Maori Fisheries Bill emphasised the need for that Bill to be redrafted to deal better with the over-exploitation of New Zealand's fisheries.

Vicki Froude

## Management Strategy

At the beginning of the year, the council felt that some order should be put into the large number of very diverse matters that the Society should be involved in. As a first attempt to do this a Management Strategy was drawn up, with input from the general membership. By identifying clear goals, we hope to focus the talents and energies of members to the benefit of both the Society and ecology.

Judith Roper-Lindsay

## Ecological Affairs

This year most "ecological affairs" fell into the "legislation" category, and are thus discussed elsewhere. We made a detailed submission to the Department of Conservation on management for the benefit of Hector's dolphin around Banks Peninsula, and have had input to some environmental impact-assessment work. In keeping with a wish to widen the Society's contacts with other professions, and to support appropriate local initiatives, a grant and loan was made to the Urban Landscape Group. The money contributed to a workshop in Christchurch on urban biological resource planning and management. Towards the end of the year two major areas emerged in which the Society should take an active role - Antarctic management, and tropical forest protection.

Judith Roper-Lindsay

## Awards

The 1988 student award was won by Elizabeth Slooten and Stephen Dawson.

Following from the Society's draft Management Strategy, a review of existing awards, to formalise criteria and conditions of awards and to suggest new awards that might be offered to the Society, is under way.

Bill Lee

## Education

In line with the draft Management Strategy, an Education Working Group was re-formed this year. Gavin Daly and Mary McIntyre organised and chaired a 14 person workshop held at University of Canterbury on 18-19 May. The aim of the workshop was to review past activities and identify initiatives able to be taken by the Society in advancing ecological study in schools. Participants at the Workshop provided much-appreciated educational information from numerous perspectives. These included the secondary teaching environment, Teachers' Resource Centres, Teachers' College, Central Institute of Technology, Ecology Division, Department of Conservation, New Zealand Natural Heritage Foundation, and universities. A detailed action programme and budget is being prepared.

After the successful and lively discussion at the May workshop, participants wished to meet again. Opportunity will be afforded at the annual conference in August for a further workshop.

The Council's education working group has been expanded, with Pam Williams rejoining in Christchurch and John Craig in Auckland. Keen members are being sought in Dunedin and other cities.

The survey of members' interests and expertise has revealed a high level of interest in educational activities. The Council working group wishes to make contact with such members and eventually raise ecological and environmental awareness in primary and secondary schools and the public arena. These are also aims of the New Zealand Natural Heritage Foundation at Massey University. Contact with that organisation will be continued.

Gavin Daly

## Royal Society

Like all other scientific bodies in New Zealand, the Royal Society is undergoing change. Its appointment of an Executive Officer with a mandate to review management systems, structures and operations of the organisation is a positive step from which will emerge a closer working relationship between member bodies and the Royal Society, greater servicing for member bodies, and a higher public profile for the Royal Society and for science. All are long overdue. Debate continues over whether the needs of New Zealand science and scientists are best handled by the present Royal Society organisation or whether a new structure in the form of an Academy of Sciences is warranted. In the meantime the Royal Society continues its annual get-together with the Member Bodies Committee, and continues its push with science education initiatives. It was closely associated with the operations of the Science Review Advisory Committee and its appraisal of science management in New Zealand.

The Royal Society has established a memorial to the scientific achievements of the late Sir Charles Fleming in the form of an award for environmental achievement. The Ecological Society has enthusiastically supported this award, and will be contributing \$3000 to the award's fund over the next 3 years.

Murray Williams