

REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION SUBCOMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 1973

Utilisation of South Island Beech Forests

The Conservation subcommittee prepared, on behalf of Council, a statement on New Zealand Forest Service's proposals to utilise beech (*Nothofagus* spp.) forests in the South Island as set out in the White Paper "Utilisation of South Island beech forests" of October 1971. During preparation of the statement a working committee of the Officials Committee for the Environment, which was set up in October 1972 to examine these same proposals, published its report (Anonymous, 1973. "Utilisation of South Island beech forests: environmental impact report on proposals of Director-General of Forests"). Council's statement was recast in the light of this report.

The subcommittee considered that, while the official "environmental impact report" contains many valuable recommendations, it is deficient in its assessment of the impact which a major wood utilisation industry might have on the forests concerned. The deficiency arises from a general lack of knowledge of the ecology of these forests. We felt obliged, therefore, to point out the deficiencies in the "environmental impact report" as we saw them and to emphasise those aspects of the utilisation proposals which, in our opinion, require further study and research before the proposals should be deemed to be "environmentally acceptable".

These things were done and are embodied in a report of Council entitled "A critique of the environmental impact report on the proposed utilisation of South Island beech forests to the Officials Committee for the Environment".* The report was released to Ministers of the Crown and Government Departments on 10 April 1973 and later to members of the Society and general public.

Pitt Islands, Chatham Islands

Submissions were made to successive Governments recommending that the "Glory Block", a 2,400 ha area at the southern end of Pitt Island in the Chatham Islands, be purchased as a reserve. It was argued that a reserve of such a size in the Chatham Islands is desirable to preserve representative samples of plant and animal communities of the island group and that the area is strategically placed between the two smaller reserves of Mangere and South East Islands. The later submission was favourably received by the Prime Minister who stated in reply:

"I will be happy to support the request and in the first instance I am sending the submissions to the Minister of the Environment . . ."

*An abstract of this report and its recommendations are reproduced elsewhere in this volume.

Mana Island, Cook Strait

The Minister for the Environment was urged to consider declaration of Mana Island as a reserve for protection of flora and fauna on the grounds of the absence there of mustelids and rodents apart from the mouse, *Mus musculus*. The fauna of the island reflects the absence of these animals and includes rare species such as the ground weta *Deinacrida rugosa* and yet unclassified lizards of the genera *Sphenomorphus* and *Hoplodactylus*. Concern was expressed that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, which plans to use the island as a livestock isolation station, might, inadvertently, cause rats to be introduced.

This problem, and the desirability of the island being reserved, was also drawn to the attention of the Minister of Lands; and we suggested that, in the event of the plans going ahead, procedures be adopted to minimise the risk of introducing rats and other undesirable mammals and a biological survey be initiated. The island could subsequently be zoned for multiple use and fenced to allow regeneration of native vegetation and protection of native fauna.

Ahuriri Estuary, Hawke's Bay

On the basis of a report on wildlife values by members of Ecology Action in Hawke's Bay we supported that organisation's case for revision of the Napier City Council's plans for development of the estuary.

Plimmerton Swamp, Wellington

Discussions have been held with the Regional Planning Officer of the Porirua City Council concerning the possible reservation of at least part of the swamp.

Ultramafic reserves—Dun Mountain and Red Mountain, South Westland

Further approaches have been made to the Nature Conservation Council about the encroachment of exotic plants and prospecting activity respectively in these two areas. Little progress is being made and detailed investigations of the areas would be of assistance.

Roading in areas of wilderness and scientific value

Representations have been made to the Nature Conservation Council and the Environment Commission on the need for ecological investigations before roads are put through scientifically important areas. Two members of the Society took part in a meeting between CoEnCo (Conference on Environment and Conservation) and the Environment Commission to discuss environmental safeguards in such roading plans and their alteration where roading would have an unacceptable impact on the environment. We expect that an "ecological evaluation"

will become part of most environmental impact reports on development roading. The Society, or its registered Ecological Consultants, will be likely to be called upon to assist the Environment Commission in assessing environmental impact reports produced by Government Departments or local bodies.

Acknowledgments

Many members of the Society assisted the subcommittee in its various activities and we would take this opportunity of thanking them for their help.

M. N. Foggo, L. F. Molloy, E. A. Walker.

CONFERENCE 1972

The 21st Annual Conference was held at Massey University between 23 and 26 August 1972. Approximately 90 members and some visitors attended. An extensive display had been set up near the lecture room showing research at Pukepuke Lagoon and local conservation projects. On the first day the following contributed papers were read:

1. I. G. Crook and L. R. Moran: Relationships between tuatara (*Sphenodon punctatus*) and the fairy prion.
2. P. Campbell: The feeding ecology of the hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) in pasture lands in New Zealand.
3. P. R. Wilson: The ecology of the Indian myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) in Hawke's Bay.
4. C. Burrows and W. H. Lintott: Palaeo-ecology: 14,000 years of vegetational change at Cass.
5. W. Silvester: Nitrogen fixation in litter and soils of mixed forest.
6. P. Wardle: The kahikatea forest of South Westland.
7. M. J. A. Bulfin: Some aspects of the vegetation of Farewell Spit.
8. I. M. Ritchie: The origin of grass seed as it affects seed-weight, germination and subsequent growth, with implications for high altitude regeneration.
9. J. Skipworth: Faecal analysis: methods and potential.
10. G. D. Ward: Tracking possums in mixed forest by means of radio-telemetry.

The second day was devoted to a symposium on "The ecology of the coastal lake and swamp ecosystems of the Manawatu". The following papers were read:

1. T. Caithness: Introduction to the Pukepuke Lagoon Wildlife Project.

2. I. Ritchie: Dune chronosequence and history of the Manawatu coastal vegetation over 10,000 years.
3. J. Ogden: The origins and decline of the coastal swamp ecosystems of the Manawatu.
4. C. Page: The Pukepuke representative hydrological basin—M.O.W. project.
5. G. Gibbs: Plankton cycles and some comments on succession in the Pukepuke Lagoon system.
6. J. Ogden: Energy flow in *Typha* stands.
7. P. Castle: The role of eels in the ecology of Pukepuke Lagoon.
8. T. Caithness: The waterfowl and their usage of Pukepuke Lagoon.
9. R. Fordham: Use by pukeko of pasture adjoining Pukepuke Lagoon.
10. R. B. Lavers: A preliminary account of a study of mustelids at Pukepuke Lagoon.

After the day's papers Mr P. A. Williams gave an impromptu account of the activities at the U.N. Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm.

The excursion was well attended by over 70 members who were shown research work at Pukepuke Lagoon. *En route*, dune structure and sequence was explained.

Annual General Meeting

The 20th A.G.M. was held in the Ira Cunningham Lecture Theatre on 25 August and was attended by 52 members. The Annual Report and financial statement were adopted. Dr G. R. Williams was elected president, Mrs M. M. Davidson vice-president, and Mr M. N. Foggo and Dr M. R. Rudge were elected treasurer and secretary respectively.

M. R. Rudge