



A Sustainable Vision

Forest & Bird post-election briefing



FOREST
& BIRD

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Forest & Bird is committed to providing a voice for nature in New Zealand. We advocate on behalf of New Zealand's unique and wonderful wildlife and landscapes so they can continue to be enjoyed by this and future generations.

We aim to better protect the things that are special to New Zealanders, and form a huge part of our identity and heritage: our fresh air, our clean lakes and rivers, our pristine native forests, our beautiful high country, our unspoiled coastline and oceans, and our special plants and animals that are found nowhere else in the world.

Whether it is the experience of hearing a tui singing in a kowhai tree, swimming with your children in a river, or going to the beach to catch a feed of fish for your family, these things are a precious part of what it means to be a New Zealander.

Our natural environment and resources are also key to the success of our country's economy – if economic development is environmentally sustainable it will keep on giving into the future.

That's why we at Forest & Bird are committed to protection of these natural treasures so that future generations can continue to benefit from and enjoy them.

We recognise that the Government plays a key role in helping look after our natural heritage, and we look forward to working with all our elected representatives to help them fulfil their vital guardianship role.



Mike Britton,
General Manager,
Forest & Bird



On land

New Zealand is home to an amazing array of natural environments: the centuries-old kauri forests of the Far North, the wide expanses of tussock grasslands and snow-capped mountains of the South Island high country, the volcanic splendour of the North Island's central plateau, or the glacier-carved fiords and mist-shrouded forests of Fiordland.

It is also home to some of the world's most unique plants and animals: our national icon, the kiwi; the world's heaviest parrot, the kakapo; and our New Zealand Christmas tree, the pohutukawa, to name just a few. These natural assets are not only special to all New Zealanders; our international reputation as clean and green also underpins our \$17 billion tourism industry and marketing of our primary products.

Much of this natural treasure trove has been lost forever as the forests have been cleared for farmland and development, or felled for timber, and introduced pest animals have taken their toll on native plants and animals. Most of New Zealand's remaining forests and upland wild places are protected in the conservation estate; the challenge remains to protect nature in the lowlands and coastal areas.

Forest & Bird is committed to restoring what is left of these precious wild places and wildlife. We have a vision of a New Zealand where once again our forests resound with the sounds of the dawn chorus, where our coastline is again painted red with the blossom of pohutukawa in summer, and species such as the kakapo and takahe no longer hover near the brink of extinction.

To achieve these goals we advocate for effective control of pests such as possums, deer and stoats, protection of the environment from unsustainable development, and effective management of our conservation lands. We also need legislation that allows communities and stakeholders to have a say on how our environment is managed and protected.

If we get these things right, the future of our land-based natural heritage will be assured for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.

As New Zealand's leading conservation organisation, Forest & Bird is committed to working with local and central government and other stakeholders and community groups to help make this happen.

How the Government can help

- By upholding an effective Resource Management Act that allows communities and environmental groups a voice in how our natural resources are protected and used.
- By supporting a national strategy for effective and expanded pest control throughout New Zealand, including the use of 1080.
- By upholding the Government's central role – through the Department of Conservation – in protecting New Zealand's wildlife and wild places.
- By supporting community initiatives to restore native habitats and biodiversity.
- By maintaining its role, on behalf of all New Zealanders, as owner and custodian of the most vulnerable and special areas of the high country.



In our oceans

Most New Zealanders live within easy reach of the coast, and have a close affinity with the ocean. Many intrinsically New Zealand experiences are closely connected with the sea: the Kiwi bach, summer at the beach, surfies, paua fritters – and many more. New Zealanders are guardians of an area of ocean that is 15 times the size of our land mass, and we have an important role as kaitiaki of our oceans.

This vast area of ocean supports a wealth of wildlife, including a third of the world's marine mammals, among them the world's rarest dolphins, Hector's and Maui's dolphins; endemic New Zealand sea lions, more than half the world's albatross species, corals, giant kelp forests, shellfish, crayfish, whales, and an enormous variety of fish.

Our oceans provide a bounty that supports a fishing industry worth more than a billion dollars each year. If this natural resource is managed sustainably, it can continue to support an abundance of marine life that will in turn support a thriving export industry and recreational fishing for everyone.

Forest & Bird recognises that conservation doesn't stop at the shoreline: much of our marine life and habitat is just as vulnerable as our wildlife and environment on land. Many of our threatened species, including Hector's and Maui's dolphins, NZ sea lions and albatrosses, are killed as by-catch in fisheries. Many of our fisheries are not sustainable, leading to depletion of fish stocks and harm to the marine environment. While a third of our land is protected in parks and reserves, less than 1% of our waters are protected.

Forest & Bird advocates for a network of marine protected areas that will allow marine life to recover and be replenished for the enjoyment of all New Zealanders and the future of our fisheries. We want our fisheries to be managed in a truly sustainable manner that will ensure there is still plenty of fish to be caught by future generations and our fisheries will remain viable.

We support certification of fisheries as sustainable, provided that the process is robust. Our *Best Fish Guide* also helps consumers make sustainable purchasing decisions.

We are committed to working alongside local communities, iwi, environmental groups, the Government and recreational and commercial fishers to ensure that our marine environment is better managed and protected for the good of everyone.

How the Government can help:

- By supporting a network of marine protected areas that will achieve protection of 10% of New Zealand waters by 2010 and 30% by 2020.
- By developing an Oceans Policy and supporting effective legislation that ensures that fisheries are environmentally sustainable.
- By setting and working towards targets and measures that will see by-catch of non-target marine species reduced to near zero within five years.
- By involving community, iwi, environmental and recreational fishing groups in decisions about the future of our fisheries.



Freshwater

Freshwater is the lifeblood of New Zealand's environment, its agriculture and tourism sectors, its economy and its communities. Our rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands support some of New Zealand's rarest and most-loved wildlife, such as blue duck, wrybills, black stilts, godwits, eels, whitebait and many more native freshwater species.

They are also a source of recreation: New Zealanders treasure swimming in their local river, fishing, eeling and whitebaiting, or enjoying the magnificent vistas of lakes such as Rotoiti, Tekapo and Wakatipu. World-renowned freshwater attractions such as fishing, jetboating and whitewater rafting are a major drawcard for our tourism industry.

Our agriculture sector and other valuable export industries rely on sources of freshwater, our communities need fresh, clean water supplies, and hydro generation makes a huge contribution to meeting New Zealand's energy needs.

We need to look after our freshwater resources to ensure they can continue to support this wide range of environmental, economic, recreational and community needs.

The demands of electricity generation, agriculture and other development have put increasing pressure on our lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands, resulting in declining water quality. In particular the impact of intensification of dairy farming has had a serious impact on the quality of our waterways. Many are no longer safe to swim in, and can no longer provide healthy freshwater environments for native wildlife. Many of our wild and scenic rivers are also threatened by proposed hydro developments.

Forest & Bird advocates for clear, consistent nationwide standards and policies, monitoring and enforcement of water quality. We need a fair system of sustainable water use to ensure that everyone gets their fair share of this precious natural resource without causing environmental harm. We all need to work together to allow this to happen.

How the Government can help:

- By introducing a national policy statement and national standards on water quality and quantity that set up clear timeframes for improvement and provide effective protection of eco-systems and freshwater biodiversity.
- By supporting a collaborative approach that involves community, iwi, farmers, primary industry, recreational and environmental groups in working with local and central government towards better water quality and fairer use of our water resources.
- By introducing a national energy strategy that prohibits hydro developments that will have serious environmental impacts and supports truly sustainable energy generation.
- By supporting community initiatives to restore freshwater environments and species.

Energy and Climate Change

Climate change is probably the biggest environmental issue the world will ever have to face – our economy, our environment and indeed our future depends on us being successful in meeting this challenge.

New Zealand has a key role to play in contributing to world efforts to meet this global environmental crisis. While New Zealand has set ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions, in reality our emissions have continued to climb.

Forest & Bird's main focus in the energy and climate change debate is the impact on our native plants, animals and ecosystems. Climate change threatens some of our most unique and vulnerable native species and habitats. For example, if ground temperatures are above a certain level all tuatara eggs hatch as males, and warmer summers create "mast years" of heavy fruiting and seeding in beech forests that lead to plagues of rats and stoats that threaten to wipe out populations of mohua (yellowheads), kiwi, blue duck and kakariki.

However, conservation can also play a vital role in combating the threat of climate change. Native ecosystems account for more than 90% of carbon stored in vegetation, and a significant proportion of this is in private ownership. Protecting and enhancing New Zealand's remaining native habitats and biodiversity will also protect and enhance the country's natural carbon stores.

An effective Emissions Trading Scheme would recognise and reward the contribution of native vegetation to carbon storing. It would also ensure that agriculture – which produces half New Zealand's carbon emissions – takes responsibility for reducing emissions. It would also provide safeguards so that biodiversity is not threatened by conversion of native forest, shrub and tussock lands to exotic plantings.

New Zealand must take a sustainable approach to power generation and use. Rather than continuing to meet ever-growing demands with more and more generation, we should look to increasing energy efficiency. New generation should come from truly renewable sources, not generation which causes serious environmental damage.

How the Government can help

- By changing the Emissions Trading Scheme to recognise and reward the contribution native vegetation makes to carbon storing and to protect native biodiversity.
- By reducing the delay in requiring agriculture to meet its obligations under the Emissions Trading Scheme.
- By developing a national energy strategy that focuses on renewable energy generation, increased energy efficiency and reducing growth in demand.
- By supporting home-owners and communities to generate energy from renewable sources such as solar and wind power.
- By supporting conservation efforts such as pest control and forest restoration that will help combat climate change and protect New Zealand's largest carbon-storing assets.



Our role

Forest & Bird has 40,000 members in 50 branches around New Zealand, and our members have been at the forefront of major conservation issues for more than eight decades.

Our members represent a wide range of backgrounds, communities, ages and occupations, but they have one thing in common: a passion for conservation.

We are also the New Zealand partner of BirdLife International and work with its Pacific partners on conservation issues across the region.

As well as serving as a national conservation advocacy group, we are involved in “flax roots” conservation work around the country.

Our branches are active in:

- Restoration of native habitats (planting projects, pest control, coast and river care, monitoring and translocations of native species).
- Making submissions in support of enhanced environmental protection in district and regional plans.
- Advocating for protection of local environments, for example supporting marine reserve proposals or community conservation projects.
- Raising public awareness of environmental issues through our Kiwi Conservation Club children’s activities, educational programmes, talks and field trips, displays and local media.

Forest & Bird recognises that a collaborative approach that includes and respects all groups and points of view is required to achieve results that have the backing of the whole community.

We aim to work constructively with local and national government, industry, NGOs, iwi and communities to achieve the best results for conservation that everyone has a stake in and will support.

We support Government commitment to enhancing community groups’ contribution to conservation – with the proviso that we also believe the Government must remain committed to meeting its core responsibility for protection of New Zealand’s environment.



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Nature’s Voice

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