

Forest & Bird highlights



Forest & Bird[®]
GIVING NATURE A VOICE

New Zealand's reputation as 100% Pure has long been the cornerstone of our national identity and international selling point. But over the last few years, we've witnessed the increasing erosion of our natural treasures and the realisation that 100% Pure New Zealand is not 100% true.

New Zealanders have borne attacks on their national parks from mining, greater land intensification and the continual deterioration of our lakes and rivers. And in 2012, the threats to our environment escalated as we witnessed moves to wrench out the heart of the Resource Management Act.

The good news is that thanks to the passion and commitment of staff, members and supporters, Forest & Bird generated positive changes that will benefit the environment for generations to come.

This year we celebrated victories after lengthy court battles over the wild Mokihinui River, West Coast wetlands and Whakatane's Kohi Point. We were also the 'voice for nature' on collaborative working groups and mapping a sustainable future for New Zealand's waterways and the Mackenzie Country.

Our voice was heard by politicians, councils, industry bodies, community groups and the wider public. This behind-the-scenes role laid the groundwork for better, long-term environmental gains.

With 80,000 supporters across 50 branches, we also made a huge contribution on the ground. Forest & Bird members rolled up their sleeves to plant over 200,000 plants this year, survey birds, propagate native seedlings, write submissions, hold public meetings, and set and monitor over 10,000 predator traps.

We also spoke to the next generation through our Kiwi Conservation Club. Over 6000 young New Zealanders were given the opportunity to discover, engage and actively protect their natural heritage.

Fighting for conservation can be a tough and drawn out battle. But it is heartening to know that what we do today is planting the seeds for a better New Zealand, tomorrow.

Annual Report
For the year to 28 February 2013



Forest & Bird on land

In 2012, the Resource Management Act, the core legislation for protecting our environment, came under attack.

In August, a report to the government recommended sweeping changes to the RMA that would rewrite its most important sections. We joined other environmental groups in an open letter, critiquing advice and laying the groundwork for a public campaign to "Save the RMA".

Our field officers across the regions continued to be an integral voice on council-based groups that identified and protected areas of high natural value on private land. Through early collaboration we helped establish long-term protection for our natural resources.

Inappropriate land use remained a hot topic in the south, and we stayed firm in our resolve to defend the tawny drylands of the Mackenzie Country from intensive agribusiness. We were part of the Mackenzie Sustainable Futures Trust to find a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability, and guarantee some protection for the spectacular landscapes and wildlife.

We also sought better biodiversity outcomes in the high country through tenure reviews and worked to prevent inappropriate freeholding of land. And in November, we celebrated an Environment Court win, which resulted in amending Waitaki District Council's District Plan for improved protection of native plants on private land.

Two years ago, Forest & Bird opposed an application that threatened to destroy a critical feeding site of the world's most endangered bird species, at Mangawhai Harbour. In December, the court announced it would preserve most of the fairy terns' feeding ground, allowing just 13ha of mangroves to be removed, subject to conditions.

We also helped fund the new three-year Eastern Bay of Plenty Shorebird Protection programme to protect shorebirds affected by the 2011 Rena oil spill, and monitored illegal indigenous logging in Northland and Gisborne.



Forest & Bird and freshwater

The degradation of New Zealand's waterways was a popular topic in 2012. The public's interest, especially in the hard truths from ecologist Mike Joy, underscored the importance of our ongoing Freshwater For Life campaign and the years Forest & Bird has spent championing the need to clean up our act.

Stakeholders have recognised the best chance of success lies in collaboratively developing strategies to improve water quality.

In 2012, Forest & Bird continued its work on the Land and Water Forum, which released the final two of its three reports to the government.

Its recommendations set the path for improving the state of our streams, rivers and lakes, including a set of national bottom lines for water quality and use, which if applied nationally will start to reverse the decline.

We also secured better protection for West Coast wetlands. After a 12-year battle, including a joint court appeal and subsequent mediation, we managed to get all significant West Coast wetlands into a protection schedule.

Many branches managed or contributed to community and regional freshwater projects. For example, the Hastings-Havelock North branch offered an environmental voice on local freshwater management stakeholder groups. Many branches such as North Taranaki undertook long-term riparian planting projects, while the Ashburton branch raised awareness about the threats 4WD vehicles pose to riverbed-nesting birds through information signs and local media.

We also offered expertise in the Waituna Catchment Group and in the development of the new Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord.



2012 nature numbers

10,292 votes for Bird of the Year

97 whiteheads released at Ark in the Park

10,147 Facebook supporters

\$88,423 donated by branches to our Save Denniston campaign

5854 new members



\$57,869 raised in our nationwide "Kiwi Battler Appeal" appeal



Forest & Bird at sea

In March, DOC announced the adult population of Maui's dolphins had plummeted to 55.

The government's Threat Management Plan that could help save this species endured considerable delays. Interim protection measures banned gill nets, the species' top killer, in some areas where they are found, but did not go far enough for Forest & Bird to ease back on the issue. We remained a leading force in various public awareness events, and continued to work with the Ministry for Primary Industries and make submissions.

In 2012 the government began reviewing its National Plan of Action – Sharks. We played a leading role drafting the updated plan and used this timely opportunity to band with 12 other marine conservation groups to form the New Zealand Shark Alliance. The alliance's campaign to ban shark finning on New Zealand waters captured widespread public and political support. Six of the seven major political parties publicly pledged support.

The government passed new legislation to "unlock" the economic potential in our Exclusive Economic Zone. Concerned that the Bill too greatly favoured economic development and failed to comply with United Nations law, we aligned with environmental groups and gained limited success in having the Bill amended to give more weight to environmental protection.

We helped formulate the National Plan of Action – Seabirds, and were part of a forum to advise on its implementation, which would shape government and fishing industry efforts to reduce seabird by-catch for the next five years.

We also took part in the Black Petrel Action Group to advocate better protection from bottom long-line fishing, and continued to fund research to identify New Zealand's Important Bird Areas for seabirds.

Forest & Bird strengthened its international presence by joining the Antarctic Ocean Alliance and Antarctic Southern Ocean Alliance.



The battle for Denniston continues

Our bid to stop the development of an open-cast mine on the Denniston Plateau was designated Forest & Bird's priority campaign for 2012. The controversial consents to develop the 150-hectare coal mine divided West Coast communities and generated heated debate on both sides.

Our campaign has been buoyed by the overwhelming support from members, supporters and communities all over the country.

In March, 150 people, including top scientists, took part in our BioBlitz weekend. Over 500 species were recorded, several of which were completely new to science. The Australian mining company Bathurst Resources flexed its muscles that same month when it opened its first New Zealand office in Wellington. Forest & Bird and about 250 anti-mining supporters made their voices heard outside the opening, which was attended by Prime Minister John Key.

Saving Denniston is our largest and most expensive legal case to date. In May, we lost an Environment Court appeal to have RMA decisions take the development's effect on climate change into account. Other anti-mining groups appealed that decision, while we focussed on our main Environment Court appeal in November and December to overturn Bathurst's resource consents.

Branches and individual members have been invaluable in raising and donating funds. They've distributed pamphlets, collected petition signatures and around 1500 people across the country attended public presentations by staunch Denniston supporter and wildlife photographer Rod Morris.

In May, the West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board's recommendation for better protection strengthened Forest & Bird's bid to create a 5900-hectare reserve on the plateau.



Saving the Mokihinui River

Saving the West Coast's Mokihinui River will go down in Forest & Bird's history as one of our great achievements. Forest & Bird battled hard throughout the six-year campaign to overturn Meridian Energy's resource consents to build an 85-metre high hydro-dam and flood 330 hectares of forest. Meridian was scheduled to go up against the Department of Conservation and Forest & Bird in the Environment Court. But on May 22, 2012 the energy company withdrew its resource consents.

Our campaign to save the Mokihinui reached all corners of the Society and spread into the community through a strong activist database. The Society opposed initial consents and staff were preparing our court appeal. Branches held stalls, meetings, made donations and wrote submissions. Our fundraisers launched an initiative where supporters bought mock share certificates for the river. Campaigners gathered 3000 signatures on an e-card petition. We raised public awareness by co-launching the Wild Rivers photographic exhibition at the Beehive and organising a rafting trip for 120 supporters.

The victory removed the immediate threats for the river's surrounding wildlife and habitats, but did not guarantee long-term protection. Immediately after the win, Forest & Bird embarked on a drive to have the Mokihinui River and its catchment added to the adjacent Kahurangi National Park.





President's report

Conservation is a marathon not a sprint. Success is often achieved through persistence and vision, driven by individuals and local communities who are prepared to advocate for the protection of forests, lakes, rivers, grasslands, coasts and local species they cherish.

During the past year I've been lucky to meet many members and branch committees who work and campaign to protect their local ecosystems. What is inspiring is that their vision is not restricted to local issues alone. Support from branches across New Zealand has been vital to our campaign to protect the Denniston Plateau from open-cast mining, and individual members contribute to campaigns ranging from protecting Maui's dolphins to tightening the rules around seabird by-catch in the fishing industry.

Long-term issues have been on the Executive's mind this year. Over the past 12 months the Executive has taken several decisions to prepare for the long-term future of the Society. We initiated a review of the national organisation, looking at how best we can structure our professional organisation. We have also begun reviewing our Constitution, first to modernise it and then to consider how we should govern ourselves in the future.



Photos: Steve Attwood, David Brooks, Simon Haywood, Mandy Herrick, Peter Langlands, Graeme Loh, Craig McKenzie, Craig Potton, A Reith, Ian Trafford, New Zealand Defence Force.



No matter how you support Forest & Bird, from advocacy to letter writing, to being a regular donor or planting trees, your support is part of a vision to protect our environment for now and generations to come. We've been at it for nearly 90 years, and in that time we've changed New Zealand for the better.

Thank you for your support.

Nga mihi nui

Andrew Cutler,
Forest & Bird President



Forest & Bird in the community

Pest control remained a mainstay of many branch projects. Volunteers from the Nelson-Tasman and Marlborough branches helped protect long-tailed bat habitat at Pelorus Reserve, while possum trapping at Gisborne's Gray's Bush Scenic Reserve preserved a remnant kahikatea forest.

Seven branches participated in on-going restoration projects in the Kaimai Mamaku Ranges where pests have ravaged the forest and decimated the local native bird populations. In one project alone, Forest & Bird volunteers helped service 1200 bait traps across 370ha of bush.

North Shore branch battled a different form of pest by installing cleaning stations and information signs at five Auckland reserves to limit the spread of kauri dieback. Branches frequently provided the "voice for nature" in community discussions. For example, the Eastern Bay of Plenty branch led the decade-long legal battle that in October stopped the development of a multi-storey apartment building on Whakatane's Kohi Point.

Nationally, the government continued to offer up significant areas to mineral exploration. Branches in the Far North, Golden Bay and Southland rallied against moves to mine in their regions by collecting petition signatures, organising an anti-mining festival, holding public meetings and talking to local media.

Forest & Bird increased community engagement through its Land For Wildlife programme. The volunteer programme was launched in October and offered landowners advice and practical resources to manage their land for the benefit of native plants and animals.

Volunteers gave approximately 25,000 hours to the Forest & Bird and Auckland Council-run Ark in the Park bird sanctuary, which has been the new home for translocated North Island robins, whiteheads, kokako and hihi.

