

Kārearea

Protecting a southern land

Aug–Sep 2018



Image: Craig McKenzie

On penguins and elephants

Jane Young reflects on the recent Yellow-eyed Penguin Symposium in Dunedin

Almost ten years ago, I attended my first Yellow-eyed Penguin Symposium. Some things have changed since then: audiences are larger, presentations slicker – and the statistics even less encouraging. There is no longer an air of defensiveness on the part of those who support intensive intervention and rehabilitation. Penguins are being treated for the scourge of diphtheria and, increasingly in a warming world, mosquito-borne avian malaria. Underweight chicks and adults are being taken in for rehabilitation, while injured birds receive skilled, effective treatment at the Dunedin Wildlife Hospital. There is general agreement that the ambulance – metaphorical and otherwise – now has to be parked fair and square at the bottom of the cliff.

Although there is still an army of volunteers carrying out trapping, weeding and revegetation in penguin habitat, penguin populations, with very few exceptions, continue to decline throughout their South Island range. For example on Whenua hou/Codfish Island, which is predator free, there were 61 nests in 2001 but only 24 in 2017/18. Just 14 birds fledged in this last breeding season.

A lot more research is now focused on events taking place out at sea. This research is increasingly hi-tech and, of course, increasingly expensive, especially when penguins fitted with data-loggers aren't considerate enough to bring them home again. Nevertheless, we are gaining a huge amount of information about where and how penguins feed, which just hasn't been possible to access in the past. Miniature cameras let us see the size and species of fish being caught, and admire the sheer tenacity of birds determined not to let their lunch escape, however oversized it may be.

And the elephants in the room?

Elephant No. 1: Marine Protected Areas

Jeremy Helson of Fisheries Inshore NZ stressed that fishers are keen to find ways of reducing deaths of marine birds and mammals as bycatch. But he didn't refer to the indirect impacts on penguins as a result of competition for food sources or destruction of benthic (sea-floor) environments. Penguins have to be taken into rehab because they are starving. Commercial and



Yellow-eyed penguin chick Jim Young

recreational fishers have been instrumental in blocking the establishment of no-take marine reserves at locations such as The Nuggets and Long Point.

Elephant No. 2: Climate change and ocean acidification

Ian Angus presented an update on the Hoiho Strategy whose 100-year vision is: "To work in partnership to ensure self-sustaining, thriving hoiho." A whole century in the future? Given the devastating impacts of our greenhouse gas emissions on both the terrestrial and the marine environments, how likely is it that there will be any mainland yellow-eyed penguins around in a hundred years to provide the rationale for the existence of a 'Hoiho Governance Group'?

Conservation Science Advisor Trudi Webster points out that findings about the impacts of climate change on hoiho, especially at sea, are unlikely to have practical implications for their management. Fair enough. We have to do whatever we can in the here and now. Nevertheless, I believe that climate change and ocean acidification have to be front and centre of any discussion about the long term prospects for the survival of yellow-eyed penguins, or, for that matter, of any other marine species on this planet. ■

Trudi Webster (Feb 2018) *The Pathway ahead for hoiho*
Te Ara whakamua *Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust*

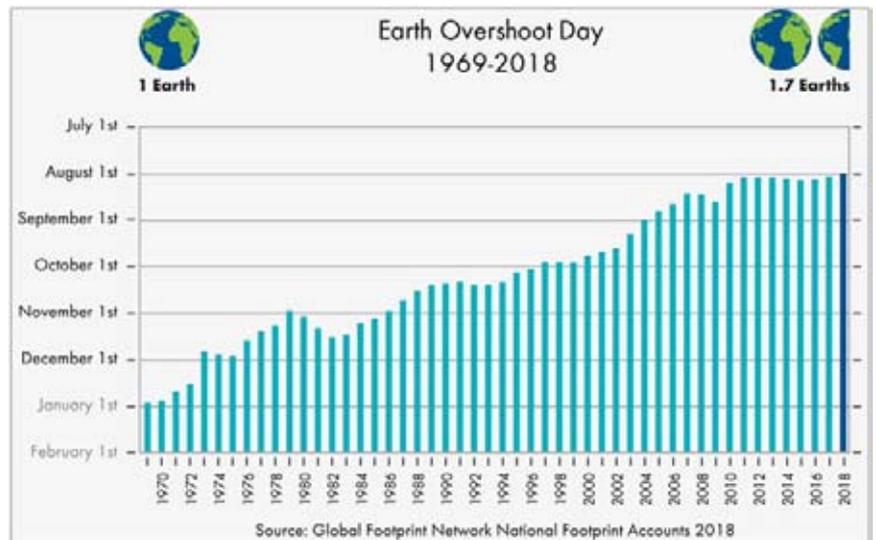
Earth Overshoot Day

Wednesday 01 August was Earth Overshoot Day – the day marking the point at which global consumption outstrips the capacity of nature to regenerate. This is the earliest date ever recorded.

To feed our current hunger for resources, we would need the equivalent of 1.7 Earths, according to Global Footprint Network, an international research organisation that makes an annual assessment of how far humankind is falling into ecological debt.

Resources don't just include water, food, minerals, timber etc, but also the ecosystem services on which we depend, such as the ability of insects to pollinate our crops, or the oceans to act as a heat sink and to absorb CO₂.

Mathis Wackernagel, co-founder of Global Footprint Network, believes that the day of reckoning is moving nearer: "Our current economies are running a Ponzi scheme with our planet. We are borrowing the Earth's future resources to operate our economies in the present. Like any Ponzi scheme, this works for some time. But as nations, companies, or households dig themselves deeper and deeper into debt, they



eventually fall apart."

Can we reverse this situation? Economic slowdowns, which tend to reduce energy consumption, generally shift the ecological budget in a positive direction. But would voters tolerate a deliberate move by governments to reduce GDP and consumption of resources? The overall trend is for costs to increasingly be paid by planetary support systems – recent studies show that a third of land is acutely degraded, while tropical forests have become a source rather than a sink of carbon.

What about New Zealand? Although we're an 'advanced' and wealthy nation, and are one of the highest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases, our ecological footprint still falls within the world's biocapacity. This is mainly thanks to our large areas of forest and grazing land, and minimal urban area. Nevertheless, according to Global Footprint Network, it would require three Earths' worth of resources if everyone lived like Kiwis. And as they say: "There is no Planet B" ... let alone C, D or E. ■

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4 key areas for improving sustainability

Food

- If people reduced global meat consumption by 50 percent and replaced these calories through a vegetarian diet, we would move Overshoot Day by six days.
- If people cut food waste in half worldwide, we would move Overshoot Day by 11 days.

Population

If every other family in the world had one less child, we would move Overshoot Day 30 days by 2050.

Energy

Reducing the carbon component of humanity's Ecological Footprint by 50 percent would move Earth Overshoot Day by 93 days, or more than three months.

Cities

If people cut back on driving by 50 percent around the world (and assume one-third of car miles are replaced by public transportation and the rest by biking and walking), Earth Overshoot Day would move back 12 days.

Source: Global Footprint Network



"NO REGRETS"

www.polypp.org.uk

Sources: Earth's resources consumed in ever greater destructive volumes 23 July 2018 *The Guardian* ♦ Earth Overshoot Day' arrives earlier than ever 02 Aug 2018 *Newshub* ♦ 2018 Earth Overshoot Day: We've just exhausted a year's worth of the planet's resources 02 Aug 2018 *Accuweather*

South Otago Forest & Bird

Celebrating 40 years as a voice for nature

On 02 August 1978, thirty-five conservation supporters gathered at the Creative Arts Centre in Balclutha for the inaugural meeting of the South Otago Branch of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of NZ. Not a bad turn-out.

Forty years later, we celebrate the fact that our branch is still a voice for nature in the south of the South Island. I could have written a long account of the branch's achievements over the years, but decided that a pictorial record might be more evocative. Of course this does have its disadvantages – even modern technology can't always rescue faded, decades-old photos. And, perhaps more importantly, although photos are a great record of planting days, street stalls, field excursions, weed busting, KCC events, protest marches, predator trapping etc, they give little indication of all the work that goes on behind the scenes.

This work doesn't just involve meetings and planning sessions, but also taking on the advocacy role that is such an essential part of what Forest & Bird does. The three hefty Minutes books that cover the years 1978–2018

hold an invaluable record of branch activities, and in themselves show evidence of changing times as copperplate handwritten records give way to crinkling pages produced on a portable typewriter and then to hi-tech word-processing. What hasn't changed is the emphasis on speaking out about the threats to our precious biodiversity. In the branch's early days the main issue of concern was the ongoing destruction of native forests; in recent years the focus has shifted more to predator and weed control, and marine protection.

I'd like to thank the members who shared their memories of those early days with me. It quickly became apparent that belonging to South Otago Forest & Bird has been an important part of your lives. I hope that will continue to be true for many people for many years to come.

Jane Young

PS If you're not a member of South Otago Forest & Bird but would like an electronic copy of our Birthday Book just email janejimmyoung@slingshot.co.nz with 'Birthday Book' in the subject line.

From the 1978–1980 Minutes

Sep 1978 Concerns about remaining native forest on coastal land between Tahakopa and Long Beach gradually being illegally destroyed by cattle grazing, bulldozing and burning.

Nov 1978 Large area of scenically important native bush in the Catlins has been recently cleared, probably with government assistance.

March 1979 Explanation required of how the Catlins State Forest Management Plan can aim to both assist Māori owners in the profitable use of their holdings and to maintain the bush for posterity. Tahakopa farm settlement blocks to be balloted – what protection will there be for native bush? Investigate ways in which Awakiki Bush with its virgin totara stands can be safeguarded. Concern expressed about the future of the bush opposite Pounaweia.

May 1979 Cleared land towards Chaslands is reverting to broom, rushes and scrub while farmers continue to clear more land with the assistance of Government Encouragement loans. Peter Gardner and Brian O'Callaghan will contact our local MP to express our concerns.

June 1979 A committee has been set up with Dunedin and Southland branches to coordinate efforts to preserve forest in the Tahakopa Valley and to press for the formation of a Coastal Park.

August 1979 Will issue a public statement opposing the



use of Rural Bank Development funds for funding the felling of native forests.

Feb 1980 Special meeting called to discuss a proposal that has been made to set up a chip mill at Awarua. This mill would threaten Catlins forests including those on unprotected Māori land. We will contact the Forestry Caucus Committee, the South and West Regional Council, the Southland County and Robin Gray MP to voice our concerns. Peter is prepared to present our case against the chip mill at the hearing next month. The new owner of block IA2 has a bulldozer on Waipati Beach, presumably with the intention of using it on the block. ■

Happy 40th Birthday South Otago Forest & Bird!



Sharing memories at the 40th birthday party



Founding President & Secretary, Brian & Jan O'Callaghan, cut the cake

Earthlore Mark II



Gordon at work on the new shop fittings
The Envirocentre

After a lackluster season, with only being able to open on Mondays or by appointment due to a change in jobs, Janine and Gordon at Earthlore Insect Theme Park decided they needed to make the decision to either close down altogether, or to go all out and build it up.

Deciding on the latter option, they are now in the process of revamping and rebranding from 'Insect Theme Park' to 'Earthlore Wildlife Gardens' with Gordon giving up his job to enable them to open full time.

Some serious thought went into the change in name, as Earthlore has started to develop a name for being about insects, but with several years of being open part time and talking to the public, the sad truth is that learning about bugs, even in a fun setting, is not to everyone's taste. This, combined with the effect of all the early native plantings that were done to encourage insects and are now attracting a large amount of bird life, has allowed a broadening of the theme to 'wildlife'. (Ironically, it only goes to reinforce how important insects are to the chain of life).

But it's not just about a name change. Other additions will be a vehicle bringing people from Owaka to Earthlore and back, on the hour through the days of summer, and a gift shop with carefully chosen products that will either benefit wildlife or our planet, encourage learning about wildlife, or be created in an earth-friendly process. The other exciting addition is the launch of Gordon's Inspector Insector book for children, which will take pride of place in the new shop, encouraging kids to learn and appreciate the importance of insects, and which goes to show that bugs are still big at Earthlore. ■

From around the country

Stop Māui dolphin miner access 'immediately'

An array of environmental groups, including Greenpeace and Forest & Bird, has written to the Government asking it to immediately put a halt to mining exploration inside a marine sanctuary for endangered Māui dolphins. The Department of Conservation said in an official briefing it had 'significant concerns' about the risk posed to the dolphins. Because of the previous Government's amendments to the Crown Minerals Act, it is very difficult for the Minister for Energy & Resources to refuse permission for exploration on environmental grounds. Any application for a mining permit, however, would need to go through a full process including public consultation.

Newsroom 19 July 2018



Māui dolphin *Greenpeace*

Kauri sanctuary planned to combat die-back in north

Takou 439 Reservation Trust is working with local hapu Ngati Rehia and the Crown Research Institute Scion to investigate setting up a 45 ha disease-free kauri sanctuary on Māori land at Takou Bay between the Bay of Islands and Matauri Bay. Up to 50,000 kauri from a range of sites could be planted if tests show that the site is presently free of the fungus that causes the lethal die-back disease. The scheme would help to create employment in the local area as there would need to be intensive management of the sanctuary to keep out the disease.

Northern Advocate



Kauri www.flickr.com/photos/dekettde/3841976509



Mohua *Craig McKenzie*

Native plant species enlisted to help clean up waterways

ESR scientists at the Kenepuru Science Centre in Porirua are looking at the potential of rātā and horopito (pepper tree) to reduce the number of bacterial pathogens in soil to which dairy shed effluent has been added. Earlier laboratory tests showed that the root system of mānuka trees can significantly reduce the bacteria counts and nitrate levels. Field trials are now underway to see if the mānuka can actually stop the pollutants leaching into waterways. Rātā and horopito showed promise in the initial screening tests and scientists hope to find a range of native plants that could work as well as, or even better, than mānuka in riparian plantings. www.esr.cri.nz/home/about-esr/media-releases/native-plant-species-enlisted-to-help-clean-up-waterways/

Doubling total native bird numbers in the South

Westland Landsborough valley Predator control began in 1998 after bird numbers were seen to be steadily falling due to predation by rats, stoats and possums. Control methods include valley-wide trapping and six aerial-1080 operations timed with increasing rodent levels. Seven bird species, including the threatened mohua (yellowhead) and kākāriki, have steadily increased in numbers; four species, including kākā and tomfits, remained stable; and only silvereve and long-tailed cuckoo populations have declined.

Department of Conservation – Battle for our birds



Rata seedlings *Jane Young*

SPRING ECO FEST 2018



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Where: Invercargill Workingmen's Club, 154 Esk St

When: Sat 22 Sept, 10am-3pm

Entry fee: Adults \$2.00, Students gold coin,
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Exhibitors' Fees: \$20.00 per stall size 2m x 2m –
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To book a stall space &/ or workshop: please
contact Jenny Campbell on 03 248 6398, or 027
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Exhibitors selling and providing information on
bees, worms, insulation, water, recycling, climate
change, massage ... Special student activities
include bee viewing, making models, huge
jigsaws and donkey rides.

Workshops will occur through the day – extra
charge might apply for some.

Southern Events

**Mon 27 Aug 7.30pm South Otago Forest & Bird
Travels in South America**

Bronwyn Bain St Andrew's Church Hall Balclutha
◊

Sun 26 Aug /Sun 23 Sep 1pm

**South Otago Forest & Bird
Weeding & revegetation at Otanomomo**



Forest & Bird replanting at Te Rere Reserve after the 1995 fire

Thinking about spring planting?

South Otago Forest & Bird are
offering special discounts on
all native plants at our Pro Rata
Nursery 145 Hina Hina Rd,
Owaka for 1 week only:

Mon 20 – Sun 26 August

10% off all purchases

20% off orders over \$100

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Forest & Bird
GIVING NATURE A VOICE

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Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust

www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz

New Zealand Sea Lion Trust www.sealiontrust.org.nz

Kārearea: protecting a southern land

Contributions welcome. Copy for Oct is due on 30 Sep.

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