Editorial

Several years ago there was a multi-media advertising campaign designed to encourage New Zealanders to see the sights of their own country. The campaign promoted New Zealand by comparing Wellington's cable car with San Francisco's, Hanmer's exotic forests and mountain backdrop with parts of Canada (or was it Switzerland?), and so on. What happened to New Zealand's uniqueness? Why should we be ashamed of advertising our country's natural and cultural features as being *different* from the rest of the world?

Unfortunately, the authors of the fore-mentioned campaign would not have had the benefit of Geoff Kelly's striking introductory photo-essay in *The New Zealand Protected Natural Areas Programme, a Scientific Focus*[1]. Geoff's accompanying text also puts New Zealand in a proper perspective: "... many unique plants and animals make our country different from anywhere else on earth. Will they survive around us, to enrich our lives, and deepen our sense of place and nationhood? Will our landscape retain its essential New Zealand character and diversity — the pohutukawa-clad shore, the thickets of bean-stick manuka, the pigeon in stream-side kowhai, or the kea crying above the mountain snow tussock — a character which is of profound (but unmeasurable) economic benefit in rejuvenating all New Zealanders during their annual holidays. Or will New Zealand end up looking like any other temperate-latitude country, of diminished interest to us, and less to overseas visitors?"

Certainly, human intervention seems hell-bent on reducing this country's uniqueness by creating new landscapes which are clones of each other from one end of New Zealand to the other, and barely different from many beyond our shores. Small towns, city suburbs and inner city re-developments, beach settlements and alpine villages, planted forests, extensive farmlands with only non-native plants, and horticultural blocks screened from the traveller's eyes by tall shelterbelts or unsightly constructions of peeled pine poles, wire, and plastic shade-cloth increasingly characterise developed New Zealand.

The Protected Natural Area (PNA) programme is concerned with preserving the natural character of New Zealand at the local level, the Ecological District (ED), of which 268 have been identified in New Zealand[2]. Local members of the Wellington Botanical Society (WBS) should feel at home in short-stature totara-matai stands on gravel alluvium around Te Horo and Otaki (Manawatu Plains ED), kohekohe and karaka forest remnants on lower hillslopes between Paekakariki and Plimmerton (Wellington ED), low-altitude stands of black and hard beech of the eastern Hutt Valley (Tararua ED), and patches of mixed tall podocarps with dense understoreys of divaricating shrubs around Featherston (Wairarapa Plains ED). And not just forests; wind and salt-shorn coastal scrub of *Coprosma propinqua* with *Muehlenbeckia complexa,* coastal flax, and interspersed herbs such as speargrass, *Brachyglottis lagopus* and yellow woolly-head (*Craspedia uniflora* var. *maritima*) is just as characteristic of Wellington's natural character. Examples could be added from Wellington's remnant salt-marshes, swamps, dunes, lakes, seal colonies, and sea-bird roosts and nesting colonies on rock stacks.

Of course I am under no illusions that the predominance of native species in these places makes them primaeval pieces of New Zealand. Human impacts,

either direct or indirect, are seen in even the most natural of "natural areas". These impacts will undoubtedly continue, and new ones will compound the problems of maintaining areas in native vegetation. Exotic plants will continue to arrive or to spread from cultivation; a fairly recent example is veld grass, which is discussed elsewhere in this bulletin. Even pohutukawa and karo, native trees whose natural range extends as far south as Taranaki, have established adventively around Wellington from planted specimens. Pohutukawa and karo may well become the main components of a new coastal forest, for example, along the western side of Wellington Harbour and the coast from Pukerua Bay to Paekakariki.

In 1981-84, members of our Society contributed to a survey of locations for possibly threatened native plants of Wellington region. From a list of about 200 species, about 40 are likely to be regionally extinct, and there are no recent records (say, less than 10 years old) of a further 70 species which had been known in the region. About 35% of Wellington's threatened plants are (or were) on coastal cliffs and beaches. Existing native plant species of the coast have already survived more than a century with sheep and cattle, rabbits, hares, and, more recently, possums. To these must be added the impacts of urbanisation, the increased incidence of fires, the spread of introduced plants and exotic invertebrates, application of fertilisers, quarrying, and human recreational pressures.

In addition, over the last year or two one of the worst agents of destruction has arrived on Wellington's western coasts . . . feral goats. Goats now range from Island Bay to Paekakariki, over land which lacked them before. Already goats are the main reason for the almost total failure of speargrass plantings done by our Society between Sinclair Head and Makara Stream in 1985. Goats will cause a rise in the rate of extinctions of coastal plants, and they will degrade further the remnants of wind-shorn scrub, tussock, and low forest which have contributed so much to the coastal character of Wellington.

There is a need to identify specific locations and the nature of threats posed by all agents to Wellington's natural estate, and, where practicable, act to remove the threats. In times of heavily reduced Government funding of agencies like Department of Conservation, the responsibility for local conservation management will fall increasingly on local authorities, special-interest groups, and private individuals. WBS members are the repositories of much relevant information. We also have the skills to collect further information for management agencies.

Over the years, the recreational botany of WBS members has been the basis of submissions to land-managing agencies on the protection of native plants and vegetation in natural areas. This has been done by a relatively small number of individuals, mostly operating in a private capacity. With a membership of several hundred, the Society surely has considerable scope, and indeed a responsibility, to become more involved in influencing the character of the Wellington region.

A glossy publication on the botany of Wellington, compiled by Maggy Wassilieff and Jeremy Rolfe with input from a number of other WBS members, will appear in a few months. This production will awaken many more Wellingtonians to what they have (and what they have already lost). Rather than seeing this as the last word on what needs protecting, our Society will be more widely identified as a major source of botanical information. I suspect that not only will

we get a surge of new members, but we should be prepared to meet extra demands for information and advice.

Colin Ogle

1. Technical Advisory Group. 1986. The New Zealand Protected Natural Area Programme : a scientific focus. Editors: G C Kelly and G N Park. DSIR Science Information Publishing Centre, Wellington. 68 p.
2. New Zealand Biological Resources Centre. 1987. Ecological regions and districts of New Zealand; 3rd revised edition in four 1:50,000 maps. Editor: W M McEwen. *Biological Resources Centre Publication No. 5 (in 4 parts)*. New Zealand Department of Conservation. 326 p + 4 maps.

More Advice from the Past

Geoff Rogers (Rotorua)

Quotations (abridged) from pp 42-43 of *Waipoua Kauri Forest, its demarcation and management* (Department of Lands and Survey, 1918), by D E Hutchins.

Some lateral thinking on kauri forest management produced this advice, which was never heeded.

"Timber-hauling — when the forest at Waipoua comes to be worked, with Kauri and the good timber so much scattered, the choice of a good log-hauling animal is a matter of the first consideration.

Where the good timber is scattered, animal haulage is by far the most economical if the requisite animal is there. Oxen are difficult to beat. While the ordinary farmhorse is the most expensive animal for timber-hauling, it is the one most largely used at present.

The mule does the most work of its keep, but mules are not bred in New Zealand, and, like the horse, it wants artificial feeding. Why donkeys are not run on the scrub lands, and jennets bred, I have never heard satisfactorily explained. With no bad wild animals the scrub lands of New Zealand should be a donkey's paradise!

It is desirable, therefore, at once to think of the best animal for hauling timber — one that can feed itself. Buffaloes and elephants are both used largely for hauling timber, and both would be quite at home in the climate and with the feed of the Waipoua Forest.

Elephants — There is much to be said for and against elephants at Waipoua. It would be possible, but not easy, to catch a pair of young ones, let them run wild in the forest at Waipoua, and catch and put the surplus animals to work. The old ones would be useful in forming costless paths and keeping down the undergrowth. Once tamed they would make all the inspection paths required at little or no cost, and they would be an attraction to tourists.

Buffaloes — Buffaloes, however, are on quite another footing. They should be introduced without delay.

The "Sword-grass", the Kiekie and coarse herbage eaten off, and the soil "wounded" by the heavy tread of the buffaloes, would be an aid to natural regeneration."