

**JOHN NICHOLLS AWARDED
MEMBER OF THE NEW ZEALAND ORDER OF MERIT (MNZM)**

Paul Cashmore and Willie Shaw

John Nicholls, one of the founding members of the Rotorua Botanical Society and long time resident of Rotorua, whom many of you will know, was awarded The New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to ecology and forest research in the Queens Birthday Honours List.

John was very active in the early years of the Rotorua Botanical Society in the 1980's imparting to members his vast knowledge of forest ecosystems in the Central North Island on many field trips. As well as botanical society trips many current members have also worked with John at one time or another over the years. He was a great workmate and generously imparted his encyclopaedic knowledge of New Zealand's forests to another generation of ecologists who were privileged to work with him in the 1980's.

John's long and distinguished career with the New Zealand Forest Service, based at the Forest Research Institute in Rotorua, is credited with laying the foundation for current scientific understanding of native forest diversity and pattern throughout New Zealand. He worked on the National Forest Survey in the 1950's and the Ecosurvey in the 1960's and has a tremendous depth of field experience.

His achievements are well summed up by Tony Beveridge in the book "*Characters of FRP*" – "John's work on identifying a nationwide system of Ecological Areas must be numbered as one of the genuinely heroic, but unsung, research efforts of the 1970s and '80s. Not only did he play a major role in developing the philosophy for representative natural areas in New Zealand, but he, almost single-handedly, identified, mapped, described, and defended before a high-powered multi-

disciplinary committee, close to 150 Ecological Areas totalling over 300000 ha. The memorial to his efforts lies not in papers in science journals, but in enduring native forest landscapes.” He goes on to say that “it is unlikely that John's encyclopaedic knowledge of New Zealand native forest composition and species distribution on a national scale will ever again be known to a single person.”

John also published landmark scientific papers, many forest maps, and left a tremendous resource of unpublished file reports. His work provided the basis for the subdivision of New Zealand into 85 ecological regions and 268 ecological districts – frameworks still used widely by ecologists and planners. He is a life member of the New Zealand Ecological Society, in recognition of his scientific contributions.

The Rotorua Botanical Society would like to congratulate John for his distinguished award. We recognise that this is long overdue credit for someone who has done a huge amount to improve the knowledge and ultimately obtain protection for many of the larger tracts of native forest in the Central North Island and elsewhere in New Zealand that many professional and amateur botanists enjoy today. Many of these areas would not be present today without John's efforts.