

EDITORIAL

Conservation has been in the news a lot lately. Whilst being concerned over national conservation issues, our committee at its February meeting also discussed putting our own house in order in this respect.

Many of our outings are to Scenic Reserves or National Parks and it has been noticed that some of our members have been collecting specimens, sometimes uprooting quite large plants for their gardens. Unfortunately many of the specimens taken in this way are unsuitable for transplanting and finish up by dying. People tend to take the attitude that it is only one small plant that they're taking and there are plenty more of the same kind around but if everyone who walked down a particular track felt like this, the bush in the vicinity of the track would, over a remarkably short time, become denuded of its more interesting plants. Nobody wishes to discourage people from collecting native plants for their gardens or for private herbaria as long as such collecting is done with considerable discretion and always from areas which are not designated National Parks or Reserves or which are to be cleared at a later date. Alternatively, in Reserves or National Parks, the permission of the Ranger or the Administering Body should be sought - this is readily given in genuine cases.

The relevant section of the Reserves and Domains Act, 1953 is quite definite and specific and is I think worth quoting here:-

Offences on Reserves

84 (1) "Every person commits an offence against this Act who without being authorised (the proof of which shall be on the person charged) by the Minister or the Commissioner or the administering body, as the case may require -

- (f) Wilfully breaks, cuts, injures, or removes any or any part of any wood, tree, fern, plant, stone, mineral, furniture, utensil, tool or thing of any kind, on any public reserve; or
- (g) Wilfully digs, cuts, or injures the sod on any public reserve."

This may seem to go too far but, as I say, it doesn't need much imagination to realize what would happen if the hundreds of thousands of people who visit our National Parks annually were to remove even one plant each, so please, let's leave them for others to enjoy.

Still on the subject of conservation; the inaugural meeting of the New Zealand Conservation Society was held recently. The aim of the society is to be truly national in outlook

and to recruit sufficient members to become an effective political force operative in all matters relating to the conservation of the natural resources of New Zealand.

It is to be hoped that with conservation becoming such a talked about and 'respectable' topic the new society can capture the public imagination and realize this general aim.

If this leads eventually to the setting up of a Nature Conservation Council with some real teeth, which can present considered, responsible and informed opinion and which can have a good chance of being heeded, then it will indeed be well worthwhile. There must be no more Manapouris, no more cloak and dagger stuff. In future it must be hoped that the Courts and Committees of Enquiry are set up automatically before decisions of such far reaching importance are made.

To quote from the notice stating the aims of the new Society:- "Conservation is not merely a matter of sentiment or of the ideal but lies at the very root of economic welfare. It is pre-eminently the concern of the practical man. Its tenets will be respected by Governments only in proportion to the strength of the demands of an informed public opinion."

If any of our members are interested in joining they should contact the Secretary Miss D.M.Nairn, 26, Elgin street, Auckland.2. The annual subscription is at present 50 cents.

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IS THIS THE TALLEST ?

Two of us recently walking down Kauri Grove Track, Piha Valley, noticed a nikau tree so tall that I deemed it worthwhile to return with a hand instrument to measure it up. As the spread of the outer fronds hid the growing tip, I took the sight to the top of the visible trunk below the swelling of the frond sheaths, which on computation measured 48'6" above ground. Dead fronds lying under the tree were 9' long, which added to the bare stem gave a total height of 57'6". As the centre fronds spring from a higher point on the stem than the outer ones the actual height was probably a little more than this. The top appeared quite healthy although somewhat over-mature. Fronds of young, vigorous nikaus are 10½ or more in length.

In the near vicinity is a kahikatea with a girth of 16', possibly the largest in the Waitakeres.