

## Obituary

### Malcolm Foord – a celebration of a life well lived

It's hard to believe that Malcolm is gone. He was one of those people who was just always going to be around. For one thing he was fit enough to show those half his age that your age is much more than just a number – it's an attitude. Malcolm had a passion for the natural world. He was no armchair enthusiast either and he seemed to be a member of every Dunedin society that had anything to do with natural history, regularly attending the monthly talks, and he was often in the audience at Botany and Zoology Department seminars.

I first met Malcolm in 1986. At the time, I was embarked on the Protected Natural Areas survey of the Umbrella Ecological District. I forget exactly the chain of events but I recollect that Brian Rance (who even then really knew his plants), introduced me to Brian Patrick, and Brian introduced me to Barbara Barratt. Those generous people would give up their weekends to come and help me put an entomological component into the survey. Through them I became a committee member of the Dunedin branch of the Entomological Society, and that is where I first met Malcolm. It wasn't long before I became aware of his particular passion for the mohua or yellowhead and he joined up with my fieldtrips particularly to the Waikaia Valley and the *Nothofagus* forest of Waikaia Bush, where he had recorded mohua. We didn't see any mohua despite having some long days looking but Malcolm kept going back in the years following and did confirm just a few birds. He remembered that I hadn't seen mohua and invited me to join with him on one of his trips to the Blue Mountains, which supported a healthy mohua population. This became a longstanding invitation, which Malcolm remembered for a very long time, because he offered again when I returned to Dunedin in 1997. He never forgot. In fact Malcolm kept meticulous records and delighted in recounting some of these at meetings, so clearly delighting in sharing his knowledge.

We did finally make it to the Blue Mountains in September last year, along with Alan Mark who had also never seen mohua in the wild before. All round, a pretty special trip. Malcolm was absolutely focused on finding mohua. This he did with the highly successful call-up combination of polystyrene rubbed against a piece of glass. After several kilometres, we struck success and we were privy to an amazing display from six birds only a few metres away in the subcanopy. This will be an abiding memory for me. Malcolm was clearly thrilled, in his element, obviously completely committed, still passionately interested and motivated, and so clearly getting real satisfaction at finally getting us to see mohua in the Blue Mts. What a surprise it was when in the trusty Subaru on the way home that he confided that he was eighty. I couldn't believe it (and said so) having just seen him forge his way around the Blue Mts mohua survey circuit (several kilometres) with a few side trips through some thick tussock and tall shrubland.

A great day and one that I won't forget. Malcolm's life is truly one to be celebrated.

*Kath Dickinson, Botany Department, University of Otago.*