

*Titiro whakamuri
kia papatau nga rā o nāiane
kia mauritau i nga rā ki mua.*

*We reach back to the past
to consolidate the present
so that we are better prepared for the future.*

The Department of Conservation (DOC) turned 25 years old in April 2012. To mark the anniversary we have put together this exhibition.

It covers the origins of modern conservation's European roots, from 1848, the events leading to the creation of DOC and the 25 years of challenge, set-backs and accomplishment.

Not quite what it seemed: 1830s–1952

It took Māori several hundred years, a rapidly growing population and the extinction of several species, before they evolved a relationship that served the environment as well as themselves.

This display focuses on the country's second colonisation period. Despite the effects of necessity, presumption and often violence to the land, this period was marked by occasional acts of conservation as we know it. Two world wars and Depression slowed progress, however, until the mid-20th century.



Not understood: the price
of possum and deer introductions.
DQC West Coast

1830–1950

A folly unforeseen: possum and deer

The collapse by about 1810 of fur sealing, New Zealand's first extractive export industry, was succeeded in the 1830s by early attempts to introduce Australian brushtail possums. This was one of New Zealand's first animal introductions, but many attempts were made before possums actually 'took'.

Debate on the possible effects of exotic predators, such as possums and deer, on native biota was also obscured by rapid habitat loss in the late 1890s.

Even the indefatigable horticulturalist and botanist Leonard Cockayne, was for many years blind-sided to the damage possums were doing to forest canopy. His focus was deer and their impact on native forests and erosion. Despite reports of destruction to crops, orchards and forests

by possums, Cockayne and fellow botanist Professor H.B. Kirk concluded in an official report to government that possum damage to native forests was negligible and their fur economically valuable. The Animals Protection and Game Act 1921–22 initially enshrined these attitudes.

Soon after, New Zealand naturalists and scientists began to close on the problem of deer and possum. A.N. Perham's report on deer devastation in forests exotic and native, and in mountain grasslands, set off alarm bells. The Deer Menace Conference of 1930 revealed the folly—and fecundity—of earlier deer imports. Government deer culling operations began later that year.

Government attempts to control possums provoked a flurry of illegal liberations and a bounty was imposed of 2s/6d (25c per head) in 1951.

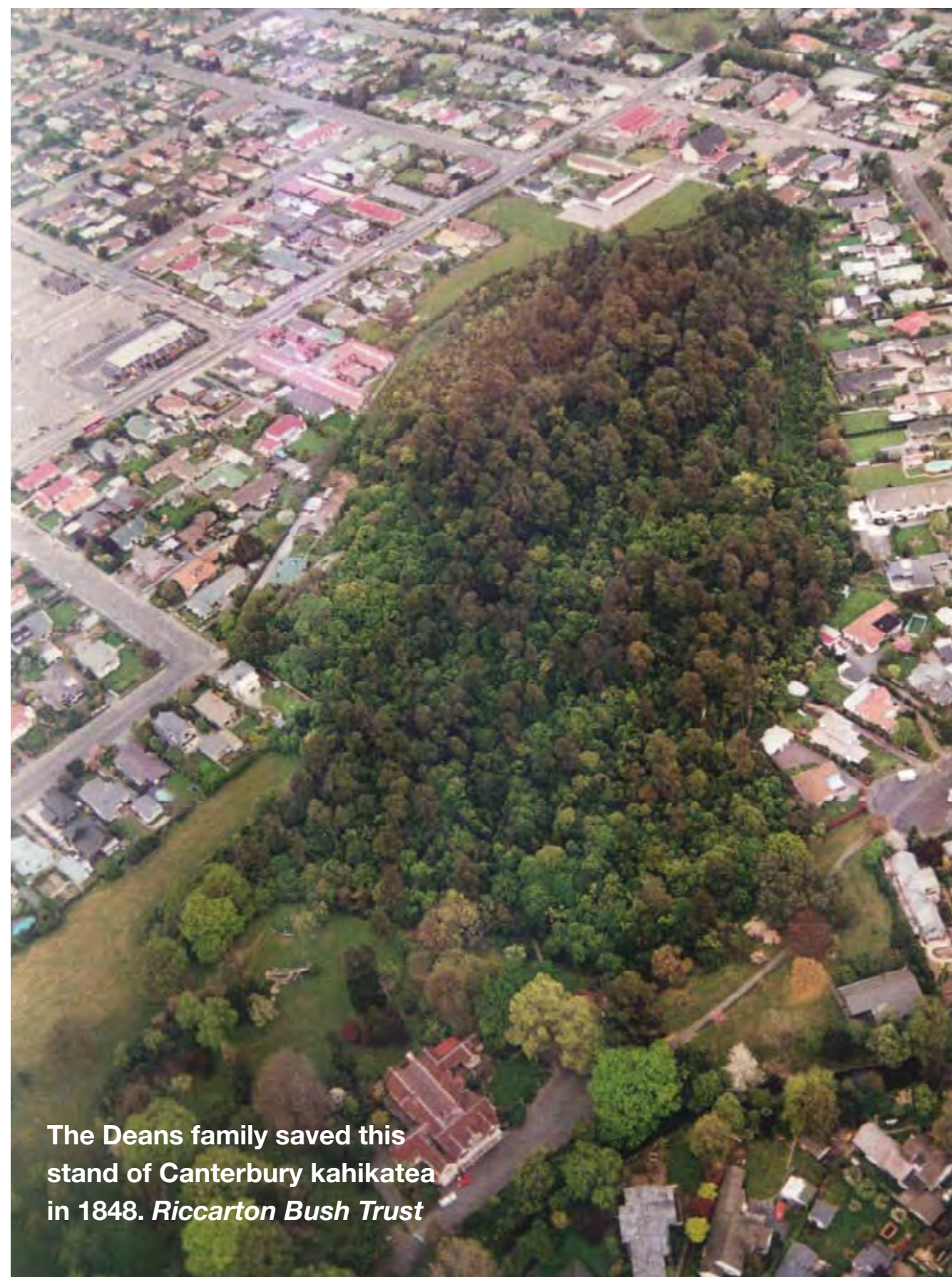
1848

Scarcity: Canterbury and conservation

Lack of native bush cover on the Canterbury Plains, often the effect of early Māori fires, provoked a conservation response among a small handful of pioneers. Earliest among them were the Deans brothers, John and William, immigrant farmers from Ayrshire, near Glasgow.

In 1848, the Deans signed an agreement with the New Zealand Company to protect a parcel of their land at Putaringamotu, Riccarton, west of Hagley Park. This was a patch of established kahikatea forest, once widespread on the Canterbury Plains. John's dying wish in 1854, and that of his widow, Jane (who died in 1911), was that part of this forest be forever preserved.

Within a decade, the timber of seven other remnant blocks around Christchurch was all but gone. By 1915, when Deans Bush was gifted to the people of Christchurch, just 6.4 hectares remained of this forest—now unique to the Canterbury Plains. The historic homestead, erected in three stages, survived the February 2011 earthquake but requires extensive repairs.



The Deans family saved this stand of Canterbury kahikatea in 1848. Riccarton Bush Trust

The Riccarton Bush Trust, now chaired by a Deans' descendant, has erected a predator-proof fence around the site, which until recently has been a habitat for juvenile kiwi.

An influential near-contemporary was Thomas Henry Potts, a wealthy high country farmer, brilliant ornithologist, Canterbury Provincial councillor and later MP. He was one of the first, in 1858, to advocate conservation in Parliament. Potts, who lived at Governors Bay, became deeply concerned at the casual firing by settlers of nearby forest. His advocacy secured the first national survey of forests and foreshadowed Hagley Park; his book, *Out in the open*, remains a conservation classic.



Continuing firing of forest increasingly exercised Parliament in the late 19th century.
Puketora Station, Frederick Hargreaves.
Ref: 1/1-023274-G. Alexander Turnbull Library

1874

Forest gazump

It has never been easy in New Zealand to advance big ideas, and never more so than in 1874 when Premier Julius Vogel attempted to restrain widespread forest destruction by Act of Parliament.

By axe and by fire, the colony was rapidly transformed into ‘smiling farms’ by a settler population that, in the 1870s alone, doubled in size. Thirty percent of original New Zealand forest was destroyed by settlers in 80 years.

That the parliamentary debate over Vogel’s Forests Bill reflected many viewpoints is hardly surprising, but what is surprising is the level of erudition and international scientific argument displayed by the many members who participated over several days.

Prompted by James Hector’s government survey of the state of our forests—with findings of alarmingly rapid deforestation—concerns expressed ranged from scarcity of timber for housing to American C.P. Marsh’s concerns regarding soil ‘desiccation’ and loss. That the role of ‘climatic forests’ in healthy societies was a continuing concern into the early 20th century reminds us that anxieties concerning climate are far from recent.

From a House of 78 members, 34 spoke to the Bill—22 of them in support of Vogel’s long, deeply informed speech, which included what we would regard as the fundamentals of good conservation. The Bill failed, defeated partly because it was entwined in a plan to reduce the powers of provincial government.

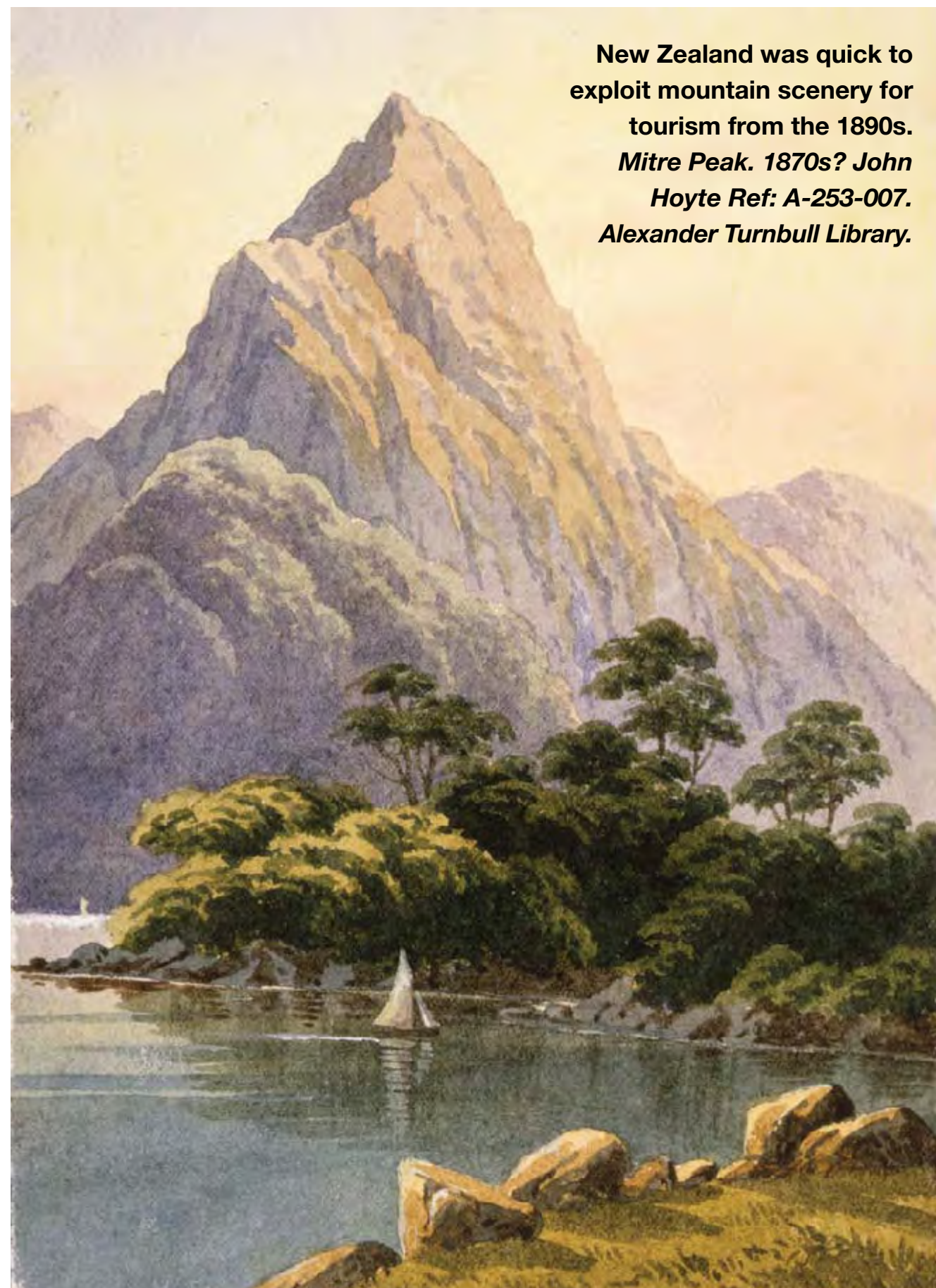
1878–1910

Tourism: conserving the picturesque

As early as 1878, the Union Steam Ship Company offered tourist excursions into Fiordland, and from the 1890s, private enterprise also pioneered glaciers, peaks and river tourism.

State recreational tourism based on landscapes is marked by the reservation of the Rotorua Thermal District in the 1880s. Then, ‘taking the waters’ was as ‘health-giving’ as was visiting nature and its spectacles. By the 1890s New Zealand’s scenic regions attracted a small but steady trickle of tourists, usually high end travellers, including writers Mark Twain and Anthony Trollope. Impressions of scenery were invariably favourable, but some writers were horrified by the widespread destruction of casual forest firings.

The original Department of Tourist and Health Resorts was set up in 1901. Its superintendent was an Australian, T.E. Donne, who disseminated scenic photographs abroad. Donne introduced pedigree deer from the Scottish Highland lodges and is responsible for Roosevelt’s gift of American wapiti, still hunted in Fiordland.



New Zealand was quick to exploit mountain scenery for tourism from the 1890s.
Mitre Peak. 1870s? John Hoyte Ref: A-253-007. Alexander Turnbull Library.

From the 1890s, Alexander Hatrick’s growing fleet of riverboats and associated accommodation targeted tourists for the Whanganui River ‘Rhine of Maori-land’. Climbing tourists were being lured to the early Hermitage at Mount Cook, taken over by the Government in 1895.

As rail links were forged, railway’s scenic tourism possibilities were raised in Parliament by the conservation-minded, who were equally concerned by ‘unnecessary destruction’.

The New Zealand Illustrated, 1899–1905, raised awareness of the picturesque in its graphic photography as well as articles by top local writers.

1887

Trendsetter: Tongariro 1887

In securing Yellowstone for posterity in 1872, American conservationists set up the world model for national parks, rapidly imitated in Canada and, within a few years, New Zealand.

The idea of preserving the scenic values of the central North Island volcanic plateau had been around from the 1870s. However, it was the mounting pressure of European land-grabbing that forced the hand of paramount chief Horonuku Te Heuheu, Tūkino IV. In 1887, he made his *tuku* to the Crown. This was to protect, for all time, the *tapu* nature of Ngāti Tūwharetoa's peaks. This led to the proclamation of one of the world's early national parks.

One hundred and twenty-five years ago—and for decades after—such were colonial attitudes in New Zealand, a case had to be made that land for reservation had no economic (farming) value.



In the face of land-lust, protection of those mountain tops therefore passed the double test of non-productivity for Pākehā and of sanctity for iwi.

Gradually, over the years, through the advocacy of conservationists such as our first ecologist, Leonard Cockayne, the park became extended to today's boundaries.

In 1993, it was declared a UNESCO world heritage site, the first in recognition of a culture still practised within its boundaries, as well as for its natural values. It is one of New Zealand's 14 national parks.

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Horonuku Te Heuheu, Tūkino IV, an abiding ancestral presence behind Tongariro National Park. Cowan, James. 1922: *The New Zealand wars: a history of the Maori campaigns and the pioneering period*. Vol.1, p. 374. Government Printer, Wellington.



1888

Late, great, green Victorians

The origins of important social movements are always multi-rooted. It is possible, however, to trace a line from today's considerable community energy around regeneration and species protection back to late Victorian activity.

American events, such as Arbor Day, as well as the British reaction to the squalor engendered by its industrial revolution, gave rise to ideas of both a romantic and health-giving nature. These and other factors, some of them arising directly from Edinburgh's urban renewal endeavours, produced in 1888 the Dunedin and Suburban Reserves Conservation Society. Alexander Bathgate, Dunedin lawyer, poet and Arbor Day enthusiast, was an important figure in its establishment.

Still thriving today, almost 125 years later, as the Dunedin Amenities Society, it is New Zealand's oldest conservation organisation. It began campaigning for the creation of parks and reserves, the planting of trees, both exotic and native, and for 'open air aesthetics'.

Actively involved in early efforts to replant part of the Town Belt, it continues as a watchdog in its preservation of living nature and has been a strong critic of Dunedin City Council.

Similar societies soon followed in Christchurch and Wanganui. In Auckland, the focus was on natives, kauri particularly, while in Taranaki, the preservation of native reserves was often closely associated with old Maori pā, both traditional and gunfighter.



1895

Hauturu: jewel in the crown

Hauturu (Little Barrier) in the Hauraki Gulf was designated as an off-shore island bird sanctuary in 1895 after naturalists pressed for places where endangered species might survive. An extinct andesite volcano, rugged and densely forested, its introduced pigs were soon eradicated; it took another a century before cats were eliminated.

Here was a place where rarities such as stitchbirds, North Island robin, whitehead, bellbird, Cook's petrel, tuatara, giant earthworm and giant wētā might be able to survive in an environment as near to pre-human contact condition as anywhere in New Zealand. Considered to be one of the most important reserves of its kind in the world, it contains some 400 species of native plants and is said to be 'the most intact ecosystem in New Zealand'.

However, acquisition of the sanctuary was complicated. Ngāti Wai chief Tenetahi, who—partly to help pay his Native Land Court costs—was milling kauri on the island, resisted. He cited his Treaty of Waitangi rights and, eventually, after court hearings, was bundled off his island by a bailiff and soldiers. Māori history on the island is considerable and some issues remain alive for Ngāti Wai.

At 2,817 hectares, Hauturu's landmass makes it one of New Zealand's largest offshore island reserves.

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**Little Barrier Island (Hauturu)—
most intact ecological treasure
of all that DOC administers.
Image database DOC**

1903

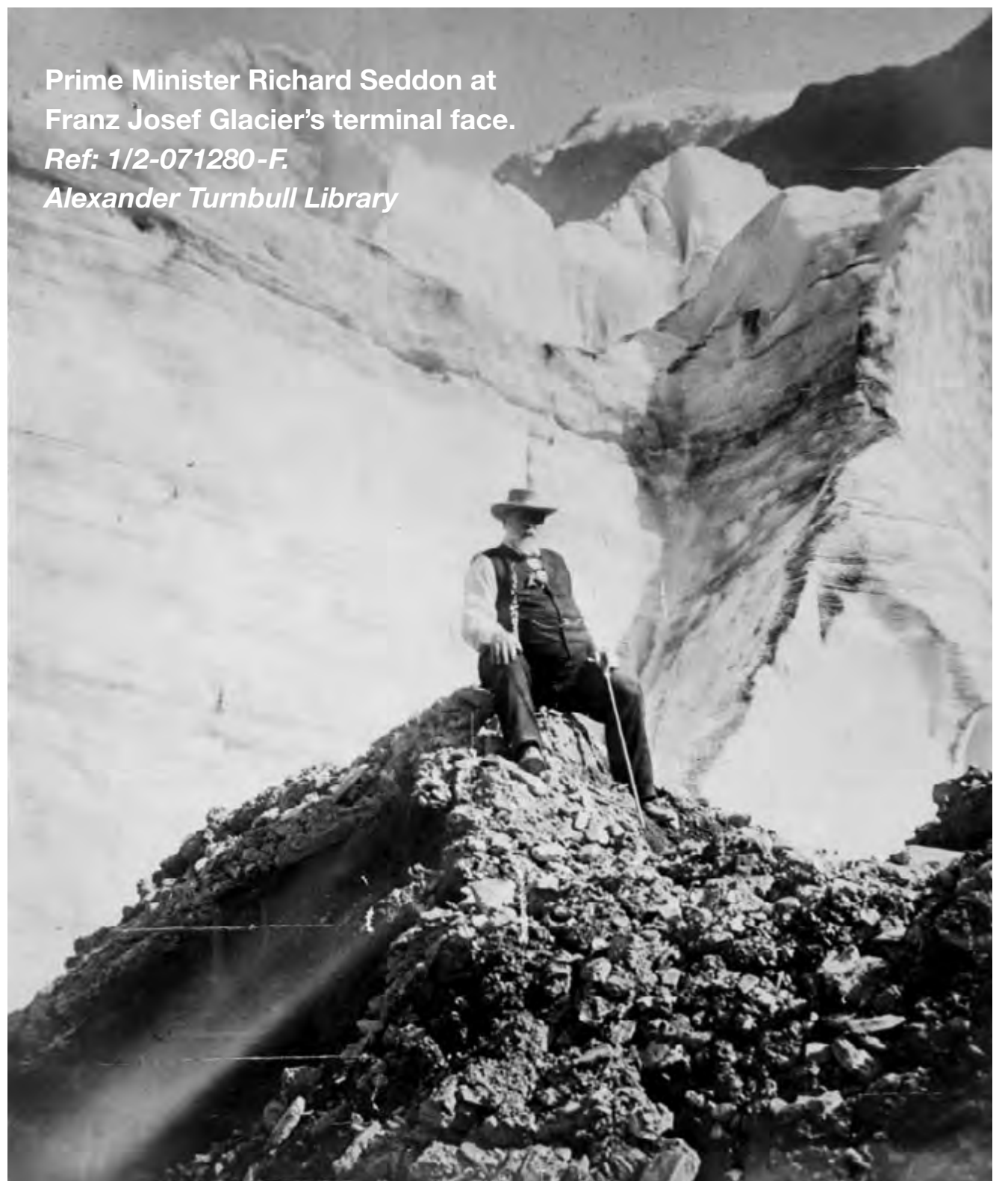
Scenery Preservation Act

Premier ‘King Dick’ Seddon led the Liberal Government that, broadly speaking, brought New Zealand out of the colonial and into the modern era. In ‘God’s Own Country’ Seddon’s boosterism promoted New Zealand’s beauty and identity to the world.

However, mounting scientific papers and reports on losses of indigenous plants and animals and romantic expression, from the paintings of former Premier William Fox to the writings of Blanche Baughan, coalesced with political pragmatism in an impulse to secure a bit of New Zealand. Sympathy for the heritage perspective of conserving Māori sites was also evident within the Government, albeit for that of a ‘dying race’.

Tourism and recreation were further reasons for preservation, underpinned by the belief that picturesque and heritage landscapes needed to be in public hands for public good, not for private gain. Liberal MP Harry Ell, who advocated for forest retention, water and soil conservation, reserves and afforestation, campaigned for systematic reservation to

Prime Minister Richard Seddon at
Franz Josef Glacier’s terminal face.
Ref: 1/2-071280-F.
Alexander Turnbull Library



accompany settlement. Apart from his noted reserves on Christchurch’s Port Hills, he was a major influence in establishing reserves nationally.

In 1903, the Liberals passed the Scenery Preservation Act, the first law to protect land for its aesthetic, scientific, historic and natural values. Land clearances continued—in the same year, the Scenery Preservation Act’s polar opposite, the Swamp Settlement Act was passed.

The Government set aside £100,000 and a Scenery Preservation Commission was set up to recommend sites under the Act. While maintenance and care were often at issue, by 1940, New Zealand had a national network of more than 1,000 reserves, in addition to its national parks.



The Forest Service adopted a multiple-use approach to forestry. Pureora Forest Park. Les Molloy, Image database DOC

1921

Forest Service: multiple use

It was not so much the picturesque as the principle of ‘wise use’ that gave rise to the New Zealand Forestry League in 1916. As fires continued to destroy forests to make way for farming, late Victorian and Edwardian New Zealand debated forests in the chambers and journal of the philosophical societies.

Knowledge from as far afield as France and the United States, as well as Australia and India was used to argue the importance of climatic forests, the risks of soil losses, flooding and of timber scarcity as well as intrinsic conservation values.

The Forestry League, founded by Rangitikei farmer Sir James Wilson and international forestry expert Sir David Hutchins, was motivated by all of these concerns, as well as the importance of farm and state forestry. It also sought protection status for Waipoua kauri forest.

Hutchins, with experience in France, India, South and West Africa, went on to write the report that led to the formation of New Zealand’s Forest Service in 1921. Another league member, surveyor Edward Phillips Turner, was an informed protector of native plants and animals and was responsible for several reserves on the Whanganui and Mokau rivers.

Many of these interests and concerns shaped the role of the Forest Service, whose first head, Canadian MacIntosh Ellis, shared similar views. The Service grew into a highly trained operation, its expertise supported by an active research programme in production forestry and pest control. Like Lands and Survey, it provided increasingly for public use of its holdings until restructuring in the mid-1980s.



Sanderson—Royal Forest
and Bird Protection Society of
New Zealand archives



Guthrie-Smith—Sir Charles Fleming:
Photograph; Ref: 1/2-112218-F.
Alexander Turnbull Library



Moncrieff—Kingsford
Collection 124247/6 Nelson
Provincial Museum

1923–1940s

Three minds: a century of influence

As conservationists of great influence, three contemporaries, with surprising commonalities, can make considerable claim to such a title. Herbert Guthrie-Smith (1861–1940), Val Sanderson (1866–1945) and Pérrine Moncrieff (1893–1979) corresponded and supported one another in ways that secured considerable conservation benefits for the nation.

Of the three, only Sanderson was born in New Zealand. Both Guthrie-Smith and Moncrieff were well-born and well-educated, of privileged British stock. Both were authors, the former's notable works, *Tutira* and *Sorrows and joys of a New Zealand naturalist*, particularly, have long outlived their author. Moncrieff's *New Zealand birds and how to identify them*, sold steadily over five editions. Sanderson, after an early successful business life, confined writing to his campaigns.

All three had strong backgrounds in hunting. This they eschewed, as their deep love of birds motivated protection of native species. Each devoted considerable resources,

financial and physical, to the seemingly impossible goals they set themselves.

Sanderson advocated for the managed protection of Kapiti Island as a legal sanctuary. When government continued to stall, Sanderson organised the group that, in 1923, founded the Native Bird Protection Society, later the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society. He held high office in it until his death.

Apart from personally securing several important reserves in the Nelson area, Moncrieff's determination ensured the creation of Abel Tasman National Park, as well as reserving Lake Rotorua, and Maruia forest land. Guthrie-Smith's Tutira station and lake is today a reserve and education centre. One of his sayings, 'I would devastate a shire to save a species', sums up the passion of the trio.

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Sanderson, Guthrie-Smith and Moncrieff:
today's conservation built on their
shoulders.

1931

Recreation and conservation

Conservation achievements in New Zealand owe much to the influence of outdoor recreation interests—beginning with early naturalists from the latter 19th century, closely followed by the growing requirements of mountaineering—sporting and tourist—and, after WWI, tramping’s influence.

The New Zealand Alpine Club was originally formed in 1891 and is one of the world’s oldest. The Tararua Tramping Club was founded in 1919, as transport opportunities helped liberate a post-war generation into the beauty and challenge of the mountains. But a tramper might also double as a geologist, naturalist, hunter, fisher or climber. Other, similar organisations soon followed suit around the country. By 1931, tramping and alpine clubs had coalesced into the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand.

The intrinsic value of wild nature, strongly affirmed by American philosophers John Muir and Henry Thoreau, has found some of its strongest supporters in the Federation. Its 12,000 membership today includes skiers, mountain bikers,



canoeists and hunters, as well as climbers. The Federation’s long history of policy development and lobbying has often meant securing both its own interests and protecting critical sites, forests and landscapes as well as threatened species.

It influenced the long-delayed National Parks Act 1952, ended the bounty offered for dead kea in South Westland, fought the Government’s beech forests utilisation scheme and advocated for the creation of new, and the extension of old, national parks and protected areas. Together with Forest and Bird, recreation represents the most vigorous and active membership of the environmental umbrella organisation, ECO.

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Easter trampers—Mangatepopo Huts 1928
(Ian Powell album—Hutt Valley Tramping Club photo archive); and Christmas trip, Aspiring N.P, HVTC 1960s.
(John Rundle collection)

1945–1953

Closing on the problems: Wildlife Branch

Within days of the end of WWII, the Wildlife Division of the Department of Internal Affairs was planned. Major Yerex, who had held the old deer culling service together during the war, was in charge.

There was no Wildlife Act until 1953. Under the 1922 Animals Protection and Game Act, a ‘mixed bag’ if ever there was one, almost all native birds were given legal protection, except those perceived as threats to farming or exotic fisheries: kea, hawks and shags. Trout hatcheries and hunting regulation were also a departmental matter.

Responsibility for culling of deer and goats continued with the Branch, which also retained a considerable role in fisheries acclimatisation at hatcheries at Rotorua and Southern Lakes acclimatisation districts. Finally, however, New Zealand had a body dedicated largely to the protection of native wildlife.

Early species protection work
began with the Wildlife Service.
Image database DOC



Technical training was introduced and research, conducted by both field staff and, now, academically qualified biologists, was developed. The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research also began to build expertise in related areas under Kazimierz Wodzicki.

Furthermore, a relationship between the scientific ‘public’ and the Division was forged with an advisory Native Bird Preservation Committee, later the Fauna Advisory Protection Council. It was led by ornithological luminary, Dr Robert Falla, Director of the Dominion Museum. Two other members were Dr Charles Fleming, whose career in bird research was matched only by work in wider science, and Edgar Stead, whose legacy enabled him to achieve world ranking as an ornithologist, competitive shooter and rhododendron cultivator. In 1939, Falla, Fleming and Stead were foundation officers of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.



1952

Parks and rangers

Sixty years ago the National Parks Act was finally passed, with bipartisan agreement after several attempts over four decades. At that time, 1952, New Zealand had just five national parks and eight rangers. While reserves were abundant, the only national parks were Tongariro, Egmont, Arthur's Pass, Abel Tasman and Fiordland. Now, for the first time, the country had one Act for all parks and a unified parks system protecting special landscapes and native flora and fauna.

The first few rangers were deployed in national parks by parks boards, under the 1892 Land Act. In 1958, Ray Cleland, who had been the first ranger at Arthur's Pass, was appointed supervisor of national parks. He began to standardise terms and conditions, uniforms and insignia and, by

1965, a National Park Rangers' Association was formed. Ten years later, a formal ranger training programme was launched, by which time the service had over 100 men and was highly respected.

Their work was wide-ranging, meeting the demands of everything from search and rescue to conservation, tourism and hut and track building. By 1975, they were also involved in national park training in Nepal and Peru. The ranger service was terminated when DOC was formed in 1987; the term 'ranger' was revived in 1998.

— Botanical values inspired its protection —
Arthur's Pass National Park, created 1929.
Rob Suisted