

Clark Hut at Haast Pass circa 1940.
Photo: Thelma Kent

HISTORICAL TREASURES

Forest & Bird has teamed up with the National Library of New Zealand to make our oldest journals freely available on *Papers Past*. By Casey Spearin.



Thanks to a generous partnership with the National Library of New Zealand/Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, we are delighted to announce the earliest of Forest & Bird's popular magazine will be published online as part of our 100th anniversary history project.

The first issues from 1924 to 1945, spanning the period before the Great Depression to the end of World War II, will be available on *Papers Past* later this year.

From its fledgling years nearly a century ago, the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society matured into one of Aotearoa's leading voices for conservation. Its magazine is New Zealand's oldest continuously published record of environmental and social history.

A full set of the past 96 years is held at Forest & Bird's Wellington office, but they aren't digitised or properly indexed. Some hard copies are available on request from the National Library, but researchers have to visit in person to view them.

"We realised we were guardians of an incredibly valuable resource spanning nearly 100 years of New Zealand's conservation history, but few people knew the journals existed or were able to access them. Finding information about specific individuals, places, or species was also difficult without a searchable database," says Forest & Bird's editor Caroline Wood.

"Working with the National Library means we can digitise the oldest magazines on the *Papers Past* website, making them searchable online, and the content will be freely usable under a creative commons licence. It will also secure these fragile historic documents for the future."

Originally titled *Birds*, the magazine focused on New Zealand's native forests and bird life, and educating adults and children in the importance of conserving them. Over time, the Society evolved into a powerful political force that also advocated for strong environmental legislation, ocean protection, freshwater, and the climate.

The National Library identified Forest & Bird's journal as being a priority publication to add to *Papers Past*, and we've been fortunate to have the expertise of its digitisation advisor Melanie Lovell-Smith to guide us through the copyright clearance process (see right).

"This is an exciting project that will make it easy for researchers and the public to search this early publication, and it will increase the amount of scientific and conservation material that New Zealanders can freely access," says Bill Macnaught, National Librarian.

"We expect these records to be a valuable resource for researchers, students, and the public alike as they explore New Zealand's rich history of environmental conservation."

Forest & Bird was founded in 1923 by the late Captain

Val Sanderson at the suggestion of former prime minister Sir Thomas Mackenzie.

"Our journal has been a voice for nature for nearly a century. Our foundation members understood the power of publicity – using words, images, and storytelling – to make the public aware of Aotearoa's rapidly disappearing native forests and birds," says chief executive Kevin Hague.

"While they weren't able to save everything, New Zealand's environment would be in a far worse position without their efforts. They stand as eye witnesses to tipping points in history, and we hope this project will help shed light on their passion and achievements.

"We are immensely grateful to the National Library for recognising the value of these early publications and for their assistance in making their digitisation a reality."

Poetry was a frequent staple of the early magazines, and painter Lily Daff's beautiful illustrations graced the covers for many years. They also featured liberal use of extracts from books and scientific papers from all over the world.

Over the Society's first 20 years, the journal's pages record the efforts of New Zealand's past conservation heroes who fought steadily against acclimatisation societies, the perils of deer and other introduced predators, forest logging, and the destruction of nature all over the country.

As Kevin Hague said, when closing this year's Courageous Conservation conference, we can scarcely imagine what the state of nature would be like in New Zealand without their years of dedication.

*Papers Past is a goldmine of information, with millions of pages of digitised historical content from all over New Zealand. See <https://natlib.govt.nz/collections/a-z/papers-past>.

Pilot Officer H. M. Hoadley, of Havlock North, a member of the Forest and Bird Protection Society, was killed in action. He loved all nature especially the birds of his native land New Zealand. His last letter expressed his admiration of the glorious trees of the English countryside. His mother has elected to become a Life member of the Society as a memorial to her nature-loving son.



13 Stafford St
Wellington
April 1939

Forest and Bird Protection Society
Dear Sirs,
Could you stop the Pukeko from being shot next month -
Boris Williams - age 11 years
Bill Haddad age 14
Lyle Park age 12
G. Coonan age 12
Ivan Duke age 4
Paul Duke age 12
Barbara Smith age 11
Mervyn Smith age 15
Doreen age 10
Yvonne Dwyer age 9
James Wilson age 12
Neville Jones age 12
James Bird age 14
Stephanie Blackford 9



Pages from the past: soldier's death, May 1941 (top), children's petition, August 1939 (left) and friendship with birds, November 1940.

How can you help?

We are now working on phase 2 of the project, digitising magazines from 1946 to the mid-1970s. Forest & Bird needs to cover the scanning and digitising costs, and, funds permitting, we'd like to employ university students to help us with copyright approvals over the summer. We'd love to hear from anyone interested in making a donation to this legacy project. Please contact Caroline Wood at c.wood@forestandbird.org.nz.

TRACKING CONSERVATION ALLIES ACROSS THE GLOBE

It took many months of painstaking detective work to clear the copyright on the early journals so they could be digitised.

A big thank you to student volunteers Casey Spearin and Madeline Schwass, who had to identify the authors of every photograph, poem, article, extract, and illustration from the first 22 years of magazines.

For every work still in copyright, they tracked down the author, or their descendents, and sought written permission from the copyright holder to digitise their work on *Papers Past*. Luckily, everyone contacted was happy to say "Yes!"

"I'm sure he would be tickled pink!" said the great-grandson of the English poet and novelist John Masefield, who was the Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom from 1930 until 1967.

"We are pleased that (Uncle) John's information is still of value, and proud of his pioneering work", said the family of American John L. Blackford, whose article about the trumpeter swan was republished in the journal after originally appearing in *Nature* magazine.

It's clear that early Forest & Bird members connected with conservation allies fighting to protect nature all over the world. This included the Royal Society for the

Protection of Birds in the UK, and the National Audubon Society, "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, and Harvard and Cornell universities in the US.

"Forest & Bird's work has been influenced by conservation thinkers worldwide since its inception. Writers such as Julian Huxley and John Masefield appear alongside our many local conservation heroes, such as Perrine Moncrieff and Lancelot McCaskill," says Casey, who is studying for a Science in Society masters degree at Victoria University.

"Conservation has been an inter-generational practice for many Forest & Bird supporters. Some families have been members since 1923, and we sincerely enjoyed making contact with their descendents."



Cartoon by Marmaduke Matthews, published November 1939.