Forest & Bird conference creates united front for conservation

Title Forest & Bird (BirdLife in New Zealand) announced recently that there is a growing acceptance that conservation and the protection of our environment must become central to all New Zealanders lives if we are to save our unique environment and secure our economy. A common message among speakers at Forest & Bird?s ?Face Up to the Future? conference in Wellington recently was the need for conservation to become a mainstream issue at the forefront of New Zealand?s social and economic life. The decline of our native animal and plant species, worsening freshwater quality, and growing problems in our marine environment all show that we need to act urgently, Forest & Bird President Andrew Cutler said. ?The wide range of speakers and attendees at our conference, ranging from business people, farmers, and environmentalists all said it is critical we tackle these problems and put sustainability at the heart of everything we do.? ?We have to look after our environment if we want the environment to look after us,? Andrew Cutler said. The broad range of people who attended the conference, including historian and anthropologist Dame Anne Salmond, economist and philanthropist Gareth Morgan, Federated Farmers President Bruce Wills and business representatives showed that conservation is not only the concern of conservationists. ?While we may come from different backgrounds, and while we may not always agree on solutions, we are united by a shared passion and concern for protecting and sustaining New Zealand?s natural environment,? Andrew Cutler said. ?As Gareth Morgan said, our future prosperity should not be measured by GDP. We need a much broader measure of wealth that takes into account other crucial things like clean air and water,? he said. The theme of the conference was about creating a positive vision for the future of New Zealand nature and finding the way to make that vision reality. Forest & Bird plans to do a great deal of work in the next couple of years to flesh out that vision to show New Zealanders what we can achieve if we try. Among the areas that Forest & Bird will be doing a lot of work is the vision for a predator-free New Zealand, better protecting our marine environment, turning around our declining freshwater quality and ensuring there are no further extinctions of our unique species. ?The stereotype that we always oppose developments and industry is out of date and just plain wrong. We recognise that working with industry and business is part of the answer to our conservation crisis, ? Andrew Cutler said. **Subscribe to The BirdLife Pacific Quarterly E-Newsletter**