



Looking over Kaikoura to the Seaward Kaikouras. A local Maori group has proposed National Reserve status for the range.

This unnamed nocturnal gecko (*Hoplodactylus* sp) from the Seaward Kaikoura Range appears restricted to the alpine zone, living on exposed rocky bluffs on the steep tussock and shrub-covered slopes.

Photo: B W Thomas, DSIR Ecology Division

Why are the Kaikouras special? They are scenic and very accessible and therefore important for hunting, tramping and climbing. The ranges have high soil and water protection value in an area of extreme erosion. Apart from the Catlins area, the Kaikoura forest remnants are the largest on the South Island's east coast.

Forests extend in a narrow but continuous belt along the eastern slopes of the Seaward Kaikoura Range north to the Clarence Gorge. They contain fine stands of lowland mixed podocarp and beech forest which include many plants near their southern distribution limits (eg tawa, rangiora, wharangi). In the northern section of the Seaward Kaikoura grow stands of the rare weeping Broom (*Chordospartium stvensonii*). The forest contains most native bird species with only the kaka, weka and kiwi absent. Above the treeline are located the only two known breeding colonies of the Hutton's shearwater (*Puffinus huttoni*) — one on a reserve, the other on leasehold land. These colonies contain approximately 50,000 active burrows. A variety of giant weta and a special gecko occur only on the range.

The Seaward Kaikoura Range is a patchwork "quilt" of land tenure with blocks of unalienated Crown land, a Nature Reserve, State Forest and Scenic Reserves. A continuous reserve which preserves the range's main landform and biological features would also involve other leasehold Crown land extending to the 2,610 metre summits of the range.

A continuous, large reserve would ensure that the area is managed effectively and would permit unrestricted access along the range.

On 14 May 1984, the Lands and Survey Department announced the surrender of 3,422 hectares of land from a Seaward Kaikouras Crown lease, while the balance of the leasehold land containing good grazing land was freeholded. The retired land has now been gazetted as the Mount Manukau Scenic Reserve.

Lands and Survey Marlborough Commissioner, Ian Mitchell, sees this reserve as "the key to a tentative proposal for a chain of reserves along the top of the Seaward Kaikouras". Such forward-looking policies are an example for management of the rest of the South Island high country.

*Kaikoura resident and keen trampler.



MARLBOROUGH'S KAIKOURA RANGES

by Barry Dunnett*

On a fine day any visitor to the Kaikoura coast cannot fail to be drawn by the beauty of the scene. Nowhere in New Zealand does the sea touch so close to such high mountain tops.

The two ranges of the Kaikouras form great parallel humps which dominate the area. The ranges have been rounded through erosion with winter snows covering extensive screes of summer. The Seaward Kaikouras nurture a valuable remnant of the great forests which once covered almost the whole area. They also host many plants and animals which occur only in Marlborough province, while some are even restricted to the Kaikoura ranges.

Here is an area ripe for preservation. Recent changes to Government high country policy have prompted local people to make several reserve proposals for public lands in the Kaikouras. Last year a local Maori

group, the Kaikoura Tribal Committee, proposed National Reserve status for the Seaward Kaikoura Range. In 1983, the North Canterbury National Parks and Reserves Board identified a large section of the Seaward Kaikoura Range as a possible National Reserve. Soon after, a detailed submission was presented to the Board by three Kaikoura residents, supported by Marlborough MP Doug Kidd; Federated Mountain Clubs and the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society.

Although these proposals recommended reserve status only for the Seaward Kaikoura Range, Forest and Bird submitted that an enlarged reserve to include the Inland Kaikoura Range, with a linking corridor across the Clarence Valley, should be investigated. At present the reserve proposal is being studied by a sub-committee of the North Canterbury Parks and Reserves Board.