Preface

The Aims and Scope of this Book

The central North Island of New Zealand is one of the most significant sites of natural and cultural history interest in New Zealand. It has a rich Maori history, followed by a period of well-documented European exploitation of the seemingly inexhaustible resources of high-quality native timber in the mountains west of Lake Taupo. Over time, a vigorous forestry industry established many sawmills handling huge volumes of logs, accompanied by some important early experiments in forestry science, silviculture and selection logging.

Forestry has long been a vital source of rural employment and timber products supporting the development history of New Zealand. At the same time, forestry has contributed directly or indirectly to extensive biodiversity loss, in complex and inter-related ways. Conservation of biodiversity in the last remaining tall forests is critical for ensuring fully representative environmental preservation.

In the 1970s, Pureora Forest, the largest remaining area of native forest in the west Taupo region, was the location of a pivotal moment in New Zealand conservation history, focussed on an iconic endemic bird at severe risk of extinction. Since the last of the timber mills was closed in the 1970s and early 1980s, Pureora Forest Park (PFP) has become a nationally important site for experiments in conservation research and management, practical ecological restoration and outdoor recreation.

Development Versus Conservation

Conflicts arising between people and wildlife came into sharp focus in the timber industry at Pureora in 1978, when the rumbling of protests against continued logging of prime conservation habitat suddenly became a roar that the Government could no longer ignore. A series of well-publicised and dramatic tree-sitting demonstrations forced the Minister of Forests to break two binding legal contracts in order to declare a moratorium on logging.

The competition for press attention and public sympathy between aggrieved loggers and environmentalists over the next few years was intense,

but PFP was gazetted in 1978, and the moratorium was made permanent in 1981. In 1987, the previously powerful New Zealand Forest Service was itself disbanded, and control of the park passed to the newly created Department of Conservation.

The Pureora story is nationally significant because it illustrates in one compact area a fundamental conflict of interests that applies in many other contexts. This book discusses the events that opened up important practical challenges and moral dilemmas associated with the massive historical deforestation of the central North Island forests; the 1978 wildlife conservation interventions in forests available for logging; the human consequences of radical decisions on forest conservation; and the dramatic changes in attitudes to conflicts over forest use, leading to the establishment and management of the Forest Park.

We begin with the geological history of the area, especially the impact of recent volcanism, and the species of fauna and flora protected within the park. We look at the questions of fundamental ecology crucial to developing effective management solutions: the controversies surrounding the establishment of a Recreational Hunting Area on Conservation land, and of pig-hunting with dogs in areas that could still be supporting kiwi; at the increasingly difficult challenges posed by the spread of introduced predators (especially rats and stoats): their impacts on native species, and how to control them.

We discuss how a massive effort to understand the behavioural ecology of the introduced Australian brushtail possum has informed the national campaign to minimise the spread of bovine tuberculosis and protect the forests from browsing damage; and how the attitudes and actions of foresters, hunters, urban environmentalists and amenity managers differ with respect to the arguments for and against the use of 1080 poison to achieve effective landscape-scale control of possums and rats.

All the factual information we present has been taken from the sources cited in the references, preferably the published literature. We have had access to important unpublished official archives, including the hitherto unknown significant details of the massive compensation packages paid to the timber companies after the moratorium forced the cancellation of their logging contracts. Where necessary, we have also quoted from newspapers because, although we are well aware that non-refereed reports are not always reliable, they are often the only sources of contemporary information about events that were not recorded anywhere else.

The text is designed to be easy to dip into by the many, many people—the timber workers and their families, foresters, scientists, hunters, birdwatchers, photographers, mountain bikers and trampers—who have loved, worked in or visited, and/or fought for Pureora over the years. We provide a fascinating background story for educational groups, especially those based at the Pureora Forest Lodge and the Tihoi Venture School, and users of the new Timber Trail for cyclists and walkers.

We quote a tiny selection of the hundreds of people-centred stories and historic illustrations known to us. Many more are available from knowledgeable local historians Ken Anderson, Ron Cooke, Audrey Walker and their many colleagues. Citations to these invaluable sources often appear here

and will lead interested readers to masses of further information held in public libraries.

We aim to inform the academic community by providing all the necessary references, but have not attempted to provide a comprehensive review of biodiversity conservation in native forest generally. Rather, we aim to demonstrate how ecological study, often long-term, combined with a respect for people and for natural history, plus a flexible, interdisciplinary approach to current scientific priorities, can be welded into a consistently effective strategy to answer the pressing forest-ecology questions of our time.

Place Names

This book is about the eastern half of the King Country centred on Pureora Mountain. Pureora Forest village lies in the northern half of PFP, between the northern Hauhungaroa Range and the southern Rangitoto Range (Fig. 0.1).

Place names used both by Maori and by Pakeha (Europeans) usually reflect the perspectives of their authors. Originally, only the southern half of the Hauhungaroa Range was given that name, and the northern part was called Hurakia (and is so-called on many old maps and records). The two ranges meet at the central watershed, Weraroa. In Pakeha times, the entire range has taken the name Hauhungaroa, and the name Hurakia has been reserved for some of the westerly ridges making up the former Hurakia State Forest.

When the North Island Main Trunk Railway was being constructed, Europeans referred to the Pureora area as the Rangitoto-Tuhua country, since those were the ranges most visible from the railway route. Later, Auckland timber interests called it the Mangapehi bush, because that was the origin of the timber being cut by the mills at Mangapehi and sent to Auckland on the railway, whereas southern timber interests called it the Taumarunui bush or the Tuhua country, which was closer to Wellington. Looked at from the Lake Taupo side, it became the west Taupo ranges, and the Forest Research Institute at Rotorua thought of it as the west Taupo forest. All these names refer to the subject of the book, home of one of the largest blocks of continuous North Island forest remaining after 1900.

To everyone who knows it, Pureora is a very special place, and its story is well worth the telling.

Glossary and Abbreviations

For a note on our use of the Maori language, a General and Maori glossary, and lists of abbreviations and of scientific names of animals and plants mentioned in the text, please refer to the Appendices.

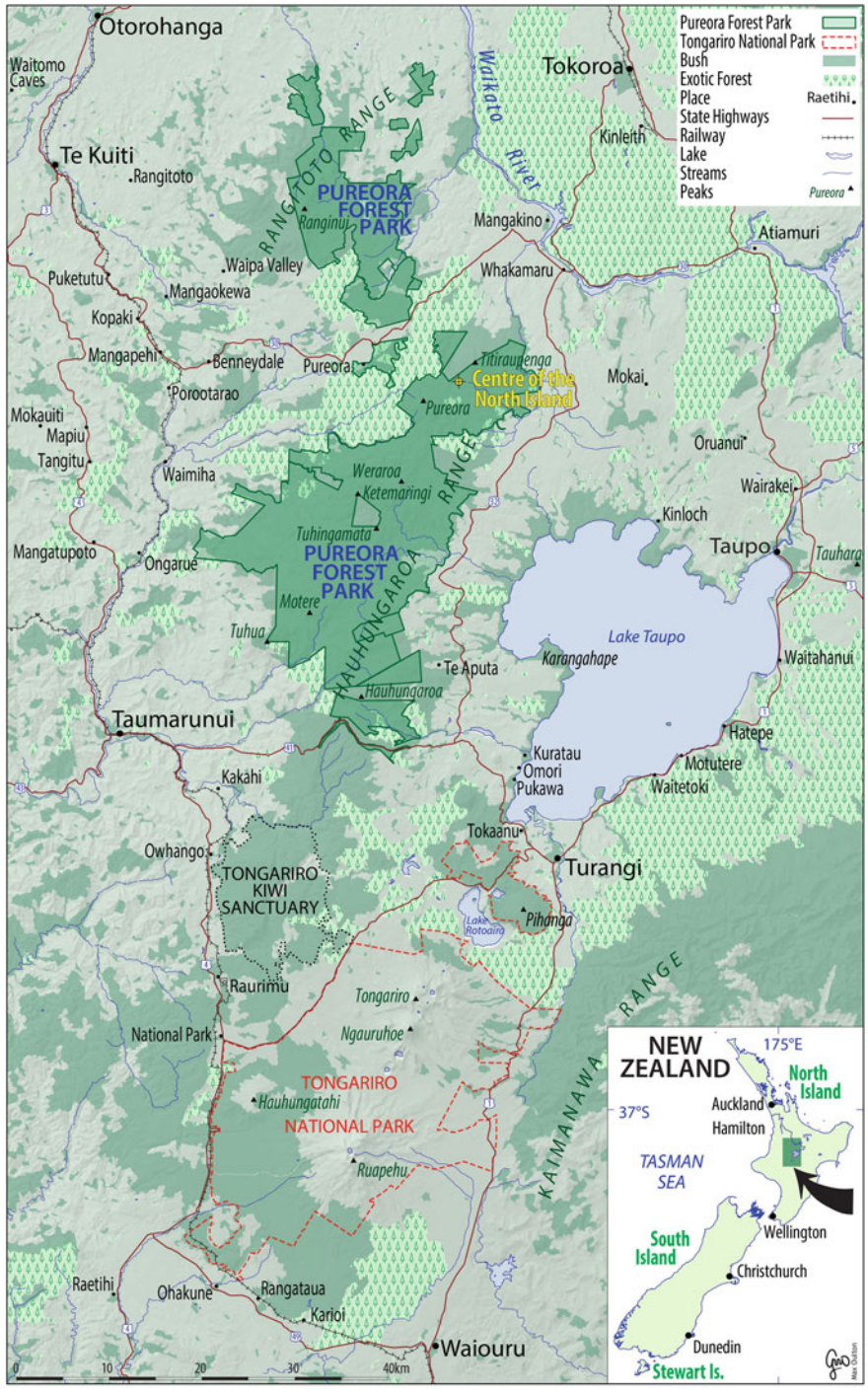


Fig. 0.1 Location of Pureora and the surrounding country, central North Island, New Zealand. The boundaries of forest areas (native and exotic), Pureora Forest Park, Tongariro Forest Kiwi Sanctuary and Tongariro National Park, roads (with their State Highway numbers) and the North Island Main Trunk Railway are shown, plus prominent ranges, peaks and rivers. Settlements mentioned in the text are marked here or on later, larger scale maps. All details shown as of 2014. *Max Oulton*

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