

Conservation Policies Warped Due to 1080

“The Third Wave - Poisoning the Land” by Bill Benfield

Wairarapa organic winemaker, architect, conservationist and angler Bill Benfield is angry about 1080 and the resulting warping of conservation in New Zealand.

Of his recently published book "The Third Wave - Poisoning the Land" he says if there is any message he has endeavoured to get through, it is that conservation in New Zealand is nothing about saving forests and fauna. "Instead, as the corporate statement of the government's Animal Control Products that distributes 1080 quite clearly states, is about maintaining a roughly \$120 million a year government owned poisoning industry."

Bill Benfield says the public has been fed the sop of a crisis in conservation through campaigns such as "Save the Kiwi" and "Save the Kakapo."

"Both campaigns hide an incredibly cynical corruption of conservation. The sooner it ends, the better," he says.

And a poison policy and regime is the agent of destruction. "DOC is imposing on our forests a silence of death by saturating them with 1080," he says.

"Poison is blind, and 1080 kills any creature that requires oxygen to metabolise its food; not only that, it kills slowly and cruelly. That includes all forest birds and insects." Insects are vital to the breakdown of leaf litter and working it into the soil, so even the health of the forest itself is under attack from 1080.

The poison kills some species but not others. "Certainly both possum and rats are severely knocked back by 1080, possums usually take years to recover, but rats recover in a year or less. Stoats are not scavengers, and so are little affected, there is even evidence they are more common as a consequence of 1080 poisoning."

"There is a massive overkill that is being applied to our forests. Native birds are a major kill."

He tells of a 1,200 hectare site in North Otago, where searchers went in soon after a poisoning operation and collected and grid referenced every dead bird they could find. At a pest management strategy meeting in Christchurch in 2009, Landcare scientists estimated the total bird kill from the operation to be around 10,000 birds.

"That is four to five times greater than the potential possum population of the block. That is why New Zealand has a crisis in its conservation, and the sooner 1080 is stopped the better," he says.

Footnote: *"The Third Wave - Poisoning the Land"* by Bill Benfield is available from Tross Publishing, P O Box 22143, Khandallah, Wellington, price \$30. E mail trosspublishing@hotmail.co.nz