

Other: **Biosecurity, Environmental Issues broadly**

26. Despite planning for it a number of years ago, Marlborough has yet to commence work on a Marlborough Biodiversity Strategy. We have had conversations with the environmental team and are aware they are waiting on direction from the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity, expected some time this year. A Biodiversity Strategy is a significant body of work that requires strong community engagement, and an interface with science and matauranga Maori.
27. Marlborough has the bones of what needs to be shaped into a biodiversity strategy - driven by some of the key issues included in the Kotahitanga mote Taiao strategy, and through Te Mana-o te Taiao - Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy.
28. Even without the direction to be provided by the NPSIB, sufficient guidance exists through the above strategies, and we urge Council to ensure the Regional Biodiversity Strategy is placed on a pathway towards achievement and receives the funding it needs through to completion. A Marlborough Biodiversity Strategy will also include those plant and animal pests that were beyond the scope of the Marlborough Regional Pest Management Plan.
29. As noted earlier, Marlborough includes ecosystems, plants and habitats that make South Marlborough one of the five most important sites of endemism in Aotearoa New Zealand. The partially completed surveys of significant natural areas need to be completed.
30. Monitoring work shows an underinvestment in the maintenance of biodiversity at these sites, with a number of them in decline. A 2016 monitoring report undertaken by Council in a number of dryland areas within Marlborough showed that of the 165 sites identified, only 19 of those sites were managed in any way. Monitoring of 44 of the unmanaged sites showed that 88% of them were in a Fair or Fair/Good state. Of the condition trend, 53% were stable, but worryingly 36% were either stable/deteriorating or deteriorating. Only 11% showed signs of improvement. More must be done to protect our overall general decline in biodiversity in Marlborough - especially in these most vulnerable ecosystems.
31. Marlborough also has very important river systems that need protection and restoration. In particular the Wairau River is a key waterway for the district, as well as being internationally/nationally/regionally significant as a braided river waterbody. Much more could and should be done in terms of protection and restoration of the river from weeds and pests. Its place as a home for wildlife - both aquatic and avian - should be a major undertaking by Council.
32. We recognise the important coastal/marine ecosystems and their associated species within the Marlborough Sounds as a part of Marlborough that has major biodiversity benefits - from sheltered harbours through to ocean currents, migratory routes, and some very important estuaries. We also note that some of the area suffers from weed problems in addition to the wilding conifer control programme.
33. Forest & Bird is actively involved in the Te Hoiere Catchment Project, and we are fully supportive of the investment and resources into that body of work. It stands as an example for the rest of the district in terms of future undertaking. Water quality in the catchment, although not as bad as elsewhere in the country, was poor in places. Yet the catchment holds very important natural values that need protecting. This work is pivotal and ongoing.
34. Forest & Bird is also involved with the South Marlborough Landscape Restoration Trust and is very pleased to see the increased investment in wilding conifer control throughout the district, and across the country - with significant investments into critical areas like Molesworth and dryland landscapes. We are complementary to the work in Marlborough Sounds, and see the different ecologies as having very different challenges - although our goals are very similar. Council can look at opportunities to address problems where they are not identified as a national priority, but certainly have ramifications for biodiversity and ecosystems within the region. We urge Council to continue to invest in supporting the work of these Trusts, and to be enablers of additional work.
35. Forest & Bird is involved in numerous projects through Marlborough District including the Te Hoiere Bat Recovery Project, the East Coast Protection Group, Grovetown Lagoon, Kaipupu Point and the Picton Dawn Chorus to name a few. Our members are grateful for support given by the Council, but backing it up with a Strategy and then prioritised funding, would be an additional and important step.

36. Finally, biodiversity outputs are good, but without compliance, monitoring and enforcement, the efforts of many, the planning rules approved by the Council, and feedback into various processes, comes unstuck. Improved investment should be made into this important council function.