

## NEIL HENDERSON - AN OBITUARY

Neil Henderson died suddenly in Christchurch on 13 October 1976 from injuries received in a motorcycle accident. His death is a great loss, not only to his family and friends but also to his colleagues in the Zoology Department, University of Canterbury and to the conservation movement in New Zealand. The brief biography which follows cannot do justice to Neil as a person, his warmth and humanity are not easily described although readily appreciated, but our few words are intended as a sincere tribute to him and an acknowledgement of his assured place in our memories.

After leaving school in his home town of Otatara, Neil had several jobs, including one as a Primary School teacher. He did not feel entirely satisfied with teaching as a career, so he enrolled at the University of Otago, where he successfully completed a B.Sc. in Zoology (1973) and a Diploma of Science (1974). In 1975 he moved northwards to Christchurch and commenced work for an M.Sc. in Zoology at the University of Canterbury. At the time of his death he was nearing the end of field work connected with his research on the ecology of housemice (*Mus musculus*) in different habitats.

Neil's decision to return to university after his venture into teaching was because of his desire to learn more about ecological problems so that he could teach others in New Zealand about the need for conservation of natural resources. He had a great love for the outdoors and was very keen on tramping, climbing and photography. His concern for conservation was expressed still further by his membership of Otago Ecology Action and his chairmanship of their Recycling Committee. In Christchurch he was a member of the Values Party and strongly supported their philosophy and ideals.

Neil's knowledge of New Zealand's flora and fauna was comprehensive, and a shared excursion into the bush became an instructive as well as an enjoyable experience. He felt strongly that action is needed now in National Parks, if wilderness areas, so far relatively untouched even by introduced ungulates, are to be retained in pristine condition. Unfortunately, Neil did not live to see whether his goal, the preservation of New Zealand's flora and fauna for future generations, will be achieved - but if all follow his example of devotion to this cause it will be, someday.

B.W. & M.C.C.