



# ENNZ: Environment and

# Nature in New Zealand

## James Beattie, 'Greener Pastures? Future Research Topics on New Zealand's Environment'

### Introduction

Mountains of valuable material lies in archives, newspapers, art galleries and private holdings waiting for eagle-eyed and enthusiastic scholars of New Zealand's environment to use! The following comprises a list of possible thesis topics for students interested in the history of science, medical history, historical geography and environmental history, with a particular emphasis on the latter. Rather than being an exhaustive list, it aims instead to stimulate interest, and hopefully, will encourage others to contribute similar discussions pieces to the *Newsletter*. The ideas are drawn from my own thoughts and through discussions with Paul Star and Julian Kuzma.

Under each topic I have included a few readings that interested readers can follow up on.

### Introduction to New Zealand Environmental History

No general survey text exists, although a number of collections and individually-themed works provide a reasonable overview of the topic.

### Sources

Eric Pawson and Tom Brooking, eds., *Environmental Histories of New Zealand*, Melbourne, 2002.

'Special Edition: New Zealand', *Environment and History*, 9, 4 (2003).

David Thom, *Heritage: The Parks of the People*, Auckland, 1987.

David Young, *Our islands, Ourselves: A History of Conservation in New Zealand*, Dunedin, 2004.

### Comparative study

More comparative studies situating New Zealand in a regional and/or global setting are welcome. For instance, comparisons between two or more sites which experienced colonialism around about the same time, or even different times, would be fascinating.

Some questions to consider might be: What were the environmental impacts of the Torrens system of land-use in South Australia and the various New Zealand Company settlements? How and in what ways do South African and New Zealand or New Zealand and Canadian environmental history differ and converge? What were the cultural and ecological impacts of similar social



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groups moving to different parts of the globe?

Comparative studies of exchanges of ideas and plant material between different individuals and institutions, such as that written about by Jim Endersby, would also be welcome. That way, actual exchanges between different areas could be charted.

### Sources

Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge, 1986.

Thomas R. Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand*, Cambridge, 1999.

Jim Endersby, "From having no Herbarium." Local Knowledge versus Metropolitan Expertise: Joseph Hooker's Australasian Correspondence with William Colenso and Ronald Gunn', *Pacific Science*, 55, 4 (2001), pp.343-358.

Don Garden, *Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific: an environmental history*, Santa Barbara, 2005.

Grey, Alan H., 'North American influences in the development of New Zealand's landscape, 1800-1935', *New Zealand Geography*, 40, 2 (1984), pp.66-77.

Amiria Henare, *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange*, Cambridge, 2005.

Stephen J. Pyne, *Vestal Fire: An Environmental History, Told through Fire, of Europe and Europe's Encounter with the World*, Seattle and London, 1997.

Libby Robin and Tom Griffiths, 'Environmental History in Australasia', *Environment and History*, 10, 4 (2004), pp. 439-474.

Ian Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: Californian-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860-1930*, Los Angeles and London, 1999.

### Marine histories

David Young's book on the Whanganui River offers an excellent model for anyone wanting to look at New Zealand's waterways. It is particularly strong in the ways in which it brings together European and Māori histories. Marine and estuarine areas also require far more attention. Marine histories have the added advantage in that they can be transnational and often do not take into account political boundaries.

### Sources

David Young, *Woven by Water: Histories from the Whanganui River*, Wellington, 1998.

Claudio Magris, *Danube: A Sentimental Journey from the Source to the Black Sea*, translated by Patrick Creagh, London, 1989.

### Natural theology



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John Stenhouse and I have discovered a plethora of material in this area, enough to occupy several researchers over several lifetimes. Topics range from missionary environmental and medical appraisals and the role of nature symbolism in church services, to the connections between churches and conservation as well as overseas missions and environmental appraisal. Individual biographies of prominent missionary and reverend botanists and their families, such as William Colenso or the Taylors, are badly needed.

### Sources

James Beattie and John Stenhouse, "God and the natural world in nineteenth-century New Zealand", in John Stenhouse, ed., assisted by Antony Wood, *Christianity, Modernity and Culture: New Perspectives of New Zealand History*, Adelaide, 2005, pp.180-203.

### Waitangi Tribunal Reports

More extensive use needs to be made of the rich material collected in these reports. Wai-262 offers a good starting point. Perhaps a study of the way in which these reports are written in terms of their environmental history would be worthwhile.

### Sources

Angela Ballara, *Iwi: The Dynamics of Maori Tribal Organisation from c.1769 to c.1945*, Wellington, 1998.

Cathy Marr, Robin Hodge and Ben White, 'Crown laws, Policies, and Practices in Relation to Flora and Fauna, 1840-1912', Wai-262, Wellington, 2001.

### Biography

Herbert Guthrie-Smith deserves a new biography, as do many other prominent individuals, including, to name but a few: W.T.L. Travers, Leonard Cockayne, etc. Some excellent recent (and not so recent) works include Ross Galbreath's study of Buller, Robin Hodge's article and thesis on Perrine Moncrieff and Mary McEwan's biography of Charles Fleming.

### Sources

Ross Galbreath, *Walter Buller: the Reluctant Conservationist*, Wellington, 1989.

Mary McEwan, *Charles Fleming, Environmental Patriot: A Biography*, Nelson, 2005.

Robin Hodge, 'Seizing the Day: Pérrine Moncrieff and Nature Conservation in New Zealand', *Environment and History*, 9, 4 (November, 2003), pp.407-417.

### Gender and Children

More work needs to be done on the role of missionary wives and female flower illustrators as well as the popularity of botany among women and children.



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Popular nature writing in the press, as explored by Paul Star's masters thesis on T.H. Potts or Tom Griffiths and Stephen in Australia are also good models (see below under **Themed Studies**).

### Sources

Caroline Jordan, *Picturesque Pursuits: Colonial Women Artists & the Amateur Tradition*, Melbourne, 2005.

Julie King, *Flowers into Landscape: Margaret Stoddart, 1865-1934*, Christchurch, 1997.

Colin McGeorge, 'The Presentation of the Natural World in New Zealand Primary Schools, 1880-1914', *History of Education Review*, 23, 2 (1994), pp.32-45.

Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760 to 1860*, Baltimore; London, 1996.

### Site/Institutional Histories

A history of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand is required, as is one for the Department of Lands and Survey. Also, specific studies could focus on public and private gardens, perhaps as sites for the exchange of environmental ideas and material. Mission Stations or shore based whaling stations would be particularly worthwhile areas to study, with the former having the advantage of (usually) extensive archival material.

### Sources

Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World*, New Haven and London, 2000.

Paul Fox, *Clearings: Six Colonial Gardeners and their Landscapes*, Carlton South (Victoria), 2004.

Ross Galbreath, *Working for Wildlife: a history of the New Zealand Wildlife Service*, Wellington, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_, *DSIR: Making Science Work for New Zealand. Themes from the History of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, 1926-1992*, Wellington, 1998.

### Themed Studies

A book on the history of botany in New Zealand is sorely needed. In this respect, David Allan's study on this topic in the UK is one successful model. Works looking into the scientific and artistic contribution of overseas scholars both visiting and studying New Zealand's species overseas are required. These could utilize much of the material already published (some of which is listed below).

### Sources

David Elliston Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: a Social History*, London, 1976.

Ross Galbreath, *Scholars & Gentlemen Both: G.M. & Allan Thomson in New Zealand Science & Education*, Wellington, 2002.



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Ross Galbreath, *Walter Buller: the Reluctant Conservationist*, Wellington, 1989.

Tom Griffiths, *Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia*, Cambridge, 1996.

### War and the Environment

Judith Bennett is writing on the environmental impact of war in the Pacific Islands, and a number of other scholars have pursued this elsewhere. What was the environmental impact of New Zealanders in combat in Europe and North Africa; what demands did the war economy place on New Zealand's environment? What impact did the likes of the Land Wars of the nineteenth century have on New Zealand's environment?

#### Sources

E. Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring*, Cambridge and New York, 2001.

### Food

Food is integral to life, and food production has had a great impact on the way in which societies have been organized and vice versa. How have New Zealand's changing patterns of consumption impacted upon environmental production and quality? What role have international markets played in guiding New Zealand land use? How and why did these markets change?

#### Sources

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, New York, 1991.

David Burton, *The Raj at Table: A Culinary History of the British in India*, London, 1993.

### Art and Environment

How have different artists conceptualized of New Zealand, its people, plants and animals? How have these representations changed over time? What role have artists played in environmental protection or destruction?

#### Sources

James Beattie, 'Alfred Sharpe, Australasia and Ruskin', *Journal of New Zealand Art History*, 25 (December, 2006).

Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Earth*, Carlton South (Victoria), 2000.

Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, Ithaca, 2001.

Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific*, New Haven and London, second edition, 1985.

\_\_\_\_\_, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Carlton, Victoria, 1992.





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### Power and the Environment

How have New Zealand's energy needs changed over its history? Why have these demands changed? What have been the environmental impacts of these changing demands? Much existing work has focused on waterways while Rebecca Priestly is working on a Ph.D. at Auckland University thesis about nuclear energy debates in New Zealand, Jo Whittle on transport and power provision in Auckland.

### Sources

David Young, *Matahina: Power in the Land: The Story of a Hydro Dam in a Dynamic Landscape*, Wellington, 1998.

Michael Bagge, 'Dams Dividing Democracy: Conflict on the Clutha River', in *Landscape/Community*, 117-32.

Aaron Patrick Fox, 'The Power Game: The Development of the Manapouri-Tiwai Point Electro-Industrial Complex, 1904-1969', Ph.D. thesis, University of Otago, 2002.

### Exploration and Environmental History

Researchers need to address many different aspects of exploration, for instance the contribution of military science, both amateur and professional, to the investigation and development of New Zealand's environment.

### Sources

James Braund, 'German-Speaking Scientists in New Zealand 1773-1951: Research Past, Present and Future', in Bernadette Luciano and David G. Mayes, eds., *New Zealand and Europe: Connections and Comparisons* (European Studies, vol. 21), Amsterdam, 2005, pp.173-187.

Giselle Byrnes, *Boundary Markers: Land Surveying and the Colonisation of New Zealand*, Wellington, 2001.

John Dunmore, editor, *New Zealand and the French: Two Centuries of Contact*, Palmerston North, 1997 (second edition).

Olive Wright, editor and translator, *The Voyage of the Astrolabe – 1840: An English rendering of the journals of Dumont d'Urville and his officers of their visit to New Zealand in 1840, together with some account of Bishop Pompallier and Charles, Baron de Thierry*, Wellington, 1955.

### Medicine and Environment

Environment and medicine are strongly connected, yet environmental historians in New Zealand have been somewhat reluctant to explore this. This association was particularly close when ideas about miasma were dominant; but nevertheless have continued to play an important role, such as through air and water pollution, ozone levels, global warming, and so on.

In what ways did Europeans adopt Māori plant classifications and knowledge into Western scientific literature? How were asylums and hospitals landscaped and how was environment thought to influence patients? Have how New



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Zealanders' association with the outdoors impacted upon their health?

### Sources

Gregg Mitman, 'In Search of Health: Landscape and Disease in American Environmental History', *Environmental History*, 10, (April, 2005), pp.184-210.

Paul Moon, *A Tohunga's Natural World: Plants, Gardening and Food*, 2001.

Nicholaas A. Rupke, ed., *Medical Geography in Historical Perspective*, London, 2000.

Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American settlers understood themselves and their land*, New York, 2002.

Pamela Wood, *Dirt: Filth and Decay in a New World Arcadia*, Auckland, 2006.

### Urban Areas

Urban areas remain sorely underrepresented in New Zealand's environmental history. Studies of air pollution, energy and food demands, urban protection societies, etc., are urgently required.

### Sources

J.T. Keyes, 'A Place of its Own: Urban Environmental History', *Journal of Urban History*, 26, 3 (2000), pp. 380-390.

### Transport

Transport has been crucial to New Zealand's economic, social and political history, but so too its environmental history, being responsible for both the intentional and unintentional spread of plants and animals as well as vast landscape alterations. How did coastal vessels impact upon settlement patterns and environments use in these areas? What effect did the spread of roads and railways have upon Māori and European colonization?

How did the extension of telegraphs, and later phone lines, to New Zealand influence the spread, but also the content, of environmental ideas and information?

### Sources

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, New York, 1991.

James Watson, *Links: A History of Transport and New Zealand Society*, Wellington, 1996.