

Key opportunities for improvement:

- Better leadership at all levels (agency, community, industry)
- Increased coordination and integration between agencies, organisations and communities, and within agencies
- Increased public understanding and awareness of biodiversity
- Incentives to change biodiversity on private land from a potential liability to an asset
- Increased encouragement and support of community and individual efforts and improved access to information, advice and funding

Actions

The strategy includes a full list (26) of actions recommended by the advisory group, including the following actions that have been identified as initial priorities:

Action 1.1 & 1.2

Identify and prioritise key sites requiring urgent protection and develop and implement plans for securing protection.

Action 1.4

Increase financial resources available for securing protection of high priority sites.

Action 2.2

Identify and prioritise gaps in restoration initiatives in environments where less than 20% indigenous cover remains.

Action 6.1

Develop an integrated monitoring programme for assessing state of biodiversity in Canterbury.

Action 7.1

Identify and prioritise gaps in information and knowledge about biodiversity across the region.

Implementation

Full implementation of the strategy may take some time, and will require a co-ordinated approach and on-going commitment by strategy partners. To be effective, the strategy will need to be incorporated into various organisations' formal work planning processes, such as Long Term Council Community Plans. However, two key first steps in implementing the strategy are -

- establishment of a Steering Group representative of strategy partners with the mandate and responsibility for strategy implementation
- establishment of a Regional Biodiversity Co-ordinator position to work with the Steering Group, strategy partners and communities to implement the strategy

The strategy sets out a direction for action, but its success will depend on all levels of our community, from agencies to businesses to NGOs to local communities to individuals working together and sharing in the responsibility to sustain our indigenous biodiversity into the future.

The full Biodiversity Strategy for the Canterbury Region and other information about biodiversity can be found at: www.canterburybiodiversity.org.nz



Photo courtesy of Hurunui District Council

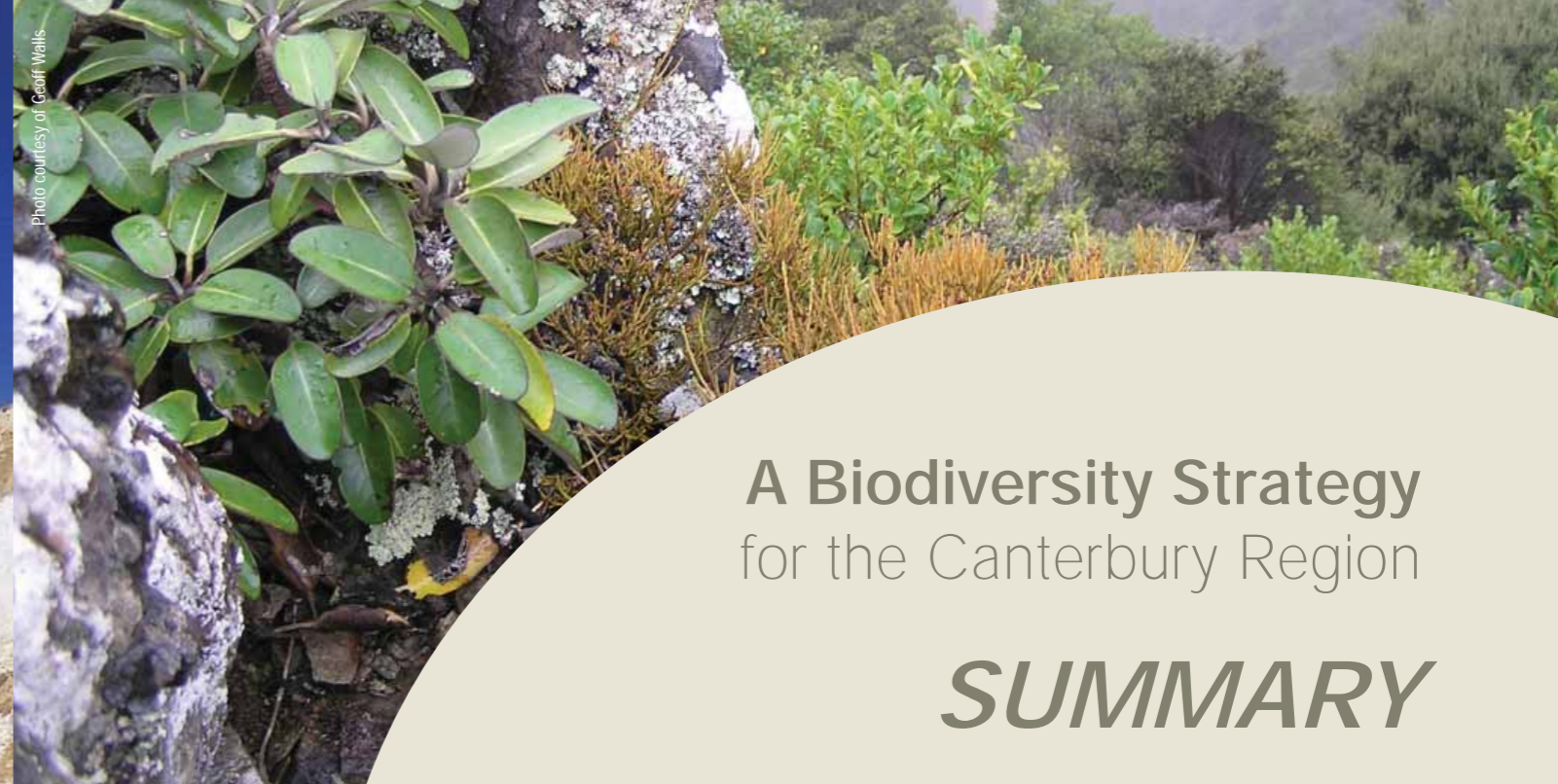


Photo courtesy of Geoff Walls

A Biodiversity Strategy for the Canterbury Region

SUMMARY

What is Biodiversity?

Short for biological diversity, it describes the variety of all biological life – plants, animals, insects, fungi and microorganisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they collectively form. This includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. It forms a fundamental part of the natural heritage and unique character of our nation and its regions.

Why is our biodiversity important?

In New Zealand, our unique biodiversity is internationally important. Many of our native species and the ecosystems in which they live are not found anywhere else in the world. This means that our indigenous biodiversity makes a significant contribution to overall global biodiversity.

Biodiversity also provides a range of benefits that contribute to our lives in both material and other ways, these include:

- Economic benefits in the form of our use of natural resources and ecosystem services that are essential to many primary industries. In addition many tourism opportunities, marketing (a clean green environment) and potential commercial or medical uses also have important economic outputs
- Social benefits in the form of distinctive national/regional identity, recreational opportunities, research potential and education
- Cultural benefits in the form of being able to recognise and continue Maori traditions, knowledge and customary uses

"Natural systems do not recognize human boundaries. As well as protecting our most important places for indigenous biodiversity, we have to manage this biodiversity as best we can in farming and forestry environments and alongside marine industries, while ensuring a sustainable return from these activities.

Sustaining New Zealand's biodiversity will benefit the whole community, through the clean air and water and biological productivity that comes from healthy ecosystems, the pride and profit we get from New Zealand's distinctive biological and green branding, and the enjoyment and sense of identity we derive from our natural world."

New Zealand
Biodiversity Strategy, 2000



Photo courtesy of Geoff Walls



Photo courtesy of Geoff Walls

What is the Canterbury Biodiversity Strategy?

The strategy is a regional strategy and has been developed collaboratively by an Advisory Group made up of representatives from a wide range of stakeholders. It is a non-statutory document, intended to sit alongside existing statutory and other instruments relating to biodiversity. It provides the basis for a more coordinated and cooperative approach to biodiversity and aims to provide guidance and a common focus for biodiversity management initiatives across the region. It should be viewed as a living document which has identified actions and achievable targets that will be reviewed on a regular basis.

The Biodiversity Strategy Advisory Group

The Advisory Group established in 2006 to assist in the development of the strategy is made up of representatives from the following organisations.

Ashburton District Council	Waimate District Council	Fish & Game
Christchurch City Council	Waitaki District Council	University of Canterbury
Environment Canterbury	Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu	Queen Elizabeth II National Trust
Hurunui District Council	Department of Conservation	Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust
Kaikoura District Council	NZ Landcare Trust	Fonterra
Selwyn District Council	Federated Farmers	Manaaki Whenua / Landcare Research
Timaru District Council	Land Information NZ	
Waimakariri District Council	Forest & Bird	

Vision Statement

The Canterbury community values and cares for the region's biodiversity and accepts the shared responsibility to work together to ensure it is sustained and enhanced, both now and into the future.

As a result, there is a full range of healthy ecosystems stretching from the mountains to the sea, reflecting the unique and diverse natural character of the Canterbury region. Our indigenous biodiversity is an integral part of our everyday lives and landscapes, it complements the productivity of our sustainable economy and working lands, and where appropriate, it supports sustainable harvest.



Photo courtesy of Geoff Walls

Goals

Achieving our Vision first requires the setting of a number of Goals. Achieving these Goals will take time, and will require cooperation, coordination and an increase in the resources invested in biodiversity management throughout the region.

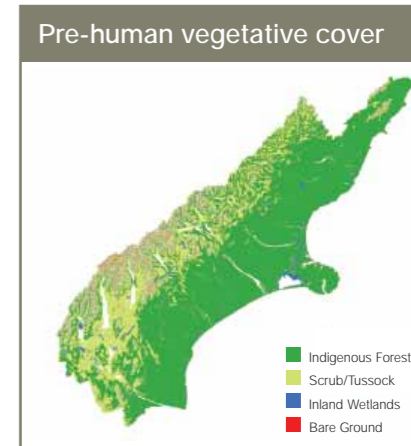
1. Protect and maintain the health of all significant habitats and ecosystems
2. Restore the natural character of degraded indigenous habitats and ecosystems
3. Increase the integration and sustainable use of indigenous species in modified environments (e.g. farm, urban, lifestyle blocks)
4. Enhance public awareness, understanding and support of biodiversity
5. Encourage, celebrate and support action by landowners and communities to protect, maintain and restore biodiversity
6. Improve the range and quality of knowledge and information about Canterbury's biodiversity for its sustainable management

Biodiversity in Canterbury

Canterbury forms a significant part of New Zealand's unique network of biodiversity as it is the largest region in the country, extending from the Southern Alps over the foothills, across the plains, along braided rivers to coastal lagoons and estuaries, dune systems, rocky peninsulas and out to sea.

This large land area, the diverse landforms, and varied climates mean that the region has an extensive and diverse range of ecosystems, that support many species of plants, animals and micro-organisms.

However, like the rest of New Zealand, there have been significant losses in indigenous biodiversity in Canterbury. These losses have been greatest in lowland and coastal parts of the region, where there is now less than 10% of indigenous cover remaining, and in some areas, less than 1%. These losses have been due mostly to the loss and modification of habitat and the introduction of invasive pests.



Threats to Biodiversity in Canterbury

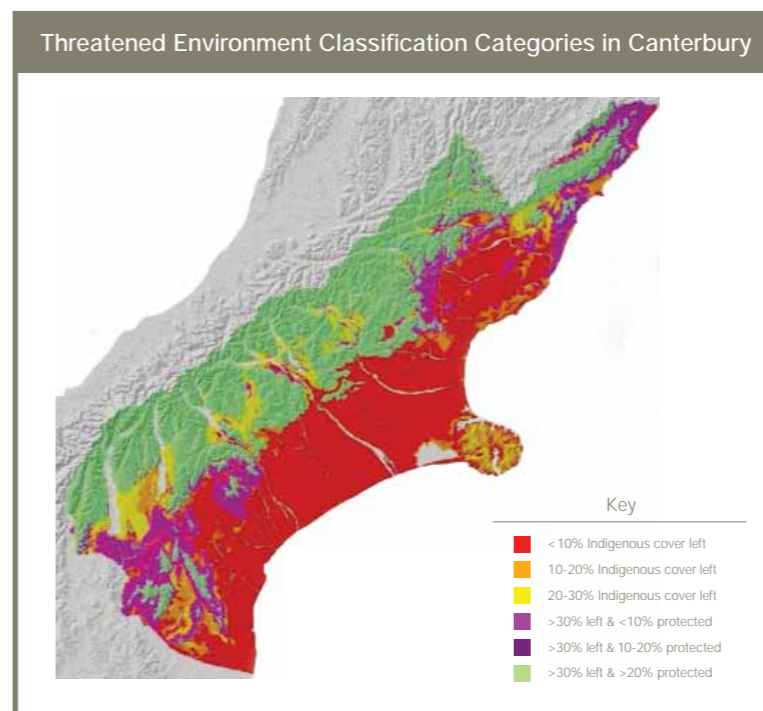
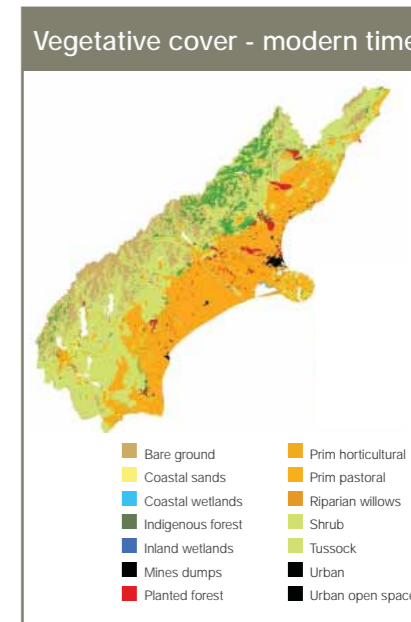
On-going habitat loss and modification and the impact of animal and plant pests are the two greatest threats to Canterbury's remaining indigenous biodiversity.

Animal and plant pests – Pests collectively pose the greatest single threat to New Zealand's remaining indigenous biodiversity. The principle threats from pests are predation on and competition with our indigenous species, as well as disease and hybridisation.

Habitat loss and modification – There is a critical threshold when a habitat area decreases to around 20% of its original extent. After this point, the rate of biodiversity loss accelerates rapidly, putting remaining species and habitat under increasing threat of further loss. In many parts of Canterbury, remaining indigenous habitat is well under this 20% threshold.

Water quality and quantity – Most evident in relation to lowland streams, lowland braided rivers and wetlands. Both quality and quantity suffer through the clearing of riparian areas, sedimentation of streambeds or over-extraction.

Coastal and marine change – Urban encroachment, agricultural developments, forest clearance and recreation uses are all contributing to the disturbance of these ecosystems.



Regional Priorities

General principle to guide efforts and action:

Focus first on protecting and maintaining what remains, and then on restoring what has been lost.

Priority areas for action:

- naturally rare or distinctive habitats and ecosystems, e.g. limestone and volcanic outcrops, braided riverbeds
- habitats and ecosystems supporting rare and threatened species
- threatened environments:
 - areas where <20% indigenous cover remains
 - areas with low levels of protection of remaining habitats and ecosystems, but increasing threats such as very rapid land use change.