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"Environmental Disturbance Triggering Infestations of Gorse, Rabbits, and Thistles in Southern New Zealand: 1850 to 1980"

Holland, Peter, and Guil Figgins

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In the first four decades of organised European settlement in southern New Zealand, gorse was planted in straight lines on farms and stations for hedges and shelter, rabbits were released at localities around the coast and in the interior for recreation and the pot, and thistle seeds were inadvertently carried to properties as pollutants in sacks of imported grass seed and the fleeces of sheep. Within a decade of becoming established on a property, each became a nuisance. Entries in farm and station letter books and diaries, ledgers and cash books, the minute books of local and national government agencies, and reports to parliament enabled us to characterise the dispersal routes and refuges of rabbits in the former tussock grass and low shrub country of southern New Zealand, and to investigate the nature, cost and effectiveness of control measures employed by land holders, local bodies and the state. We suggest that ecological theory, with its emphasis on interactions and interconnections between living things and their environments, can deepen our understanding of the spread, establishment, and dominance of these three introduced organisms after episodes of environmental disturbance, natural as well as artificial, have created opportunities for them to thrive. (Text from authors' abstract)

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Further readings:

- Kuzma, Julian.New Zealand Landscape and Literature, 1890–1925." *Environment and History* 9, no. 4, New Zealand special issue (Nov., 2003): 451–61. doi:10.3197/096734003129342935.
- Star, Paul. "New Zealand Environmental History: A Question of Attitudes." *Environment and History* 9, no. 4, New Zealand special issue (Nov., 2003): 463–75. doi:10.3197/096734003129342944.

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