

ECO CHIC

How 14 Kiwis have personally taken up the green challenge.

BY JOANNE BLACK

Gareth Morgan scarcely looks at the speedometer on his new Toyota hybrid car. Its dashboard features dials not seen on most New Zealand vehicles – one showing the current fuel consumption and another showing the battery-charge rate “which is just phenomenal when you’re going downhill”.

Morgan and his daughter Ruby, 18, recently drove to Tongariro from Wellington and he says they were looking at their fuel consumption all the time – possibly, a little too often, hence the speeding ticket at 110kph.

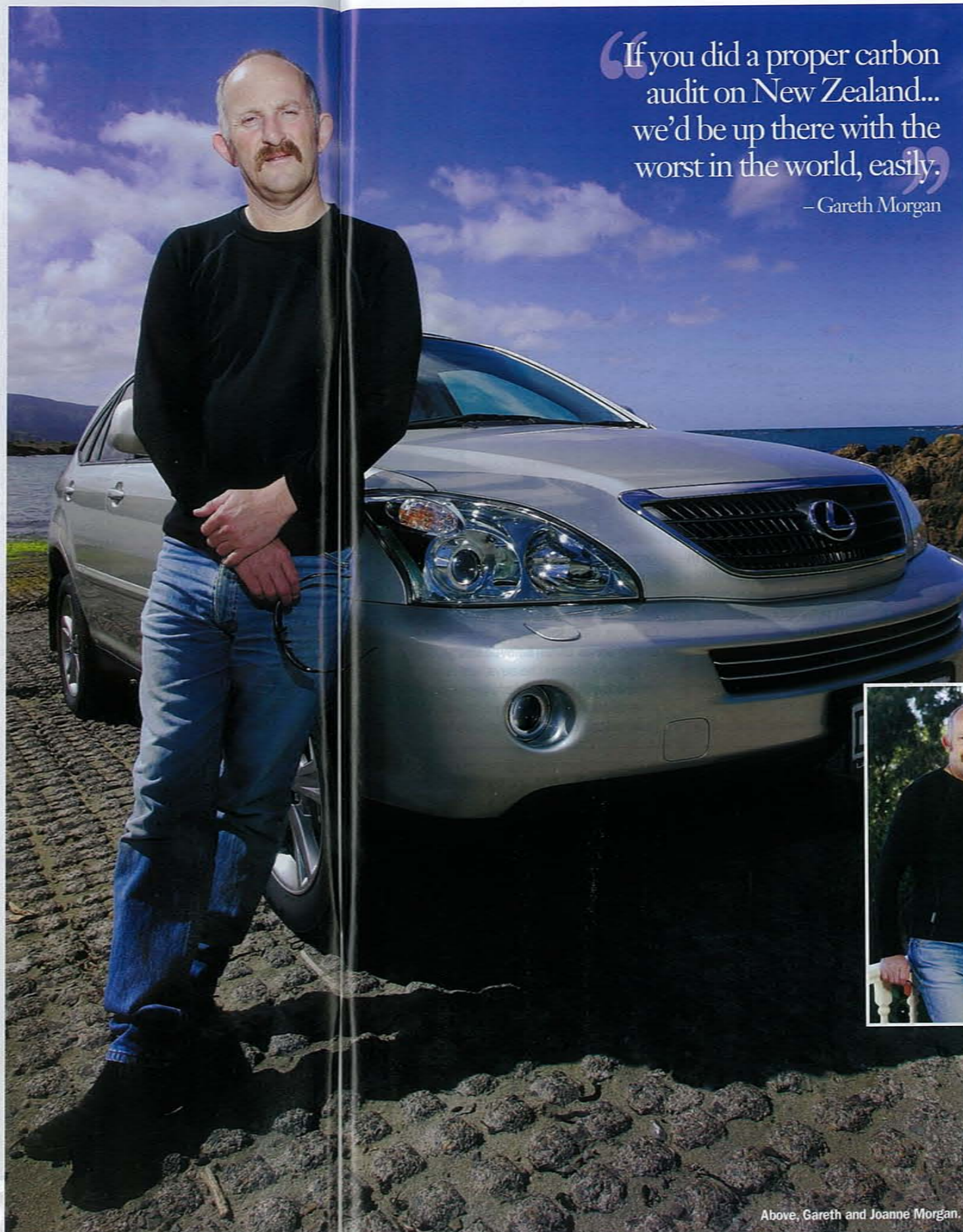
“I felt like saying to the officer, ‘What are you talking about? Look at the fuel I’m saving. Don’t I get a prize?’” No, just a ticket, although if there had been a prize for lowest fuel consumption on the trip, Ruby, who drove home, would have won it for averaging 8.1 litres of fuel for each 100kph driven, compared with her father’s 11.1 litre average on the first leg.

Morgan is a complete convert to the new car, which cost about \$90,000. But he

readily admits that, like most of the green decisions in the couple’s Wellington home, it was his wife’s impetus that led to the car’s purchase.

She has always been the more environmentally and socially conscious person in the household. She, for example, is the one who diverts Ruby on her way to the clothes dryer to insist she hang the washing on the line. It is Joanne who has been gradually replacing all the light-bulbs in the house with the long-life variety. Even Trade Me, developed by their son Sam, was to a large extent Joanne’s product, Morgan reckons, because she liked second-hand goods being re-used. And it was definitely her decision to buy the hybrid car that runs on both petrol and battery, and emits almost no air pollution.

Just this week they put their massive Chevrolet SUV on a transporter to Auckland to be sold. They cannot see themselves ever driving such a hungry beast again but had been about to buy a Holden, “because it had a plug for my iPod – funny the criteria you use”, when someone suggested that Morgan look instead at a



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– Gareth Morgan

hybrid vehicle. He did, was unconvinced and sent Joanne to look, too. That was it. They bought the hybrid and he is now its biggest fan.

Morgan says Joanne, who was on a dive course on the day of this interview, because she wants to dive under the Ross ice shelf “before it disappears”, has always resisted unnecessary consumerism.

Morgan admits that for a long time he retained a predisposition for more hedonism, but the couple’s well-chronicled motorcycle trips opened his eyes to the world’s degradation.

“Since 2001 we’ve been going to places like the Himalayas and Bolivia and you see the extreme conditions people live in, how amazingly poor they are, and how arid their environment is. Then you look at New Zealand and think, ‘Man, talk about living in an incubator, we have no idea how precious are all the things we take for granted.’”

Morgan lists a few of the examples he has seen that appear to be the consequence of climate change “that just horrify you with the enormity of their impact”. “This year we rode through forests in British Columbia, Canada, for four days on end and the trees were all dead. Imagine driving through the middle of the North Island and every pine tree is dead. And that’s due to the pine beetle. Now that has always been in Canada, so why were the trees dead? Because the pine beetle no longer dies off in winter because the tempera-

tures are higher. There was a theory that the pine beetle had evolved with the climate. But someone put the pine beetles into the temperatures that used to prevail in Canada, and they all died. It wasn’t adaptation at all, just that the temperature had changed.

“And you’ve got willows growing in the rivers in Alaska. They’ve never been in Alaska before, and more examples of the permafrost starting to

thaw.” He has also seen the encroaching desert in China, and been appalled by air pollution in Asia. Next year the couple are riding through Africa and expect to see the impact of climate change there.

“I’ve seen all that and thought to myself, ‘Well it’s a global issue, we’re global citizens, what we each do as individuals might be pathetic but at the end of the day you probably need a global consciousness before anything happens.’ I’m sure indi-

Above, Gareth and Joanne Morgan.

JOHNNY CLARK

viduals make a difference, I know they do, it's just that you can never predict the path or the timing by which they'll have an impact. Yes, we throw supermarket bags in the back of the car to re-use, but the big one is simply not consuming so much. That's by far the biggest thing we need to do, and this country is disgusting. I think for the car count per head it's just about the highest in the world, and we're past the US now."

Morgan does not like the way New Zealand champions itself as clean and green when it is not. For a start, the emissions from agriculture make us a polluter, he says. "We send our coal to China, they burn it, and then we buy their products. How's that for cynicism? If you did a proper carbon audit on New Zealand, of all the direct and indirect effects, we'd be up there with the worst in the world, easily."

He was impressed with a home the couple visited in California that was just an ordinary house – except for the roof being covered in so many solar panels that the owner sold his surplus power back to the national grid. "We should be doing that sort of stuff. It annoys me that you couldn't do that in New Zealand. And I like wind farms. People say they are eyesores, but I think they are beautiful things because of what they stand for. You go across Europe and there are just wind farms everywhere. I think New Zealand is a long way behind and that's because we've had the luxury of hydro. But now hydro has got to the point where to keep developing it you really do have to ruin quite a lot of landscapes. So what do we do instead? Import oil, and burn it. We're pretty bad, actually."

Another lifestyle change for Morgan is flying less because he says flying is "the worst form of carbon footprint you can leave". Instead, for work, he uses email. And, no, he does not plant a tree to compensate for his air miles. "I don't think you have to do stuff like that, you just have to consume less."

Cutting consumption has unexpected benefits, he says, because if people consume less, they may find they have to work less – perhaps only four days a week instead of five.

Mostly, the change to a more environmentally conscious lifestyle is worth doing for its own sake. "You should get enjoyment from making the change. If you think you are going to suffer, that is because you think that enjoyment runs parallel with higher consumption, and it doesn't necessarily. You've just got to break the mould."

ANTON OLIVER: "I CARE ABOUT MY COUNTRY"

THE DEBATE OVER TrustPower's plan to divert much of Marlborough's Wairau River into canals for power generation pushed a formidable new protagonist into the environmental arena: All Black hooker Anton Oliver. Oliver saw the plan as a hijacking, the company's name as an oxymoron. The most surprising aspect, however, was not his sudden appearance on the national stage as an environmentalist, but that he'd remained off-stage for so long.

For Oliver emerged as a fully fledged citizen of a rapidly emerging green world, worried about his sick Earth: "We humans have poisoned and polluted it to the point where some of us are questioning if the illness is terminal." He writes in journals such as *Landfall*, speaks publicly of rape and pillage, of fossil fuels creating an overheated unsustainable environment, overfished oceans, shrinking forests, eroding soils and vanishing species. All of them, he argues, are overlaid by greed and globalisation that commits the world to "buying and trading the Earth's resources, distorting lives and establish-

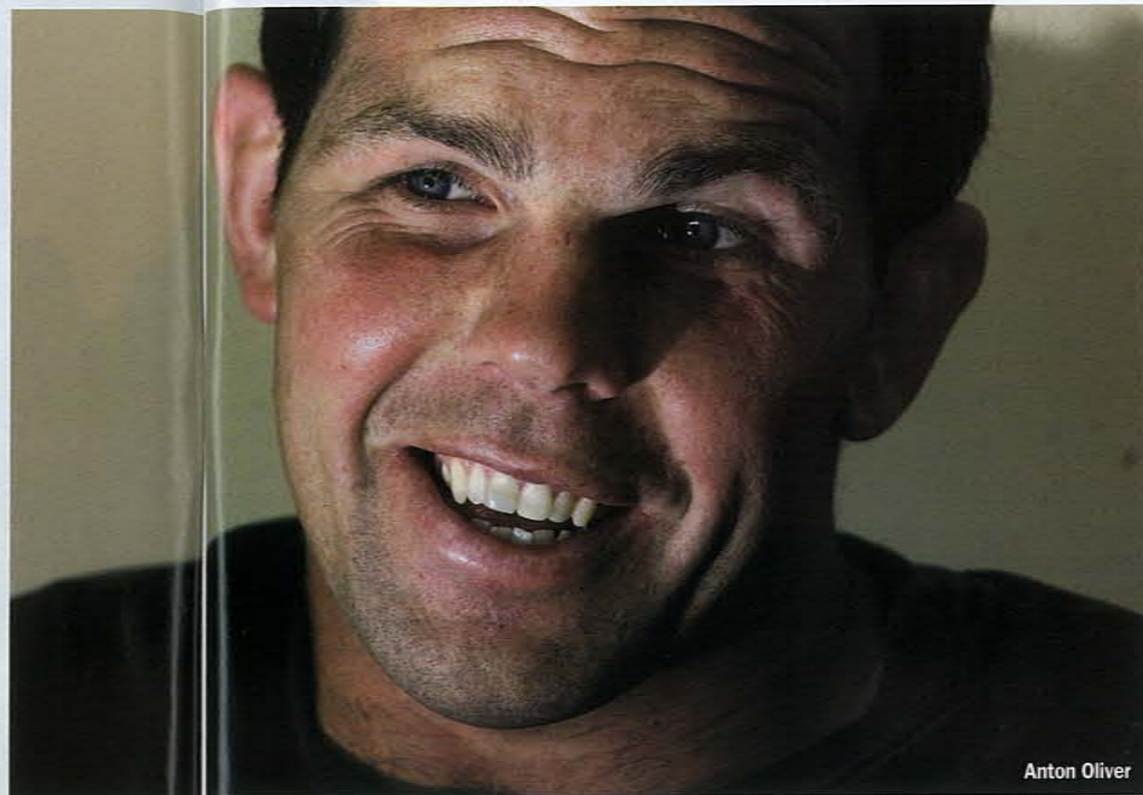
ing a world of wealth and waste".

Globally, his villains are organisations such as the World Bank, World Trade Organisation and International Monetary Fund.

As he told the Hampden Moeraki Waianakarua Energy Forum, a tiny group of North Otago people determined to make their community sustainable. "We always want more, we're never satisfied with what we already have. We've an insatiable need to elevate and consume." Nor does he let himself off the hook: "I fly round the world in gas-thirsty jets, stay and eat at wealthy five-star conglomerations, my work apparel is covered in global branding, which is in direct conflict with my personal beliefs."

Closer to home his targets are Meridian Energy's planned power project on the Waitaki River ("a hungry shark circling") and especially TrustPower and Meridian's proposed massive wind farms in the Lammermoor and Mahinerangi areas of his beloved Otago.

The wind farms, he says, are "an abomination" that cannot be allowed. "I care about my country and I want future generations of New Zealanders to be able



Anton Oliver

to experience nature in the same silent simplicity that I have. We're viscerally tied to the rivers and streams, mountains and hills, beaches, forests, lakes. The wind farms will destroy part of what we are."

Yes, efficient wind power could play a vital role in the country's energy supply. But the huge wind farms are planned for profit, not the public good: "They're greedy overkill."

Environmental disasters are irreversible. Oliver mourns the huia, ancient stands of giant kauri and rimu, the Cromwell Gorge. The wind farms "will be a tyranny passed on to those not yet born". It's getting late in the day, he says. "You can't change everything. I can't influence what is happening in Iraq and Israel. But I can make a difference in my own backyard." – Bruce Ansley



BRIGID HARDY: CLEAN-UP TIME

WHEN BRIGID HARDY'S products appeared on supermarket shelves three years ago, they were an unexpectedly glamorous addition to the household-cleaning aisle. In a market where three multinationals were selling to two major supermarket chains, Hardy understood that her products had just seconds to appeal to shoppers: not only did the labels on the Beauty Engineered Forever (B.E.E) bottles promise "I'll make it all white", or "I'm good all over the house", but they all carried

Brigid Hardy: crusading nature.

a legend along the lines of, "I'm also good for the environment".

Hardy is about to swap that and lead the labels with the environmental message; New Zealand shoppers are ready for it. B.E.E is booming, she says, because "intelligent, independent-minded, busy people can look at it and see, in a really small amount of time, that it stacks up, it's not just someone trying to flog a product."

But that's why it's successful – that it's glamming up the shelves at all is the result of Hardy's crusading nature, something that had governed her studies and work in international and human rights law. Working in Doug Graham's office when he was Minister in Charge of Treaty Negotiations was a case in point. "It made sense to be waking up each day and be totally committed – even staying till midnight wasn't hard because it mattered."

B.E.E came from a meeting with

Warehouse founder Stephen Tindall at her subsequent job with McKinsey & Company. He was looking to sell environmentally friendly cleaning products in his stores; she wasn't impressed with what was on offer. "You only get something really, truly, desirable if it's both sensually and ethically truly desirable."

So she brought her ethics to bear on a product not usually noted for being chic, or having much of a personality, but which has turned out to be ideal for spreading the message, as it pushes the boundaries of eco-chic. "We can touch people's lives – so many people." Even the Valentine family washes up with B.E.E on *Shortland Street*. "And all these people can feel a part of this and we can be responsive to them through the business. This is just an everyday part of people's lives and they can become a part of it for \$3." – Sarah Barnett

LIZ SLOOTEN & STEVE DAWSON: DOLPHIN DEFENDERS



THE CAREERS of marine scientists Liz Slooten and Steve Dawson follow a migratory pattern, just like one of the mammalian species they study.

Starting more than 20 years ago, the pair of them, says Slooten, have charted a "steady southern migration", taking in Auckland (bachelor and masters degrees), Canterbury (PhDs) and finally Dunedin, where they lecture and campaign on behalf of marine mammals, particularly the Hector's dolphin, New Zealand's only endemic dolphin.

Partly as a result of their research, the Ministry of Fisheries created the Banks Peninsula Marine Mammal Reserve, banning commercial fishing and limiting set-netting.

Slooten and Dawson want similar reserves in another five regions – much of the South Island's east and west coast, Porpoise Bay (south of Dunedin) and the coastline stretching from Mokau to Kaipara Harbour.

As the work by Slooten and others shows, the widely used gill nets trap and kill dolphins in large numbers: 18 in Canterbury in only one season.

"We're asking for very simple protection measures: ban gill netting in waters less than 100m deep." Although trawling is less destructive, the number of deaths exceeds levels necessary for the species' survival.

Another fight is brewing over plans to exploit the southern basin for its suspected gas, oil and mineral riches. Dawson's work involves investigating the impact on whales and dolphins of underwater industrial noise. There is considerable research, Slooten says of her colleague's work, showing a causal link between large-scale underwater industrial noise and whale beachings.

In shallow water, noise dissipates quickly. But in deep-sea operations the noise reverberates off the seafloor and water surface.

"What seems to happen with these beached whales," Slooten explains, "is they hear the sound and run away as fast as they can." When they hit shallow water, the noise is quieter, so the whales keep going. "And the next thing you know ..."

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