

sporting associations were established and new sports coached. So successful has been this development that some of these associations have already reached the stage when they are able to carry on without further assistance.

Assistance was given during the year to the formation of the New Zealand Marching and Recreation Association, an organization which has for its objects the promotion of inter-house marching and recreation for girls throughout New Zealand. The services of departmental officers were made available for the organizing connected with the establishment of this association, and a very successful championship meeting was held in Timaru at the conclusion of the year. This association is now well established and will be able to carry on by itself in the future. This is part of the Department's policy in promoting recreation in New Zealand by assisting in the establishment of new associations and new activities until such time as they are able to carry on without further assistance from the Department. In this way the New Zealand Women's Indoor Basketball Association has been established with departmental assistance, and is now carrying on as a national sporting association.

The mountain track operated by the Department in the Harper Pass area continued to be very popular. There is a very considerable demand throughout New Zealand for extension of the facilities in regard to mountain huts and tracks, and the recent parliamentary paper on post-war policy indicated that considerable development in this field would take place when possible. Unfortunately, it has not proved possible to make any progress with this scheme at the present time on account of the great urgency of housing construction and the undesirability of diverting from housing any of the materials and labour which would be required in hut construction. The development of mountain huts and tracks, however, will be pushed ahead as soon as conditions render possible such a course of action.

Much attention was given during the year to the planning of new areas. The Department was consulted in matters pertaining to the planning of new communities throughout New Zealand, and the Department's officers were associated with those of other State Departments in such planning. Physical Welfare Officers continued to render assistance to the established sporting and other recreational organizations throughout New Zealand, and there has been ample evidence of appreciation of the services they have rendered. "Learn to Swim" campaigns were continued in conjunction with swimming associations throughout New Zealand, and full co-operation given to the various Councils of Sport in the work of surveying local facilities for recreation and devising ways and means of improvement.

V. WILDLIFE BRANCH

A. (1) ESTABLISHMENT OF WILDLIFE BRANCH

In view of the increasing necessity for a more positive administration of the Animals Protection and Game Act, 1921-22, and active measures of wild-life conservation generally, a Wildlife Branch of the Department was established. At present the staff of the Branch can be regarded only as a nucleus.

Preliminary measures were taken for investigation and remedial action where possible in connection with the following problems vitally concerning the welfare of the flora and fauna of New Zealand:—

- (a) The decrease in the native protected bird population and threatened extinction of some species :
- (b) The increase and possible menace of the opossum population :
- (c) The decrease of native and imported game-bird populations :
- (d) The relation between wild browsing animals and soil and river erosion in the back country :
- (e) The apparent deterioration of the Department's fresh-water fisheries (in common with all others in New Zealand).