

Canada, Germany, and Austria. I hope to be in a position to place a definite proposal before the Government at an early date. During the year sixteen red deer were imported from Victoria. These animals were presented to the Department by Robert Chirnside, Esq., of Werribee Park, Werribee, and have been liberated half in Westland, and half near Lake Wakatipu.

With a view of preventing the wholesale slaughter of deer by persons who have no regard for the nation's right, it has been considered advisable to reserve 32,000 acres of Crown land, known as the "Government Bush," in South Wairarapa as a deer-preserve. The timber on this area is of little milling-value, and the land generally is not adapted for either agricultural or pastoral purposes. A large block of bush lands surrounding Lake Waikaremoana has been declared a preserve for native birds. The bird-life at this lake is of a very interesting nature, and should be strictly protected.

At the instigation of the Department, the huia has been absolutely protected throughout the colony, and the blue mountain-duck protected from year to year.

A number of paradise duck have been liberated by the Department on the lakes in the Rotorua district, and have been protected for the present in order to allow them time to sufficiently increase to afford good sport.

Shooting and Fishing Seasons, and License Fees.

I am strongly of opinion that the shooting and fishing seasons and license fees throughout the colony should be uniform and be fixed by statute, also that for the right of taking native game a small license fee (say, 5s.) should be charged to persons not holding a license for imported game. Such a restriction is very necessary for the proper protection of this class of game. The seasons should, in my opinion, be as follows: Deer, 1st March to 30th April; feathered game, 1st May to 31st July; fishing, 1st November to 15th April. The shooting season for feathered game opening as it does at present in April in the southern portion of the colony permits the ruthless slaughter of large numbers of duck and other water-fowl when in the flapper stage. The fact that a large number of trout taken in the latter half of the month of April have been found in an advanced spawning stage, or actually spawning, leads me to strongly recommend that the season should close not later than the 15th April.

Poaching is carried on in many districts in a systematic and wholesale manner, and I would suggest that the Government should consider the question of giving acclimatisation societies more assistance in the protection of game. In my opinion the services of members of the Police Force, Stock Inspectors, and Rabbit Agents throughout the colony might be utilised to great advantage to prevent breaches of the Animals Protection Acts and Fisheries Conservation Acts.

HELENSVILLE.

The question of the Government being asked to take over the hot springs at Helensville has been mooted by members of the Helensville Town Board, in which body the springs are now vested, and it is expected that a direct request will shortly be made to this effect. Although these springs are not specially valuable from a balneological point of view, they would if properly developed afford excellent pleasure baths, and, being situated near the railway-line, only thirty-eight miles from Auckland City, should prove financially remunerative.

LITTLE BARRIER ISLAND.

For some years past the administration of this island—a State reserve for the preservation of New Zealand fauna and flora—has been in the hands of the Auckland Institute. The annual report of that body will be found in the appendices to this report.

It will be seen from the report that the native birds are very numerous, and are increasing on the island, where they are secure from molestation. The Institute has been paid the usual Government subsidy of £200.

TE AROHA.

In my last annual report I suggested the desirability of the Government resuming control of the Te Aroha Thermal Domain, baths, &c.

At a meeting held on the 1st October, 1902, the Te Aroha Domain Board unanimously passed the following resolution: "That this Board is of opinion that, in the best interests of the Domain, Government should resume control of same, and hereby requests that the Government shall take over the management of the Domain, baths, and springs per medium of the Tourist and Health Resorts Department."

The Government accordingly, by Order in Council dated the 7th January, 1903, resumed control, vesting the reserve containing the springs, &c., in the Minister in charge of this Department, under the provisions of "The Public Domains Act, 1881." All employees in the service of the Domain Board have been given employment by the Department, at the same salaries, in the same positions as they previously held. An amount of £7 19s., balance of moneys in the hands of the Board, was paid to the Public Account, and the Government accepted the Board's liabilities, amounting to £409 4s. 4d., for contracts let and works in progress.

With grants totalling £1,000 made in March and July, 1902, and augmented by its ordinary revenue, the Domain Board had been enabled to carry out various necessary improvements in baths and Domain, in addition to meeting the usual charges for maintenance. The following works were carried out prior to the Government resuming control: Two bath-houses which had become unfit for use were rebuilt, and other bath-buildings renovated and made more comfortable and attractive. The "Octagon" at the drinking-springs was removed to a better site and renovated, and the facilities for obtaining drinking-waters improved. The bowling-green was relaid and improved, a comfortable pavilion for the use of bowlers erected, and the Domain generally received considerable attention.