

APPENDIX V.

REPORT ON LITTLE BARRIER ISLAND (NATIVE BIRD RESERVE).

SIR,—

Auckland Institute, Auckland, 6th June, 1904.

In accordance with the request contained in your telegram, I have the honour to forward a report on the Little Barrier Island, prepared by Mr. Shakespear, the resident curator. Mr. Shakespear writes:—

“During the last two years there has been a perceptible increase among certain species, and bird-life upon the island is now fairly plentiful. Tuis and bell-birds are present in the greatest numbers, and during the last season several instances occurred of the latter nestling close to the house. The nest of the bell-bird is a very shallow structure, and young birds are often found lying at the foot of the tree under the nest.

“The black-headed tit and whitehead are also present in fair numbers, flocks of the latter being met with in different parts of the island. I think that the whitehead has increased more than any other of the scarcer varieties, and this is encouraging as it is now extinct upon the mainland. On the flat around the house, which is in many places covered with high tea-tree, both the whitehead and the tit breed in considerable numbers.

“The stitch-bird, which is another species now extinct on the mainland, is increasing here, and we constantly meet with it on the lower slopes of the mountains. Bush-robins are also more plentiful, and are to be met with in most of the deep gullies. At certain seasons of the year pigeons are numerous, and there are always some about on the flat near the house.

“The Little Barrier snipe still exist. I have put up single birds on two occasions during the last winter, in both cases on this flat near the house. It is, I think, the rarest bird on the island. A small striped rail also exists, one specimen having been seen.

“Both of our cuckoos are constant visitors, the long-tailed species, or koheperoa, doing a good deal of damage to the nests and young birds during the breeding season.

“About a month ago a fine specimen of the tuatara lizard was captured. He was secured near the west landing, and after having had his photograph taken was released. I have no doubt that there are plenty of them on the island.

“During the year 1903 the Government steamer ‘Hinemoa’ on two occasions landed birds on the island. On the first visit she brought three kakapos and one kiwi, and on the last visit a single kakapo. The kakapos were procured through Mr. Henry, of Resolution Island, but it was due to the great care taken of them (during a six-weeks trip) by Captain Bollons and Mr. Pike that they were landed in such good condition. They were liberated on the higher slopes of the mountain, in open mossy places, and the kiwi in the same locality as the pair sent by Mr. S. Percy Smith some years ago.

“There has been no interference with the birds in any way during the year.

“ROBT. H. SHAKESPEAR.”

It is satisfactory to note that the above report speaks of the increase of several of the birds found on the island, including some species not found on the mainland. There can be little doubt that if a resident curator is maintained on the island, thus preventing the access of collectors, the Little Barrier will long remain a secure refuge for no small part of the avifauna of New Zealand.

I have, &c.,

T. F. CHEESEMAM, Secretary.

The Superintendent, Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, Wellington.

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