

In addition to the foregoing districts, I have also inspected the Morere Hot Springs Reserve and the Tongariro National Park, on each of which I have made separate reports.

Noxious Weeds and Pests.—As a rule, the reserves in Canterbury are not much invaded by noxious weeds and animal pests; but the reverse is, unfortunately, the case in Otago, especially in the Catlin's River locality, where rabbits have become extremely plentiful, and Californian thistle has spread over the cleared margins of the bush and along the roads. These pests require vigorous and immediate attention, or the cost of combating them will increase immensely.

Damage by Stock.—In Canterbury all the reserves have suffered more or less from the incursions of stock; but so far in Otago (except in the reserves near Dunedin) stock have done little damage.

Timber.—In Canterbury, as a rule, most of the large trees have been taken out of the reserves, but there are many varieties of small trees still represented. In the Catlin's River locality, in Otago, the timber-trees have not been much interfered with; but in the reserves near Dunedin not many large trees have been left.

Fencing.—As a rule, little fencing has been done, as the adjoining owners feared the Crown would not bear half the expense; but most of them expressed their willingness to do so if the Crown would be responsible for half the cost. I have reported several instances in which fencing is necessary, but in some cases it can well wait.

Fires.—The greatest difficulty that has to be faced in connection with the reserves is their preservation from the ravages of fires. Swaggers and Maoris appear to set fire to the country as if they were inspired by a spirit of destruction. Settlers in clearing their own lands are indifferent to the damage their fires may cause by spreading on to the lands of the Crown. There does not appear to be any entirely certain plan of obviating this liability, but the risk can be very much lessened by clearing belts round those reserves where the danger is greatest, sowing these belts by drought-resisting grasses, removing all dead timber from the edge of the bush, felling all standing dead timber within the bush, and grazing stock on the cleared belts. In addition to the boundary-fence, an interior fence would have to be run round the bush to keep the stock out.

Birds.—In the Canterbury reserves I found that the native birds (with the exception of the tui, which in Akaroa is still fairly plentiful) are getting very scarce. In Otago the larger size of the reserves has served as a more effectual sanctuary, and tuis, bell-birds, and tomtits were fairly plentiful, whilst fantails, robins, wrens, parrakeets, kakas, and pigeons were also seen. As it is almost impossible under present arrangements to give a really effective and constant supervision to these reserves, owing to their generally being so scattered, I would suggest that some reliable settler in the vicinity should be given some small subsidy, in return for which he would be required to prevent the removal of timber or plants, destruction of native birds, and trespass by stock.

Notices.—As I have suggested elsewhere, caution notices should be put up at railway-stations and post-offices, and by this the public would gradually get to know that any infraction of the regulations for the protection of the reserves would be at the risk of a heavy fine.

The preservation of places of scenic or historic interest is a matter that is now receiving great attention in other countries. In Canada a large sum is being raised to purchase the celebrated Heights of Abraham; in England within the last few years large sums have even been raised by private subscriptions to purchase old abbeys and castles, the histories of which form part of the history of the Empire; and on the Continent of Europe also people are taking measures to prevent the destruction or disfigurement of beauty-spots that for years have attracted millions from other lands, and afforded infinite pleasure and instruction to those who dwell near them.

I have, &c.,

E. PHILLIPS TURNER,

Inspector of Scenic Reserves.

The Under-Secretary, Department of Lands, Wellington.

SCHEDULE OF RESERVES INSPECTED, 1907–8.

<i>Canterbury.</i>				A.	R.	P.
Twenty-five gazetted reserves, with an area of	...	...	...	1,363	3	23
Nikau Gully (Akaroa Heads): Report on Rural Section 36386	...	...	...	71	0	0
Total area	...	...	...	1,434	3	23
<i>Otago Land District.</i>						
Fifteen gazetted reserves, of a total area of	...	...	...	4,257	0	17
<i>Hawke's Bay Land District.</i>						
Morere Hot Springs Reserve, in Nuhaka North Survey District, of an area of	...	...	...	585	0	0
<i>Wellington Land District.</i>						
Tongariro National Park, in Ruapehu and Kaimanawa Survey Districts	...	...	...	139,000	0	0
A total of forty-three reserves, with an area of 145,277 acres.						