

Damage by Deer.—As the result of complaints made by settlers, Mr. Moorhouse, Conservator of Fish and Game, was instructed to report on damage done to farm lands by fallow deer in the Rongahere District (Otago). It is clear from his report that in many cases settlers are working under a very severe handicap owing to the depredations of the deer, and the question of how best to deal with the matter is receiving urgent attention.

Deterioration of Deer Herds.—Following up the inquiries made in 1914, Mr. Moorhouse was sent to inspect and report on the condition of the Otago and Waitaki deer herds. His report confirms the need for dealing with the deterioration in a comprehensive manner. Consideration is now being given to the most suitable means of coping with the problem, and in the meantime the Otago and Waitaki Societies have been authorized to proceed with culling operations. A special shooting season was declared to enable the Hawke's Bay Society to carry out culling operations.

Huias.—Careful inquiry has been made into all reports received respecting the existence of the hui in various parts of the North Island, but in no case was the evidence sufficient to warrant the belief that the birds seen actually were huias. The Department began the quest for a pair of these birds for the Little Barrier Sanctuary about ten years ago. During that time more than one party has set out on the search, but all have been unsuccessful.

The Tuatara.—The lightkeepers on Stephen Island, the Brothers, and Cuvier Island, who are appointed special protectors of the tuatara during the time they are stationed on those islands, report that the tuatara lizards on each show no signs of decreasing. Cats have now been practically exterminated, and constant war is waged on hawks. It being reported that the bush on Stephen Island, which forms the chief cover for the tuatara, is gradually dying off, Mr. Phillips Turner, Inspector of Scenic Reserves, paid a short visit to the island and made valuable recommendations, which can be carried out at a very small cost. The co-operation of the Marine and Lands and Survey Departments will be necessary in this work.

Miscellaneous.—Regulations were made respecting the disposal of birds, animals, and skins taken from persons illegally in possession.

Permission to destroy opossums was given in several cases where it was proved they were causing damage to orchards. The value of the opossum for its skin has recently been brought before you, and you have declared your intention of making inquiries as to the practicability of establishing colonies throughout the Dominion, especially in the bush districts. It seems clear that the animal might become a valuable asset to settlers in the backblocks, as it feeds on the leaves of trees.

Consolidated Animals Protection Act.—In accordance with your direction a new Animals Protection Bill consolidating the existing law and making provision for many matters not dealt with at present is being prepared. The existing Animals Protection Act is a very faulty measure from an administrative point of view.

(4.) *Fire Brigades Act.*

Fire Districts.—One new fire district—Woolston—was constituted during the year, and one—Maori Hill—went out of existence. By-laws of four Fire Boards were approved and gazetted. Authorities to borrow moneys amounting in all to £27,500 and two authorities to dispose of property were issued.

Inspection of Fire Brigades.—The Inspector of Fire Brigades continued his work without interruption during the year. His report will be furnished later on, as the Fire Boards' year only finished on the 30th June.

Consolidated Fire Brigades Act.—As directed by you, material for an amending and consolidating Fire Brigades Bill is being prepared for your consideration.

(5.) *Motor Regulation Act.*

Ten County Councils adopted Part II of the Act during the year.

Motor by-laws of thirteen local bodies were deposited as required by section 4 of the Act.

Letters and numerals as identification-marks were allotted to thirty registering authorities.

The regulations were amended to allow of a registering authority prescribing that identification-marks shall be affixed both at the front and the rear of motor-cycles.

(6.) *Mutual Fire Insurance Associations Amendment Act, 1913.*

Regulations extending powers of mutual associations under the above Act were issued.

(7.) *Land Agents Act, 1912.*

The number of land agents' licenses shows little variation from year to year, Hospital Boards benefitting from fees to the extent of about £4,500 per annum. Two actions to recover the amounts of bonds furnished by defaulting land agents were taken against insurance companies, the Crown securing judgment in each case. The Act requires to be amended in certain directions in order to make it work more satisfactorily.

(8.) *Weights and Measures Act, 1908.*

For many years the administration of this Act left much to be desired, its importance both to the buying and selling public apparently not having been recognized. A marked improvement has been effected in the last two years, but much remains to be done. The Act will need amending in several directions before it will be possible to carry out all necessary measures. In the past it was the invariable rule to appoint only members of the Police Force to be Inspectors of Weights and Measures, but of recent years this practice has not given satisfaction owing to police officers' time being so fully taken up with their own duties. As opportunity occurs police