

TABLE 5.

STATEMENT SHOWING AREA ESTABLISHED, AREA MAINTAINED, NET COST OF AFFORESTATION, AND COMPARATIVE COST OF ESTABLISHMENT PER ACRE.

Year.	New Areas established.	Direct Seeding.	Area main- tained.	Direct Cost.	Overhead, Salaries, &c.	Interest paid on Loans.	Total Cost.	Receipts from Sales, Trees, &c.	Net Cost.	Cost per Acre.
	Acres.	Acres.	Acres.	£	£	£	£	£	£	£ s. d.
1922-23 ..	2,800	..	41,400	30,800	8,600	22,000	61,400	7,400	54,000	5 12 2
1923-24 ..	7,300	..	44,200	37,300	9,300	18,200	64,800	8,200	56,600	3 17 7
1924-25 ..	10,600	..	51,500	50,200	9,000	17,400	76,600	11,300	65,300	3 8 4
1925-26 ..	16,000	..	62,100	63,900	11,100	21,000	96,000	13,500	82,500	3 2 10
1926-27 ..	20,300	1,300	78,100	80,700	17,100	24,500	122,300	14,500	107,800	3 4 1
1927-28 ..	34,300	2,400	99,700	110,800	22,000	33,800	166,600	11,500	155,100	3 0 2
1928-29 ..	57,400	3,300	136,400	155,400	23,200	44,200	222,800	12,500	210,300	2 11 11
Total for seven years	148,700	7,000	513,400	529,100	100,300	181,100	810,500	78,900	731,600	3 2 0

For this purpose it has been assumed that the average cost of establishing 1 acre in trees is equivalent to the maintenance of 6 acres or the direct seeding of $3\frac{1}{4}$ acres.

These costs do not include the value or cost of the land, or depreciation on capital expenditure prior to 1922. Such a costing unit is an arbitrary one, and of value only for comparative and average costing purposes.

Costs of establishment and maintenance vary considerably by reason of climatic, locality, and other factors, but the above accumulated costs are allocated to each project, and appear annually in the summary of plantation operations, published as a part of parliamentary paper B.-I [Part IV].

However, these costs demonstrate that large-scale planting, combined with economy in administration and the judicious use of machinery, has ensured a gradual reduction in the net cost of establishment per acre.

4. WILD LIFE.

As the Service aims at effective control of the terrestrial wild animals within State forests, and its primary responsibility is the conservation and perpetuation of the indigenous forests, together with the establishment of exotic forests where financial and climatic reasons demand it, its present fundamental concern is the control or extermination of certain pests which have been introduced either by way of acclimatization or by domestic species which have become feral. This is vital to the conservation and protection of the forests and their indigenous inhabitants.

It is clear that the water-flow from forested lands is being appreciably affected in many localities owing to these and other agents, which unnecessarily disturb Nature's balance. It is also clear, and has been stressed by many interests other than those of forestry, that much land is being ruined by over-grazing by wild animals, and the consequent erosion of steep and unstable mountain-sides. Thirdly—and this is the prime motive actuating the Service—it is indisputable that our forests are supporting an alien fauna, whose excessive numbers are reflected in an unhealthy condition of the indigenous forests and, in many districts, in a potentially unhealthy condition and an unnecessarily high establishment cost of exotic plantations. In some few districts the presence of this alien fauna renders futile any attempt at afforestation; and, unfortunately, all too often these districts are the ones which would benefit most from judicious planting. Many contingent factors, however, must be considered, the chief being the question of safeguarding those rights which have become vested and must therefore be respected. The Forest Service, of course, confines its activities to the areas within its jurisdiction, and outside these areas it relies upon public sympathy and the co-operation of those societies formed for the safeguarding of kindred objectives. The following is a brief outline of the activities during the year.

Opossums.

During the past year an open season for the taking of opossums was declared throughout New Zealand. The condition of the skins and the reduction of numbers from certain areas point, however, to the advisability of observing close seasons, particularly in many of the southern localities.

Trapping out of season was prevalent, particularly in the Wellington District, in which approximately 50 per cent. of the opossums are caught, and in which the State forests have such easy main-road access. The use of cyanide of potassium for the destruction of opossums is prevalent and widespread, and cannot be too strongly condemned. Detection and proof of the offence are very difficult, and, moreover, this poison causes destruction not only of opossums, but of bird-life also. It is therefore urged that heavy penalties be imposed upon those convicted of using the poison, which is, unfortunately, comparatively easy to procure in many localities.

During the year a rigorous patrol of State forests was maintained, and in consequence twelve convictions for illegal trapping, &c., were secured. Fines totalled £106, and the number of skins confiscated was 624, representing a sale value of £332 11s. 5d.

Although the recorded number of opossums caught throughout New Zealand shows a slight increase, it is believed that the animals have actually decreased, but that more skins are being forwarded for sale through legitimate trading channels owing to more efficient field supervision.