

Pigs.

The Taranaki portion of the Wellington Forest Conservation Region suffers most from the depredations of wild pigs, and farmers sustain heavy losses during the lambing season. The pest has now spread over the Wanganui River, and complaints have also been received from the southern portions of Wellington District. In the Bay of Plenty (Rotorua Region) wild pigs are present in State forests and unoccupied Crown lands, and in Nelson Region certain areas are likewise affected, but in a minor degree.

During the year 1928 a bounty of 1s. per snout was paid on 11,153 pigs destroyed in the Wellington Region; 1,929 in the Rotorua Region; 359 in the Nelson Region; making a total of 13,441.

Pig-destruction was also carried out in the State plantations, particularly in Otago in the Blue Mountains area. Cyanide of potassium and strychnine were tested for this purpose for a period of three weeks in those localities where pigs were numerous, but with negative results.

Efforts have been made to find an overseas market for pig-hides, and to this end a shipment of hides was sent to America for trial in glove-making. The accompanying photographs of sueded and plain pig-skin gloves illustrate one use to which this leather is applied in America. American pig-hides range in value from 6s. to 8s. each, and if the latter price could be obtained for New Zealand hides the wild pig would soon have a commercial value which would encourage shooting parties without the necessity for a direct Government subsidy.

Stoats and Weasels.

The nests of our native avifauna are seriously endangered by the habits of stoats, weasels, and rats. Stoats and weasels are protected under the Rabbit Nuisance Act, 1908, but consideration should be given to the removal of protection within forest areas, as these animals are undoubtedly forest vermin. By removing protection and permitting the sale of skins it is probable that a reduction in these animals could be quickly achieved. The forest-rat is inimical to our bird-life, and the remarkable reproductive powers of this rodent renders constant destruction vitally necessary. Rat-skins have a market value in the fur trade overseas, and are now receiving attention from the glove trade. A consignment of these skins has recently been shipped abroad in order to test the market referred to.

The Service has conducted several experiments with various poisons to discover whether it is possible to secure one which will be fatal to rats and do no harm to other animal-life, and it is expected that success in this direction will shortly be attained.

Bird-life.

Bird-life comes under the administration of the Department of Internal Affairs, which administers the Animals Protection and Game Act, and practically all native birds are protected. In addition, the Forests Act, 1921-22, provides that all State-forest reserves and provisional State forests are in effect, bird sanctuaries. Consequently no native bird can be legally shot or destroyed within a State forest without the consent in writing of a Conservator of Forests, and to date no such consent has been given. The conservation of bird-life throughout forested areas is regarded as an important duty of the Forest Service, but this protection and propagation in some districts are contingent upon the vast numbers of deer, stoats, weasels, and rats being drastically reduced.

Bird-protection work is made a charge upon opossum revenue, but it is to be regretted that this revenue is not sufficient to provide for more than a partial destruction of the forest pests.

Most Forest field officers are rangers under the Animals Protection and Game Act, and, as they are located throughout the country and are in constant touch with the scattered rural population, they have unique opportunities to protect bird-life.

I have pleasure in recording again the good will and co-operation which exist between the Service and the New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society, which has done good work in consolidating public opinion in the direction of bird-conservation and every possible assistance is being given to the society to continue and extend its sphere of usefulness.

Special efforts are being made to assist other Departments in remote districts where Forest officers are the only regular visiting State representatives. This principle, which could well be extended, has so far been applied mainly in the southern portion of Westland, where the Service has made itself responsible, under the direction of the Departments of Internal Affairs and Marine respectively, for supervision of the white herons' nesting-grounds and of seal-rookeries on the foreshore.

5. FOREST RECONNAISSANCE, DEMARCATION, AND SURVEYS.

With a view to ascertaining the forest resources of the Dominion, a preliminary inventory was completed in 1923, which provided a groundwork for the compilation of plans towards the conservation and silvicultural management of the indigenous forests, and estimates of the forests and timber content with sufficient accuracy to enable a forecast of the Dominion forest resources to be prepared in terms of my predecessor's report in 1925.

The necessity of carrying forward this work with an increasing degree of intensity until a detailed and reliable inventory of timber stocks and areas can be produced to function both for national purposes and as a guide to the timber industry has been fully appreciated, but necessarily subordinated upon the grounds of staff organization. In the meantime, therefore, it has been considered wise to carry out only those demarcations, appraisals, &c., which could be justified upon the grounds of normal demands by the timber industry, and to concentrate the staff resources upon duties incidental to the carrying-out of the afforestation objective.