

to co-operate in the preparation of non-obligatory regional schemes for the co-ordination and correlation of matters of economic and social interest which do not begin and terminate within the boundaries of any single local governmental authority ; the postponement of the approval of statutory town-planning schemes, where necessary, pending the preparation and completion of regional schemes ; the amendment of the provisions relating to the assessment of compensation and betterment ; and provisions to enable local authorities to exercise more effective control over land-subdivision and building operations within their areas pending approval of their town-planning schemes.

In anticipation of legislation enabling the preparation of regional schemes, provisional regional planning committees have already been set up in several areas.

There is every reason to believe and hope that local authorities and the public generally are thoroughly awake to the benefits which can be conferred on the community through the preparation of far-sighted schemes of physical development based on a thorough survey and study of existing conditions and tendencies, and the reaction these schemes will have upon the conservation of the natural resources of the country.

ANIMALS PROTECTION AND GAME ACT, 1921-22.

As in previous years, open seasons for game-shooting and deer-stalking were declared in various acclimatization districts. The destruction of deer was continued, and the number on which payment was made amounted to 14,221.

Open seasons were fixed in a number of districts for the taking of opossums. The number of trappers' licenses issued was 1,113, and the returns furnished showed that 156,894 skins were taken—an increase of 17,594 as compared with the previous year. Numerous representations have been received for and against the importation of fresh stock and the further liberation of these animals, but it has been decided to conduct certain scientific investigations as to their habits, by which means reliable information will be available to enable a full consideration of the question to be gone into, and in the meantime no authorities for importation or liberation are being granted.

A scientific investigation as to the feeding-habits of the pukeko is in progress.

Reports have been received regularly from the various officers who are special protectors for the tuatara lizard, and the policy of doing everything possible to preserve this interesting specimen is being maintained.

Special attention has been given to the preservation of our native birds and to the further co operation of acclimatization societies in the matter. Encouraging reports have been received as to the increase of protected birds not only in sanctuaries, but in other localities. This, in addition to the evidence of increasing interest in the subject, is most gratifying. The Department is most desirous of preventing the shooting of native pigeon and other protected birds, and is glad to receive information of any illegal shooting in order to prosecute the offender.

The importation of birds and animals has been the subject of strict supervision, and permission is not now granted for the importation of rosellas and female galahs. One consignment of rosellas which was brought to the Dominion in the face of prior advice that authority for landing could not be granted was destroyed.

FIRE BRIGADES ACT.

During the year one new fire district—Opotiki—was constituted, making a total of fifty Fire Boards now operating. As usual, fire-hose and other equipment not manufactured in the Dominion was indented through the High Commissioner's Office on direct requisition from various Fire Boards and the United Fire Brigades' Association. In accordance with the decision of the Government indenting of fire-hose for outside bodies has now been relinquished by this Department. During the year a number of plans and specifications for erection of fire-stations have been submitted for your approval. The usual inspections of fire brigades have been made by the Inspector of Fire Brigades, and in accordance with requests received from various Government Departments and local bodies numerous special inspections and reports in the matter of protection of buildings, water supply and installations, purchase of fire appliances and machinery, &c., have been made. A number of public addresses in regard to the excessive fire waste and its prevention in New Zealand have been given.

RAFFLES.

During the year 391 licenses for raffles were issued, the articles comprising pictures, paintings, drawings, sculpture, or other works of art or literature, or mechanical models. No difficulty is being experienced in obtaining compliance with the conditions of the licenses.

PASSPORTS.

The number of passports issued during the year was 4,169, and the number of renewals 862.

NATURALIZATION.

Naturalization was granted to 326 persons, including 3 Samoans. Certified copies of naturalization papers to replace originals lost were issued to 3 persons.

SOLDIERS' AND HISTORICAL GRAVES.

Great War Graves in New Zealand.—The number of notifications of deaths of returned soldiers to reach the Department during the year was 346, of which 113 were accepted as war graves, bringing the total to date to 2,336. The number of headstones ordered during the year was 147. Temporary crosses to mark the graves until such time as the military headstones are prepared were placed on 113 graves.