

APPENDIX B.

KAPITI ISLAND.

(H. W. C. MACKINTOSH, Commissioner of Crown Lands, Wellington.)

THE most pleasing and, to the bird-life of Kapiti, the most important matter I have to report is the remarkable regeneration of the plant-life on the island during the past year, and this notwithstanding the fact that no great amount of rain fell. Visitors to the island have expressed surprise at the growth even round the coast and near tracks. Areas that were once nothing but grass are now becoming clothed with young bush trees, particularly houhou and akeake. The latter is valuable for providing shelter for the more useful berry-bearing trees.

Some thousands of trees were planted out last winter, including such useful varieties as taupata, ngaio, akeake, puka, and pohutukawa. Wharekohu, owing to the great number of goats and sheep that formerly roamed there, was very bare of any kind of bush growth, but it is pleasing to note that taupata is now becoming well established in that locality.

The work of destroying vermin on the island was rigorously pursued during the year, some 250 rats having been trapped, shot, or poisoned, while two wild cats were shot by the opossum-trapper.

I have again to express my appreciation of the work being done by Mr. A. S. Wilkinson, the caretaker of the island. The Department is fortunate in having such a man as Mr. Wilkinson in charge of the reserve, both for his profound knowledge of, and his intense interest in, the flora and fauna of New Zealand.

The following is extracted from Mr. Wilkinson's annual report:—

"In the Maraetakaroro Valley the flax flowered better this season than I have ever seen it, and was alive with honey-eating birds, providing a sight reminiscent of the old days. The Kaiwharawhara Valley is showing great improvement, and the flax has flowered very well in this sheltered spot. The manuka ridges leading into Kaiwharawhara, which were devoid of any other growth but manuka a few years ago, are now well covered with young plants of nearly every species of tree and shrub that grows on Kapiti. The undergrowth is not so noticeable in the Waterfall Valley as at Kaiwharawhara, except in places, for the roof of the bush is in many places too thick for the light to penetrate. On the spurs, however, the bush-lawyer is very prominent, making it difficult to traverse these ridges. The large area of bush between Taepiro and Te Rere includes open spaces which, a few years ago camping-places for goats, are now well covered with young trees. The most conspicuous amongst these is the miro, of the fruit of which the pigeon is so fond. The taupata, akeake, and other trees are rapidly covering the open spaces at Paripatea. Just north of Rangatira the two species mentioned are also growing well. At this place some pohutukawa flowered for the first time. From Rangatira southwards a considerable amount of planting was done last winter. Along the shore at Maraetakaroro a few hundred trees were also planted.

"Some of the trees at Rangatira have flowered more profusely this season than they have for many years. The rata was, if anything, better than last year, and when in flower was a most magnificent sight. Tuis, bell-birds, and kakas were feasting on the nectar in hundreds. As the trees near the beach flowered quite a month before those on the higher parts of the island, the honey-eaters were provided with this delicious repast for a long time. The perfume exuded by the rata when in full bloom was almost overpowering, reminding one of the old honey-mead making days. The rewarewa, another nectar-producing plant, was also conspicuous during the flowering-period, and, like the rata, was well patronized by the honey-eaters. The karaka, beautiful at all times, is made more beautiful when loaded with orange berries. To see one of these trees covered with berries, in which eight or ten pigeons are feeding, is a sight very much appreciated by the nature-lover. Titoki, makomako, houhou, horoeka, porokaiwhiri, toru, matipo, hangehange, the coprosma species, and others are all carrying their share of berries. The vines also are fruiting well, although the tataramoa and kaiwhiria are not loaded like they were last season. The kareao has had a good load of berries during the year.

"A very noticeable feature in the regeneration of the bush is the spread of ferns through the portion of the sanctuary between Te Rere and Taepiro. The beautiful kidney-fern is now seen in many places where formerly it was entirely absent or so scarce as to be unnoticed. Another fern that has spread about this section of the sanctuary is that handsome though common species known to botanists as *Blechnum discolor* and to the Maoris as piupiu. Still another that is to be seen in several places is that very beautiful *Leptolepia novae-zealandiae*, which, like the kidney-fern, is a true New-Zealander, being found nowhere else.

"With the exception of perhaps one or two species, the birds have had a very successful season. Bell-birds, tuis, whiteheads, robins, and tomtits have all done well. The tomtits that live about our house and gardens have made a record this season. This pair of birds built four nests. The first nest was built in the top of a kaikomako and three young were reared. The second nest was abandoned after three eggs were laid. The hen bird, who does all the building and incubating, was evidently alarmed by something to make her leave the nest. The third nest was also built in a kaikomako, from which five young birds appeared. The last nest was in a tree of the same species, and produced two young ones, so this pair of tomtits reared ten young ones during the nesting season just finished.

"The house pipits, in spite of having their first eggs broken, managed to rear eight young from other nests. Several new nesting-sites of the red-fronted parrakeets were found, and every nest produced young birds.