

GENERAL CONDITION OF RESERVES, ETC.

Reports received from the various districts show that, generally speaking, the Dominion's scenic reserves are in a fairly satisfactory condition, and that public interest in the preservation of these areas is definitely increasing.

Fire damage was fortunately very light, notwithstanding the hot dry weather obtaining in the summer months in most localities.

A good many reserves require fencing or the repair of existing fences; but unfortunately lack of funds has prevented the Department from improving the position in that respect to any extent.

GENERAL.

The Trounson Kauri Park maintains its popularity, and has continued to attract large numbers of visitors. Protection fences were placed around two of the outstanding specimens of kauri in order to prevent possible damage to the trees. A motor camp was established and a suitable shelter erected towards the close of the tourist season. Arrangements have been made to regenerate a growth of kauri on the area damaged by the gales which occurred in July, 1933. Young kauris from other parts of the reserve are being planted, and a shelter-belt of Norfolk Island pines is to be planted near the outskirts of the area most affected by heavy winds.

A special tour of inspection in the Rotorua and Taupo Districts was made, as a result of which it is probable that recommendations for the setting-apart of extensive areas of Crown land possessing scenic value will be submitted for the consideration of the Scenery Preservation Board.

It is estimated that over two thousand people visited the Cape Kidnapper Bird Sanctuary during the season. A sum amounting to a little over £10 was donated to the Board's funds by visitors, and it is proposed to expend this amount in improving the walking-track, providing a fresh-water supply, and establishing a small plantation for shade as close to the lake as possible.

The extensive Tennyson Inlet Reserve, in the Marlborough Sounds, attracted many yachtsmen and trampers during the year. An offshoot from Pelorus Sound, with many bays and inlets where virgin bush grows down to the water's edge, it possesses scenic charm of a very high order. The large summer excursion steamers anchor in its calm waters, and passengers and tourists are conveyed to the favourite picnic spots by boats and launches. The bridle-tracks formed by the Department many years ago have become overgrown with scrub and blocked by fallen trees, but steps are being taken to open them up again for public use. This work will give the public comparatively easy land access to this magnificent reserve.

LEGISLATION.

The Native Plants Protection Act, 1934, a measure promoted in the interests of the preservation of native flora, came into operation on the 1st January, 1935.

The Act makes it an offence for any person to take a protected native plant from any Crown land, State forest, or public reserve, or from any road or street, or from any private land without the consent of the owner or occupier of such private property. It was recognized, however, when the Act was being framed that its provisions should not in any way discourage the study of New Zealand flora, or the cultivation of native plants in private or school gardens, and so on. The penal provisions of the Act do not therefore apply to the taking in reasonable quantities of protected native plants for purposes of scientific research, or nature study, or for propagation in private or school gardens. There is also provision for the taking of native plants in reasonable quantities for medicinal purposes.

Native plants are protected in certain defined areas by Acts such as the Scenery Preservation Act, the Forests Act, &c.; and the Native Plants Protection Act does not in any way weaken the effect of existing laws dealing with scenic reserves, State forests, National Parks, &c. For instance, under the Scenery Preservation Act it is an offence for any person to take any plant from a scenic reserve without special permission, and this will still apply whether the plant in question is protected under the new Act or not. These other Acts give what may be termed a locality protection. The Native Plants Protection Act gives a national protection to all native plants with certain exceptions. It is supplementary to existing Acts dealing with Crown reserves, and also gives private landowners who wish to check vandalism on their properties more legal protection than they have hitherto enjoyed. The provision making it an offence to take protected plants from roads or streets also represents a considerable advance on previous legislation.

A warrant has been issued under the Act declaring all native plants, with the exception of a few species which are commonly regarded as weeds, to be protected throughout the Dominion. It is confidently anticipated that with the willing co-operation of the public the Act will prove a great success, and that through this legislation there will be brought clearly before the people the great value and beauty of our native flora and the necessity of preserving the natural beauty of the Dominion for future generations.

APPENDICES.

A schedule of reserves made and reservations revoked during the year, accompanied by a statement of expenditure, follows as Appendix A, while Appendix B records the work carried out on Kapiti Island.