

APPENDIX B.

KAPITI ISLAND.

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

It gives me pleasure to report that the year just passed has been a very successful one both as regards the growth of plant-life and from the birds' point of view. It is true that a gale of wind did some damage in May last, but apart from this the year was an ideal one. The calm warm weather experienced during spring and latter end of 1934 provided the right conditions for the birds that were breeding and enabled them to get through this important event without the usual rough conditions. With one or two exceptions the birds went through the nesting-season with excellent results. A large number of gulls and terns nested around Kapiti and on Tokomapuna, and were able to rear their young undisturbed by the elements. The little blue penguins were not so fortunate, however, for, just as they were preparing to breed in July last, a large quantity of oil refuse was seen floating on the water between Kapiti and the mainland. From then on, for several months, dead penguins covered with oil were seen on the beaches daily. It is considered that hundreds of these harmless little birds were killed by the oil around Kapiti alone, and a great many more must have perished in other parts of Cook Strait. The parent birds go to sea every night for food and many of these covered with oil were picked up close to the nests, showing that these devoted parents had made valiant efforts to reach their young ones who would also die. Many other birds had oil on them, although mutton-birds were the only other species besides penguins that died from the effects.

During the year a necessary piece of work was commenced. This was the erection of a fence between the reserve and the Native land. This fence should be completed by the end of the coming winter. A considerable amount of planting has been done during the year, and many plants have been donated by people interested in the island. Mr. A. S. Wilkinson, the Caretaker of the island, desires to thank the following donors:—

Mr. A. Morris Jones, Kelburn, for plants and seeds.
 Mr. Arthur Seed, Khandallah, for seeds.
 Mr. J. G. Helyar, Lower Hutt, for plants and cuttings.
 New Zealand Alpine and Rock Garden Society, Lower Hutt, for seeds and plants.
 Mr. Ainsworth, Kilbirnie, for seeds.
 Mrs. Roberts, Kilbirnie, for plants.
 Mrs. T. Smith, Brooklyn, for plants.

While Mr. Wilkinson was on leave he collected some plants near Masterton for the island. These were *Gnaphalium subrigidum*, *Gunnera strigosa*, and *Pratia angulata*, and while in Nelson he gathered a few plants which he cannot name with certainty until they flower. Constant warfare is waged upon rats, and during the year 237 were destroyed.

I again express my high appreciation of the outstanding work being done by Mr. Wilkinson as Caretaker of the Kapiti Reserve.

I append hereto extracts from Mr. Wilkinson's annual report:—

“Due to the excellent warm rains earlier in the season, the absence of strong winds, and the dry period that followed, there was a splendid display of flowers. Most of the trees and shrubs flowered quite a month earlier than usual. The rata was a glorious sight in November, and gave the best display of colour that I have seen here during the ten years I have been in charge.

“The beautiful puawananga (*Clematis indivisa*) was a lovely sight in early spring. This plant is spreading all through the bush areas as well as in the manuka. The manuka itself when in flower presented a picture worth going a long way to see, with acres upon acres covered with the snow-white lovely flowers. The manuka when in flower is one of the finest plants in New Zealand, and if it were not so common would be much sought after for gardens.

“The bush areas were again adorned by the charming flowers of the heketara. Whatever else fails, this shrub always makes a lovely show. As it is well distributed over the sanctuary from sea-level to nearly 1,700 ft. up, it can usually be seen in flower for two months at least. The kaikomako also added its beauty to the landscape, but mostly on the lower levels. The rewarewa and kamahi were both seen at their best in December. The rewarewa especially is a great favourite with the honey-eating birds—crowds of tui and korimako frequented it after the nectar contained in the flowers. Another beautiful tree when in flower is the hinau, of which there are a fair number on Kapiti. The kohekohe did not flower so well as in previous years, but is now (March) covered with blossom, so promises well for the next season. Neither did the bush lawyer give its usual show. The tawa, toro, mahoe, houhou, puka, horocka, and pate all flowered well, and are now loaded with fruit. The karaka gave a magnificent display of fruit, and was much enhanced by the presence of numerous pigeons feeding on the lovely golden berries. On the floor of the forest, especially in the Rangatira Block, numerous species of ferns are spreading. The kidney fern is well distributed throughout this area, as well as a dozen different species of filmy ferns. The kidney fern was rather scarce on the ground ten years ago, but was growing on the trunks and branches of many trees, from whence it has sown itself over acres of ground.

“Another charming plant, *Senecio kirkii*, the kohurangi of the Maori, has established itself through the bush in many places. This shrub when in flower is one of the most beautiful sights of the bush. Unfortunately, opossums seem fond of it, so many plants are either eaten or mutilated. The young