

APPENDIX C.

KAPITI ISLAND RESERVE.

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

It gives me great pleasure to report that the year just closed has been an excellent one for the plant and bird-life on Kapiti. The absence of strong gales and the abundant rainfall throughout the whole period resulted in extraordinary growth amongst the plants. Some plants made such growth that they were unable to hold themselves upright, and stakes had to be resorted to. This was the case with a tanakaha near Mr. Wilkinson's cottage, but the growth has been general all over the reserve. Plants in exposed places along the coast usually have a hard struggle for existence. This year, however, these plants, such as ngaio, pohutukawa, and taupata, show new growth 1 ft. or 18 in. All over the reserve young plants are coming away, and the forest-floor is being rapidly covered with a variety of trees, shrubs, ferns, and mosses. Some important works have been carried out during the year. The boundary-fence between the reserve and the neighbours at the northern end of the island has been completed, and a first-class job has been done. The old portion of the boundary-fence has also been repaired. The whare has been repaired and painted, and the boats have been overhauled. Trapping of vermin has been diligently carried on, and just under five hundred rats have been accounted for. That the menace from rats is being minimized is evidenced by the fact that not one pipit's nest was interfered with on Rangatua Flat, according to Mr. Wilkinson's report. A few opossums were killed, but these animals are getting scarce.

The Caretaker reports that honey bees have invaded Kapiti and are to be seen working on fine days. Apparently a hive has been established somewhere on the island. If they are not found and exterminated, they will increase and will become serious competitors with the honey-eating birds.

The Caretaker, Mr. A. S. Wilkinson, desires to thank the following, who kindly sent over plants, &c., to set out on the reserve :—

Mr. A. Morris Jones, Kelburn	..	..	..	..	Plants and seeds.
Mr. Waddle, New Plymouth	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mr. Max Roberts, Wellington	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mr. A. Ainsworth, Wellington	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Plant Preservation Society, Lower Hutt	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mr. Beddie, Petone	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mr. Clarke, Constable Street, Wellington	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mrs. R. H. D. Stidolph, Masterton	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mr. B. C. Aston, Wellington	..	..	..	..	Plants and cuttings.

I would again express my appreciation of the able and thorough manner in which Mr. Wilkinson carries out his duties. I append hereto extracts from Mr. Wilkinson's annual report :—

"The beautiful filmy ferns are spreading everywhere; also the kidney-fern. These plants were almost exterminated by goats. Fortunately, enough of them were left on branches of trees and rocks where goats and sheep could not reach them, to again spread their like far and wide.

"Most of the trees, shrubs, and vines flowered well. The rata and pohutukawa were beautiful. The last named has flowered two seasons now. The young plants were sent to me ten years ago by Mr. Mackenzie, Director of Parks and Reserves, Wellington, and flowered last year for the first time. This year they were covered with blossom and should sow plenty of seed. In a few years we should see young pohutukawa coming up in all directions.

"Tawa, miro, and matai, among the larger trees, had the usual supply of flowers and will in due course provide the berry-loving birds with plenty of food. The hinau, that is so lovely when in full flower, was dull in comparison with the display given last year, also the rewarewa, a tree that is haunted by honey-eaters in the flowering season and much frequented by parrakeets when the seeds enclosed in the canoe-shaped pod are maturing. But the kamahi made up for the shortage of bloom in some of the other trees by giving a magnificent display of veronica-like flowers.

"The smaller-growing trees, such as the mahoe, puka, kohepiro, houhou, horoeaka, matipo, and toru, all bore their usual supply of flowers. Although the flowers of these small trees are inconspicuous the fruit is very beautiful on some of them. The mahoe, with its mauve-coloured berries on the naked branches, is very pretty. All are very much sought after by birds, both large and small. The kaka is very fond of the seeds of the kohepiro. This is the only bird I have seen eating the seeds of the kohepiro. The coastal species, such as the karaka, ngaio, and taupata, provided a lot of food. The karaka was particularly prolific, so the pigeons reaped a great harvest. Some belated berries are still on the karaka, but they are nearly done now. The manuka was very poor in flowers this year—too much rain, I think. It takes a dry season to make the manuka flower well. Neither did we have any lowland so-called flax (*Phormium tenax*) flowers to attract the honey-eating birds, although the mountain species flowered as usual. Other birds besides the honey-eaters missed the flax-flowers about our house this year. As soon as the seeds of the flax begin to form parrakeets are after them. They still fly down and search the old seed-stalks, and appear quite mystified at the absence of their favourite food. However, the toetoe (*Arunda conspicua*) is making a good show this season, and the seeds of this plant are greedily taken by parrakeets. The olearias flowered well, especially the heketara, the most prominent species of the genus on the island. This plant never lets us down. Some seasons it is much better than at others, but there are always some beautiful patches of it, even in a lean year.

"The clematis was also much in evidence in early spring, draping the bush trees and manuka with splashes of exquisite bloom, and the beautiful flowers of the bush lawyer, to my mind one of the finest flowers in the New Zealand bush, sprawled around over the tops of shrubs here and there. The