

*Climatic Conditions.*

The weather throughout the season was unusually good and, while this facilitated the inclusion within the scope of the operations of a great deal of previously unexplored and exceedingly difficult country, the heat and dry conditions actually became such as to militate against the best results, owing to deer keeping in the bush instead of adhering to their normal round of seasonal migrations.

*Sphere of Operations and Tactics employed.*

It will, of course, be realized that each locality possesses individual characteristics which impose the necessity for adopting a general strategical plan and local tactics most applicable thereto, and for this reason it is necessary to deal with the various areas separately under this heading.

*Lake Waikaremoana Area.*—It having become apparent that the forest of the large and valuable reserve surrounding this beautiful lake was rapidly reaching a very serious stage of damage by deer, and it having been decided that action on a sufficiently comprehensive scale to ensure a material and lasting abatement of the menace was essential, a party was established there in November and operated for the remainder of the season. Operations were conducted there about seven years ago, but during the intervening time the influx of further deer into the reserve, and the absence of any further operations, has resulted in the damage to the bush reaching an alarming stage, the difference apparent being far greater than is usually considered possible in so brief a period. There can be no doubt that, had the existing state of affairs been allowed to continue for even a few more years, the forest of the shores of this lake, which makes it a scenic gem, would have been damaged beyond recovery. The area is not one that lends itself to the employment of a large number of men, as the most effective tactics are, owing to the large areas of bush and very limited open spaces, to alternately shoot, and then leave undisturbed the open spaces, to which deer are attracted by the feed. It soon became obvious that the deer population of the actual lakeside is constantly augmented by inward migrations from large concentrations of deer to the south and west, and to deal with these the operations were extended outwards. The numbers accounted for represent a large proportion of the actual deer population of the reserve, and at present very few deer remain in the near vicinity of the lake, but it has been found that a very much more extensive area must be dealt with to protect even the reserve. Much valuable knowledge of the extent and degree of infestation in the area from Hawke's Bay to the Bay of Plenty and from Lake Waikaremoana to the Waikato River has now been obtained, and this season's operations have formed a valuable beginning to a more comprehensive and continuous plan for dealing with the whole region.

*Tongariro National Park, Kaimanawa, Ahimanawa, and Kaweka Mountains Area.*—This vast area, which includes many thousands of acres of forest and is the watershed of all the most important of the North Island rivers—*e.g.*, Waikato, Wanganui, Rangitikei, Rangitaiki, Mohaka, Ngaruroro, and Tutaekuri—forms a triangle, each side of which is approximately one hundred miles long, bounded on the south by the Taihape–Napier Road, on the north and east by the Napier–Taupo Road, and on the west by the Main Trunk Railway line. In considering the large number of deer killed in this region, it is worthy of note that the rivers that rise therein played such an important part in the recent devastating floods in Hawke's Bay, as there can be no doubt that, in conjunction with other factors, the damage done to the forests by the deer infesting the region contributed in no small degree to the rapid run-off of water, which accentuated the severity of the flood. The country lent itself admirably to "enveloping" tactics, in pursuance of which parties operated simultaneously from various points along the Napier–Taihape Road, the Napier–Taupo Road, and the Taupo–Waiouru Road, and worked systematically and progressively inwards to the point of contact in the centre, which is the top of the Kaimanawa Ranges. Starting from the level lands, the parties advanced through the foothills to the high country and then repeated the operation, the season closing with all parties concentrating on the country above the timber-line, which is most frequented by deer at that season.

The operations just concluded mark the inauguration of a comprehensive North Island campaign which is now on a basis which permits of its full inclusion in the general long-range plan to cover the whole Dominion.

*Marlborough–Canterbury Area.*—These operations come under two headings, viz.:—

- (a) *Deer Destruction*: With a view to taking full advantage of the fact that the previous season's operations in the back-country of Marlborough and North Canterbury had resulted in some deer moving down on to lower country, parties operated thereon, and the opportunity was taken to, at the same time, destroy the goats inhabiting the same country. It is indicative of the success of the previous season's operations, and of similar tactics on a previous occasion, that comparatively few deer were found to remain there, and their destruction was, in spite of the small numbers, a valuable step towards the termination of the deer menace in this region.
- (b) *Goat Destruction*: As the result of representations by runholders in Marlborough and the completion of an arrangement whereby they contributed, on a *per capita* basis, towards the cost, the Department agreed to allow a section of its expert organization to undertake purely goat-destruction operations in this region, and there can be no doubt that the numbers killed resulted in greatly increasing the stock-carrying capacity of a large portion of this province.

*Fiordland National Park and Lake Wakatipu Area.*—The scope of the operations in this area was increased, as compared with that covered three years earlier, to enable the essential principle of delivering the attack simultaneously from both sides of a main divide, by having parties operate from Preservation Inlet and Dusky Sound, in addition to those from the Lillburn Valley, Lake Hauroko, Lake Monowai, and Lake Manapouri.