

chiefly effected by the construction of two large cabinets, each of which accommodates as many specimens as twenty floor cases. One of these has been devoted to the rock specimens, illustrative of the geology of different parts of the Colony, reference to which is only occasionally required. A small gallery has also been erected at one end of the main hall of the building, on which moa skeletons and other conspicuous objects have been placed, by which arrangement a considerable saving of floor space has been effected.

A temporary arrangement for warming and airing the building has been effected, as it was found that the collections suffered injury from damp.

Birds.—The collection of New Zealand birds is now tolerably complete, and has been arranged in a suitable cabinet for reference, there being only a few of the specimens set up for exhibition.

Very extensive collections of birds from various parts of the world have now accumulated, which it has been found necessary to place in drawers and packing cases, so that at the present time they are inaccessible to the public, and inconveniently difficult of access for reference.

The most extensive recent addition to the collections in this department has been that purchased from Mr. H. Travers, which consists of thirty-seven species and 192 specimens from the Chatham Islands, some of which are new to science or extremely rare.

A collection of seventy birds of California has also been presented by the Academy of Natural Science in San Francisco; 114 bird skins from Norway, presented by Mr. J. Graff; forty-one European bird skins, forwarded by Dr. Buller; and fifty-seven specimens of birds are on their way from Germany, having been sent in exchange by Dr. O. Finsch.

The New Zealand birds' eggs have been mounted for exhibition, and the collection has been enriched by the donation of fifty-six specimens of the eggs of British birds, by Mr. T. H. Potts.

The illustrated work on New Zealand birds, by Dr. Buller, referred to in last year's report is advancing through the press, the first two out of the five parts of which it consists, having reached the Colony, and the remainder of the work is, I am informed by the author, already in the printer's hands.*

The catalogue of the birds with the diagnoses of the species, by Captain Hutton, also referred to in last report, was issued in October last.†

Fishes.—A collection of forty-six stuffed specimens, and forty-one skeletons of the fishes of New Zealand, and ninety-two species preserved in spirits, has been prepared and arranged for exhibition, to illustrate this important branch of the Natural History of the country.

The number of fishes now known to belong to New Zealand is 147 species, of which only about fifteen are not represented in the above collection.

The distinctive characters of the species have been given by Captain Hutton, together with notes on the edible species by myself, in a work issued from this department in May last.‡

I should also mention the valuable Osteological preparations which have been made for the Museum by Dr. Knox, among which the following are the most important:—Skeletons of a Moriori (female), the sea leopard, (*Stenorhynchus leptonyx*;) thirty birds, fifty fishes, twenty reptiles, &c., constituting a most interesting feature in the Museum.

Shells.—The collections of New Zealand shells, both recent and fossil, have been thoroughly investigated by Captain Hutton, the greater part of whose time during the past year has been devoted to this important work, and he has prepared a descriptive catalogue, which only awaits the receipt of a list of the New Zealand shells in the European collections, which is being prepared by Dr. Von Martens, of Berlin, to be completed for the press.

The total number of existing species of the class Mollusca, represented in the Museum, and described in this catalogue, will be 560, to which must be added 200 species of fossil shells that are now extinct.

Captain Hutton has also prepared a descriptive catalogue of the New Zealand Echinodermata in the Museum, in which he enumerates thirty-six species.

The collection of foreign shells has been added to during the past year by 170 American species, presented by Colonel Jewett, of New York, and other collections of minor importance.

Insects.—An arrangement has been made for the publication in England of descriptive and illustrated catalogues of the different classes of insects which are found in New Zealand, as their classification cannot be satisfactorily effected without reference to extensive Museums and Libraries containing works of reference in Natural History. The foreign collections in the Museum have received a valuable addition in a named collection of 332 specimens of the Lepidoptera and Coleoptera of Queensland, from W. H. Miskin, Esq.

Palæontology.—The descriptive and illustrated catalogue of the New Zealand fossils in the Museum is also in an advanced state of preparation; but further examination of certain localities will be necessary before it can be sent to press. The collection of minerals, rocks, and fossils has been largely extended during the past year, in the course of the Geological Survey; the chief additions being the collections made in Canterbury by Dr. Haast, and Mr. H. Travers in the Chatham Islands and at the Amuri, where he obtained a large number of Saurian bones, in blocks that weigh several cwt., but unfortunately in a very hard matrix, so that it is doubtful if they can be extracted in a perfect state.

HERBARIUM.

The collection of dried plants, which is kept for reference and exchange, is now very extensive, but from the want of proper accommodation it is constantly liable to injury from insects and mice, being thus a constant source of anxiety and extra labour, which could be avoided if a sufficient number of properly constructed cabinets were provided.

* Birds of New Zealand by W. L. Buller, Sc.D., 4to., with coloured plates of all the species peculiar to the Islands.—Van Vorst, London.

† Catalogue of the Birds of New Zealand, by Captain F. W. Hutton, F.G.S., Assistant Geologist, 8vo., 85 pp.

‡ Fishes of New Zealand, catalogue by Captain F. W. Hutton, F.G.S., Assistant Geologist, and notes on the edible fishes, by Dr. Hector, Director, with 12 plates, 8vo., 135 pp.