

The Henderson Valley Reserve is being well looked after by Mr. and Mrs. Knight, who themselves own a very pretty bit of forest adjoining, and dispense afternoon tea.

As the fences around Kauri Gully, at Northcote, were falling into disrepair, and the tracks grown over and bridges gone, I obtained and spent the sum of £50 in putting them into good order.

An inspection and report were also made of the scenic beauties along the Mangamuka-Kaitaia Road, which will be a most important main highway and tourist route. Action to acquire portion of this area for scenic reserves was recommended.

Witheyford Park area, near Birkenhead, which has been extremely well looked after for the past forty years by the owner, was also reported upon, and it would make an ideal picnic-ground for the people of Auckland, but could hardly be termed a national scenic reserve. It would, however, be a great pity to see it cut up and exploited.

I did my utmost to visit all the scenic reserves in this district, as I take a very keen interest in same, having lived in the heart of the virgin forest for over thirty years.

The soldier revaluation and other work is at present too strenuous to permit the necessary time being spared, and it may be as well to revive the position of Scenic Inspector, if only for the next three or four years, provided a suitable man can be procured.

Arrangements are now in train to acquire some 20 acres of the Waro limestone rocks, near Hikurangi, Whangarei. This is an outcrop of most interesting limestone rocks, of an average height of 40 ft., adjacent to the Waro Railway-station. The purchase was first mooted some twenty years ago, but difficulties arose in connection with the coal-measures underneath. The coal has now been worked out; and, though the limestone is of much commercial value, the present owners, Messrs. Carter Bros. and Wilson's (N.Z.) Portland Cement Company (Limited), have facilitated the acquisition on as reasonable terms as could be expected.

North Auckland has many beautiful scenic and historical spots, and every effort should be made to secure them before it is too late.

Two cases of vandalism were dealt with during the year, and I am glad to say that in each case (Kauri Gully at Northcote, and Waitotemarama at Hokianga) convictions and fines were inflicted. Another case is pending regarding damage done in the Mangamuka Scenic Reserve. It seems a pity that action should have to be taken against offenders, as these historical and beauty spots are the heritage of all, and should be guarded and conserved by everybody.

H. J. LOWE,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

## APPENDIX E.

### KAPITI ISLAND.

THIS sanctuary has received a good deal of attention during the past year. Development is proceeding under the advice of a committee of scientists and other gentlemen with a wide knowledge of our native fauna and flora. Considerable progress has already been made, and a very marked improvement in the condition of this beautiful and historic island may be expected in the next few years.

The extermination of the goats is a work of great difficulty. The caretaker is giving to it as much time as possible, and he has had much help from visitors who have the welfare of the sanctuary at heart. The few remaining animals are not doing a great deal of damage, but they breed so quickly that their complete destruction is of the utmost importance. Since November last 133 goats, thirty-six rats, and two cats have been killed.

The possibility of extensive damage by fire causes anxiety during the summer months. Seeds of fire-resisting native plants are being sown along the northern boundary for the purpose of establishing a fire-break, and in other portions of the island an effort is being made to extend the forest-covered area by transplanting and by sowing seed.

A contract has been let for the removal or destruction of the wild sheep, and the coming year should see their numbers so reduced that they will no longer be a serious hindrance to regeneration of the forest.

A number of native frogs were liberated during the year. The committee has in hand the introduction of some New Zealand birds not now found on Kapiti, and it is hoped that some success in this direction will be achieved early in the coming season.

It is with regret that I record the death of Mr. J. L. Bennett, who very ably filled the position of caretaker for many years. His successor, Mr. A. S. Wilkinson, who has made a close study of our native birds and forests, has taken up the work with enthusiasm. The following notes are taken from a recent report by him:—

“I was surprised to find the bush looking so well, as I had been under the impression there was no undergrowth owing to the number of goats. The southern portion, or that part south of the waterfall, is no doubt devoid of undergrowth, but north of the waterfall on the eastern side and the trig. on the western young trees and undergrowth of every description are springing up. Indeed, in some parts the young trees are so thick that it is difficult for one to traverse the bush. This applies more particularly to the country between Taapiro and Rangitira. Even on the dry manuka ridges, where the trees are open enough to allow sufficient light through, there are hundreds of young trees coming away. With a little judicious thinning of the manuka it is possible in a few years to replace the manuka with suitable berry-bearing trees, providing we get good seasons and avoid fires, the danger of which is very great in the summer months.