

APPENDIX B.

KAPITI ISLAND.

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

It will be readily conceded that the most essential requirement in a bird sanctuary is an abundant supply of food-bearing plants and trees for the birds, and in this connection I have to report that the regeneration of the bush on the bare portions of the island has been remarkable during the year. Nearly all the large areas of grass that were to be seen a few years ago are now a thing of the past, and only one or two open patches are left. The largest open area is in Taepiro, and this is being rapidly reduced by the growth of young trees such as taupata, akeake, &c.

Young plants of lacebark and pohutukawa planted out a few years ago flowered this year for the first time, and the cliffs along the shore will in future be adorned with the crimson blossoms of the latter handsome tree.

The regeneration and growth of the bush are a never-ending source of amazement to visitors, as the growth is not confined to any particular area, but is general all over the sanctuary.

A large number of young trees have been planted out during the year, many of which were donated by people interested in the sanctuary. In this connection the Caretaker, Mr. A. S. Wilkinson, desires to thank the following donors: Mr. Morris Jones, Karori, plants and seeds; Mr. B. C. Aston, Wellington, seeds; Mr. A. F. Waters, Nelson, plants; Mr. K. D. Dalrymple, Bulls, plants. Some of these gentlemen not only gave the plants and seeds, but went over to the island and assisted in planting them out.

Constant warfare is waged against vermin, but in spite of continual trapping, poisoning, and shooting, rats seem to be increasing. Ten cats were shot by the opossum-trapper during the year, while Mr. Wilkinson accounted for two at Rangitira.

Opossums are very much reduced in numbers and a considerable distance has to be traversed to get two or three in a night.

I again desire to place on record my high appreciation of the services of Mr. Wilkinson, whose ability and enthusiasm in his work are a great asset to the Department.

I append hereto extracts from Mr. Wilkinson's report for the year ended 31st March, 1932:—

"I have pleasure in reporting another good year for the bird and plant life of Kapiti.

"Nearly all the trees, shrubs, and vines flowered most profusely last season, promising an abundance of fruit for the birds. The clematis, which seems to be most plentiful (or perhaps flowered more) during the past season, was the first to brighten up the bush. That much-abused plant, the bush lawyer, also flowered very well. Its beautiful sprays of flowers were very conspicuous. The very fragrant parsonia, with its trusses of pretty white flowers, added its quota to the fascinating bush scents, whilst the less conspicuous kohia (or native passion-fruit) was covered with its greenish flowers, promising a much prized fruit for the parakeets. Of the smaller trees and shrubs the most conspicuous flowering-plant was the heketara. It started flowering in the bush a little above high-water mark in late September, and as these flowers withered others came out higher up. The last flowers to be seen were at the head of Te Rere Valley near the top of the island in November. The typical flower of the heketara is white, but at least three trees bearing flowers of a distinct yellow shade were seen. The *Senecio Kirkii*, which Cheeseman fittingly terms "a very remarkable and beautiful species" was also conspicuous in many places. It is pleasing to note that this plant is now coming up in many parts of the bush between Te Rere and Taepiro.

"Many useful as well as beautiful native plants have been introduced to Kapiti from other parts of New Zealand. Some species from as far away as Chathams and Kermadecs have been planted, and have flowered for the first time during the past season. The rimu (*Dacrydium Cupressinum*), the white-pine (*Podocarpus dacrydioides*), the totara (*Podocarpus totara*), several of the beeches (*Fagus*), and others, which are now well established. Banks' cabbage-tree (*Cordyline Banksii*) flowered most profusely last summer. Two olearias, planted within the last three years, flowered this year for the first time—the remarkably beautiful little *Olearia semidentata* from the Chathams, and the handsome *Pachystegia insignia* (perhaps better known as *Olearia insignis*) from Marlborough. Another plant introduced—*Dracophyllum strictum*—flowered last season. Several senecios also displayed their beautiful yellow flowers, and that magnificent plant *Myosotidium nobile* was a picture.

"The promise of a good crop of berries indicated in the spring by the different trees was fulfilled, and the birds naturally responded by increasing their numbers. All the species seem to have had a very successful season. The spring of 1931 was the best here for many years, and the morning chorus of the bell-birds during October was the best that I have heard on Kapiti. The bell-birds were chiming for eight successive mornings. On several occasions during this period they were singing for twenty-five minutes at a time, when the whole hillside by my cottage seemed to be alive with these melodious songsters. Such a concert was produced that is seldom heard nowadays.

"In December the rata started flowering, those near sea-level soon becoming red with the beautiful flowers that could be seen from some distance. This was holiday time for the honey-eaters—tuis, bell-birds, and kakas were in their element. The rata flowered a month earlier at sea-level than it did on the summit of the island, so the honey-eating birds were amongst the rata blossoms nearly all this month. The bell-birds and tuis came to our house for a drink of syrup very seldom during December. On one patch of rata I went up to see there were hundreds of tuis and bell-birds, and the noise they made was almost deafening. The ground all round was covered with the red stamens of the rata blossoms.