

APPENDIX B.

KAPITI ISLAND.

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

It affords me much pleasure to report that the year just closed has been one of progress as far as plant-life on the Kapiti Reserve is concerned. So long as the plants and trees from which the birds derive their food can be maintained and multiplied, success in preserving the bird-life on the island is assured.

Although indications in the early summer pointed to a dry period, yet late in December, when the island was very dry, heavy rain fell and every few weeks throughout the summer showers were welcomed. These showers, accompanied by mild weather conditions, not only stimulated the vegetation, but also relieved the Caretaker from considerable anxiety, as the danger of fire is an ever present one. A serious check was experienced, however, in the shape of a southerly gale at Christmas time, which played havoc with some of the trees in exposed places facing the south. Even the taupata, a tough species, could not weather it, and some trees along the shore were killed outright. The rata, too, was in flower at the time, and the gale both destroyed a beautiful picture and deprived nectar-loving birds of a highly esteemed food. The rough seas accompanying the gale destroyed a few nests of the sea-birds on the small islands, but for the most part the gulls and terns had reared their young before the gale began. Satisfactory headway has been made during the year by young trees spreading over open spaces, but the most pleasing feature of the regeneration of young growth is under the manuka of which there are hundreds of acres. All amongst the manuka-trees shrubs of nearly every species are growing. These young plants keep the forest floor damp, causing the manuka branches to decay and removing a source of fire danger. A fair amount of planting has been done during the year, and in this connection the Caretaker, Mr. A. S. Wilkinson, desires me to thank the following donors of plants, &c. :—

- Mr. R. Wall, Ohau, for plants.
- Mr. Morris Jones, Wellington, for plants of various species.
- Mr. A. Wilkinson, Tauranga, for seeds.
- Mr. K. W. Dalrymple, Bulls, for plants.
- Messrs. Duncan and Davies, New Plymouth, for plants.
- Mr. Helyar, Lower Hutt, for seeds and plants.
- Mrs. M. Frew, Enfield, Otago, for plants.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson, whilst on annual leave, collected a considerable number of plants on the mainland and planted them out on the reserve. Continuous warfare is waged against rats and other pests. Three cats and three hundred and thirty-seven rats were destroyed during the year. Some necessary fencing is being erected, at time of writing, along the northern boundary to keep grazing animals off the reserve.

I again express my appreciation of the valuable services rendered by the Caretaker, Mr. Wilkinson. The Department is fortunate in having such a conscientious and able officer in charge of the reserve.

I append hereto extracts from Mr. Wilkinson's report for the year ended 31st March, 1934 :—

"It is pleasing to note the number of young matai and miro coming up amongst the young growth. In time all the larger growing species will grow up through the manuka, and a lot of them will be killed out, but there will no doubt be enough left. Though despised by many people, the manuka is very useful to have on a bird sanctuary, as well as being one of the most beautiful of our native plants. If it were not so common more people would grow it. Parakeets, whiteheads, and grey warblers get a great deal of food from the manuka.

"On the more exposed ridges and rocky places there are numerous young plants of rata (*Metrosideros robusta*) and puka (*Griselinia lucida*) coming on. The rata is wind-sown, while the puka-seed is carried by birds. Both species will grow almost anywhere. I have also planted the puka on rocks along the shore, and it is doing well.

"Ngaio-trees are loaded with berries now (March), and, although not yet ripe, the starlings are after them. These birds are undesirable on a bird sanctuary as they interfere considerably with the native species not only taking the food, but driving them from the nesting-holes. I know of a ngaio that parakeets nested in for years, until two years ago, when it was appropriated by this pugnacious foreigner.

"The flax gave promise of flowering well, but was spoilt by the southerly gale.

"The karaka was loaded with fruit, providing the pigeon with a welcome change of food. Except for the berries of the poroporo (*Solanum*) and the fuchsia, the pigeon has few berries to feed on before the karaka is ripe. So they wait until these are getting yellow before thinking seriously of breeding.

"The matai, miro, hinau, toru, matipo, mahoe, and houhou are all carrying their usual load of berries. Some houhou that I planted out in the grass areas have their first show of fruit. The cabbage-tree (*Cordyline australis*) has also a goodly show of berries. This plant is now well spread over the sanctuary.

"Young cabbage-trees are even coming up right out amongst the tauhinu at the south end, half a mile away from the bush. Some of these are no doubt from seed that I have sown, but birds also carry them a considerable distance. Some that I planted in the swamp in the front of my house flowered this year for the first time.