

WARDEN'S REPORT.

Mr. John Cullen, I.S.O., Warden of the Park, in his annual report, remarks as follows :—

“ During the spring a fire started near the Whakapapanui Bridge on the Main Tokaanu Road and made a clean sweep of all vegetation growing on that area bounded by the Whakapapanui from the river near the Haunted Whare to the main road, thence by that road to Bruce Road, and then by that road back to the Haunted Whare. The area burned over is about three and a half miles long, with an average width of about a mile and a half. There was no native bush on the area. The fire is supposed to have been caused by some party camped near the Whakapapanui Bridge.

“ Another fire swept a considerable area of the park facing Rotoaira. This was caused by a Maori burning tussock on Native land. A breeze sprung up after he started it and carried flakes of burning tussock to the park, which ignited the dry tussock there. Damage was done to the edge of the native bush on the top of the ridge. I was passing along the road when the fire was burning and am satisfied the origin was an accident.

“ Deer are not very numerous in the park, there being no cover for them, except in the southern part of the areas. Deer are very numerous in the Kaimanawa Ranges at present, and it is from there the park gets stocked.”

OHAKUNE TRACK, ETC.

Mr. T. A. Blyth, the member of the Board residing at Ohakune, reports that the track leading to the mountain hut on the Ohakune side of the mountain is in good order, and that during the year there has been little or no destruction of the forest within the park boundaries on the Ohakune side.

THE LATE MR. L. M. GRACE.

It is with regret that the Board records the passing-away of Mr. L. M. Grace on the 10th January, 1934.

The late Mr. Grace will always be remembered as one of the leading figures associated with the gift to the nation by Te Heuheu Tukino (Horonuku) of the mountain-peaks forming the nucleus of the present park. The full account is set out in the handbook on the park prepared by Mr. James Cowan. Mr. Cowan, in the course of his chapter on the Heuheu family and the mountains, remarks :—

“ It is to this chief Te Heuheu Tukipo, who was known as Horonuku (‘ Swallowed up in the earth,’ *i.e.*, overwhelmed by the landslide) in memory of his father's tragic death, that New Zealand owes the nucleus of this wonderful national park ; but the moving power behind the gift was an Englishman, Mr. Lawrence M. Grace, son of Taupo's pioneer missionary. Mr. Grace's part in it was an inspiration that should always be remembered by the nation. His was the initiative, the suggestion that prompted Te Heuheu's grand act, the handing-over of the sacred mountains to the Crown.”

EGMONT NATIONAL PARK BOARD.

(T. C. LIST, Chairman.)

During the past year the work of the Board in the supervision and protection of the large area of bush comprised in the Egmont National Park has again been very seriously handicapped by the absence of the finance necessary to a Board having the control of such a valuable national asset, and, for the same reason, expansion of the accommodation for visitors has not been possible, and all work, however desirable, which has not been immediately necessary has had to be left in abeyance. The Board feels that this continued absence of finance is very prejudicial to the development of the reserve in a manner consistent with its character and the great part it could take as a health resort and recreation reserve if it were properly developed.

The work of destroying the goats in the reserve has of necessity been restricted very seriously, and whilst the Board has been successful in ridding some areas of this pest, and is satisfied that the bush is capable of rejuvenation and a fairly quick recovery from their ravages, the complete extermination must be carried out very shortly so that the goats cannot go back to the parts that have been cleared and recommence their work of destruction.

The official tally of goats destroyed during the year under review was only 265, giving an official total of 5,697 ; but it is known that many more have been destroyed.

Local Committees.—These committees have functioned as far as funds have permitted and to the best of their ability have controlled the various portions of the reserve in their respective areas, and made such improvements in accommodation in each case as funds would permit, the principal work carried out being the harnessing of the Kapuni River at Dawson Falls for development of electric power, which was commenced during the year and has since been carried to a satisfactory conclusion.

Afforestation.—The clearing of the plantations has been done by unemployed labour as far as the limited funds of the Board permitted. A very fine growth has been general all over the 300 acres of plantation, and the Board is using every endeavour (so far as its funds permit) to continue the necessary clearing and supervision of the fire tracks, as it recognizes that, altogether apart from any influence the plantations may have on rainfall, it is very desirable that the trees be protected and fire-breaks cleared, so that the trees may continue to flourish and ultimately serve to assist the finance of the Board.

The improvement of the facilities for winter sports has been continued on the Stratford and Dawson Falls sides, and to a less degree in the north (where snowfields are not so easily accessible), and the accommodation is now of such a nature that successful winter sports gatherings can be held on the mountain, and will gradually grow more popular as the facilities become better known.