

ANIMALS PROTECTION AND GAME ACT.

Acclimatization Districts.—Reference was made in the Department's annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1931, to the number of acclimatization districts and to the desirability of amalgamation of districts. While the Department is aware that there have been negotiations amongst a number of societies for amalgamation, unfortunately no progress has been made. Without wishing to detract from the work done by acclimatization societies, it is evident that with the revenue received from a number of the smaller districts it is impossible to provide funds for ranging and other matters connected with conservation. There is no question that better results would be obtained by an extensive and comprehensive amalgamation of districts.

Importations.—The whole policy of granting permission for the importation of birds has been the subject of review on several occasions during the year. Authorities are now restricted to birds from England and Australia, excluding Victoria. The list of prohibited birds has been added to, and, while in the past authorities were granted in a number of instances for male birds only, it is now the practice to wholly prohibit the species in such cases. One of the conditions attached to authorities is that the birds have been six months in the country of origin.

Suggestions were again received that fur-bearing animals such as beavers and musk-rats should be introduced, but they were definitely turned down.

An application for permission to import fresh stock of mallard duck was declined. It is the considered opinion of the Department that special attention should be directed towards the conservation of the wild grey duck in its true species.

It has been decided to refuse permission for the importation of tortoises. A consignment which arrived without any authority was refused admission.

Birds.—Turnstone, Knot, and Eastern golden plover were added to the list of absolutely protected birds.

Any policy of conservation must of necessity be supported by sympathetic public opinion, and it is gratifying to record an ever-increasing public interest in the preservation of our unique bird life. Numerous convictions have been secured for breaches of the Act, but there is ample evidence as to the necessity for more effective ranging to deal with illegal practices. Numbers of species of birds are definitely on the increase.

Shooting-seasons.—Open shooting-seasons for native and imported game were declared in various acclimatization districts. Reference was made in last year's report to the decrease in numbers of grey duck. The conditions governing the 1934 shooting-seasons were reviewed, and it was decided not to grant a longer period than two months for these birds, with a maximum bag-limit of fifteen. The maximum number of decoys allowed in one hundred yards square of water was reduced to fifteen. In the case of the Auckland District the limit was fixed at ten. A further condition was inserted providing that no unmoored floating stand, pontoon, &c., or any boat artificially dressed or covered in any way shall be used.

A provision which applied previously to the Rotorua Acclimatization District only to the effect that no person shall, in shooting from any shelter, maimai, &c., have or use more than one gun, was made applicable to all districts.

The Auckland Acclimatization Society has decided to experiment with the breeding of grey duck with a view to liberation and increase in numbers.

ROTORUA ACCLIMATIZATION DISTRICT.

Birds.—Bird life throughout the district has been well maintained. Black teal are not so numerous at Hamurana as in past years, but it is now noticeable that they are to be found on most of the lakes in small numbers. Grey ducks were plentiful, but mallard ducks were not so numerous, and have not shown any signs of increase. Black swans have decreased noticeably during the last four or five years. An increase in Californian quail was noticed in some places. Pheasants were not plentiful, except, perhaps, in one locality where they have not been disturbed.

Most of the native birds are holding their own, and in some instances an increase is apparent. The little grebe (Totokipo) is now to be seen on all the lakes, and is decidedly on the increase. The tui and bell-bird are very plentiful and have increased in the vicinity of Rotorua. The Indian myna is plentiful in the Wairoa area, but has not spread to other localities. The policy of liberating pheasants was continued.

Fisheries.—One noticeable feature was the greater number of overseas anglers visiting the district as compared with previous years. The condition of the trout at Taupo was well maintained, and a decided improvement was shown in both Rotorua and Rotoiti Lakes. The average weight of fish taken in the former was in the vicinity of 3 lb. and in the latter 5 lb., including some fine specimens between 10 lb. and 12 lb.

Ova and Fry.—An exchange of 250,000 rainbow ova for a similar quantity of brown-trout ova was arranged with the North Canterbury Acclimatization Society, and the ova received hatched out well. The collecting of ova was confined to the Waihukahuka Stream, where 5,855,000 eggs were collected. The number of fry planted in the Rotorua and Bay of Plenty districts amounted to 2,787,000, and 1,193,000 in the rivers flowing into Lake Taupo. In Lake Waikaremoana and rivers in the Wairoa area 400,000 fry were planted.

Growth of Marked Fingerlings.—The marked fingerlings planted in Lake Okaro in March, 1931, have continued to develop, and specimens up to 2½ lb. were taken in December, 1933.

Scientific Operations.—The annual mortality amongst the Toi Toi was practically nil. Examinations were made of specimens of trout taken from all lakes in the district, and with the exception of Lakes Rotochu and Waikaremoana it was found that the Nematode worm was only occasionally met with.