

Alpine Sports Club (Inc.).—A very successful official winter sports party to the Tongariro National Park was held during August, the party lodging at the Chateau. Snow conditions were not ideal, and, with the exception of a novice race, the usual sports had to be abandoned. A number of members have visited the park in private parties, and have been given assistance and advice by the club, thus enabling them to make the most of the facilities at the park.

WARDEN'S REPORT.

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

"The park area has been quite free from tussock and scrub fires during the year ended 31st March, 1935. For many years past tussock fires have done serious damage to the native bush, the Moturoa bush having been damaged on both its northern and southern sides, and three of the isolated patches of bush on the flat between the eastern end of the Moturoa bush which existed there forty years ago have completely disappeared, and others along the Waimarino Stream have been greatly reduced in area during that period.

"Native-bird life is fast disappearing from the north-west side of the park owing to the swarms of cats gone wild which now infest it, as well as the damage done by stoats and weasels, which are also numerous there. Tuis, which used to be plentiful there some years ago, are now rarely seen or heard there.

"The three mountains—namely, Tongariro, Ngauruhoe, and Ruapehu—were quite bare of snow during the months of February and March. During these months the Whakapapa-iti River was quite discoloured with a greyish sediment, while the Mahuia and Waikari Streams, which run close to and parallel with it and have their sources close by its source, were running quite clear. During the months of February and March of 1917 the three mountains were quite bare of snow, as were also the glaciers. This was owing to about six weeks' continuous dry and very warm weather. During this dry spell the Whakapapa-iti River water became heavily charged with a greyish sediment, which settled all over the river-bed and filled up the various pools in it down to its junction with the Whakapapa-nui River. Some of the pools so filled up were a chain long and fully 9 ft. deep, and were full right up to the level of their outlets. One pool, immediately above the Whakapapa-iti Bridge, in which prisoners, whose camp was nearby, used to bathe, was completely filled and prevented bathing therein. When the weather broke with heavy rain for two days, the river was cleared of all the deposited sediment. The Mahuia and Waikari Streams running close to the Whakapapa-iti River were not discoloured in any way. The Whakapapa-iti is always of a greyish colour down to where it is joined on its right side by the Waimapu Stream in a large pool, the water of which is quite greyish on the Whakapapa-iti side and quite clear on the other. The discoloration of the water disappears after going over the first rapid after leaving the pool. There must be somewhere along the course of the Whakapapa-iti from where it leaves the Whakapapa Glacier to the Ngarorere Waterfall a sulphur and silica spring which causes the discoloration referred to, as water smells strongly of sulphur at times."

EGMONT NATIONAL PARK BOARD.

(W. C. WESTON, Chairman.)

The work of the Board during the past year has again been very severely handicapped by the almost total absence of finance. The Board members are very much concerned at the apparent lack of sympathy on behalf of the Government in this connection, as they feel that they are endeavouring to control a very valuable national reserve without any financial assistance whatever. The Board views the general position with alarm, as it is felt that, unless some definite steps are taken shortly, the forest under its control will rapidly deteriorate.

During the year several deputations have waited on Ministers with a request for some permanent contribution from the Government for the ranging and upkeep of the reserve. The necessity for the employment of two permanent rangers was stressed. In all cases Ministers have assured the Board of their sympathy and interest. This year a start was made by the Survey Department to define the boundaries of the reserve northwards, work having commenced at the junction of the areas controlled by the south and east committees. It is estimated that the survey will take at least three years to complete.

Goats.—Although in the past considerable work has been done in the matter of the destruction of goats in the reserve, during the year under review it was not possible to do anything, and now several areas are fast becoming overrun with this pest. It seems a pity that evidence of rejuvenation apparent last year will shortly be spoilt owing to the rapid increase of goats in the reserve.

Local Committees.—The local committees have all functioned very well considering the lack of funds available, and a great deal of valuable work is being done by committee members in their honorary capacity.

Improvements in accommodation have been made, roads have been maintained, and, where possible, tracks have been partially put in order.

Complaint has been made of the cutting and sale of timber by the east committee from the reserve during the past several years. This has been investigated, and it is to be hoped that there will be no further cause for complaint. Perhaps it is only fair to report that whatever revenue was derived from the sale of timber was spent on the upkeep of the house, tracks, and in planting in the vicinity of the Stratford Mountain House.

Alpine Clubs.—As in the past, members of alpine clubs have been of great assistance to the Board. Huts have previously been erected by members—one at Fantham's Peak, erected by the Egmont Alpine Club, another at the Manganui Gorge, erected by the Stratford Mountain Club, and this year an excellent hut has been erected at Humphries Castle by the Taranaki Alpine Club.