

APPENDIX B.

KAPITI ISLAND RESERVE.

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

With the exception of a devastating gale experienced in the early part of January, 1939, the weather during the year could not have been better for both plant and bird life on the island. Sufficient rain fell at fairly regular intervals to prevent any drying up of the vegetation. The January gale was one of the worst visitations experienced for years, and undid much good work done in the way of planting out young trees, &c. The reserve received a severe buffeting, and not only in exposed positions but even in areas that were considered sheltered trees bear a scorched appearance. Trees were blown down in all directions. Along the eastern side a great many akeake (*Olearia forsteri*), which will withstand very severe conditions, succumbed through being drenched with salt spray, and the taupata (*Coprosma baueri*), a seaside plant, suffered severely. It will be a considerable time before the bush is fully regenerated.

After this storm the weather became very dry, but the position was saved again by rain towards the middle of March, when $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. was registered.

The storm took a toll of the birds, too. The Caretaker found the remains of two tuis, two bell-birds, and three pigeons, and the trapper reported that he had seen dead birds lying in the bush and many nests blown down.

Continual warfare is waged against rats and other vermin. Eleven hundred rats were accounted for by trapping. Opossums have been considerably reduced, as the trapper secured only 284 for the twelve months.

I regret to report that vandalism by some visitors to the reserve has occurred during the year. Some misguided individuals persist in carving their initials and other devices on the trig. station. The Land Act, 1924, amongst other things, enacts that any one defacing a survey mark is guilty of a crime. The vandalism does not stop at the trig. station, but the stupid practice of carving initials and hieroglyphics on living trees has been resorted to. Once the bark of a tree is cut an opening is made for the wood-boring insects and the tree is doomed. Young plants have been found pulled up after some visitors have passed along the hill track, and on one occasion the Trapper's traps were all sprung. If this sort of conduct continues, it will be necessary to refuse permits except to accredited naturalists.

The Caretaker desires me to thank the undermentioned donors of seeds and plants:—

Mr. K. W. Dalrymple, Bulls	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mr. N. Drummond, Whangarei	..	..	..	..	Seeds and plants.
Mr. A. Ainsworth, Kilbirnie	..	..	..	..	Plants.
Mr. T. Hughes, Paraparaumu	..	..	..	..	Seeds.
Mr. G. W. Hughes, Kapiti	..	..	..	..	Seeds and plants.

The Caretaker also desires to acknowledge the assistance rendered to him by Messrs. R. Sinel, W. Forrest, D. Wells, and Mr. Band in connection with repairs to the boats and buildings. I once again express my highest appreciation of the painstaking manner in which Mr. A. S. Wilkinson carries out his duties as Caretaker of the reserve.

I append hereto extracts from Mr. Wilkinson's annual report:—

"In spite of having had one of the worst storms of recent years thrust upon them in the middle of the breeding season, the birds seem to have reared the usual number of young. Some of them had already reared a brood before the New Year, others were either incubating their first clutch or were preparing to rear the second. The pipits, which come to the house for food, started nesting very early, and had two broods reared by January. We were looking to them to put up a record by rearing three families in a season, but for some reason or other they never bothered with any more nests.

"The birds that nest in holes or hollow trees appear to have had a successful season. There are more young red-fronted parakeets about than usual. Flocks of these birds can be seen at the present time feeding on grass-seed, toitoi, or trying the seed branches of the flax to see if any are ripe enough, but they will not derive much benefit from the flax this year, as that was all blasted just when it was in full flower. Only a plant here and there has any seed on it. Although the kaka that comes down every evening for a drink of syrup has never brought any young ones to the dish, we think they reared two young. An empty nest of this species was found 2 chains from our house which we think had been used by this pair. There was one addled egg in the bottom of a hollow mahoe, and among the debris lying in the nest were pieces of broken egg-shell and kaka feathers. From the appearance of the nest, the young had left only a few days before. These birds were not nearly so plentiful during the summer as in previous years. The rata, which usually provides them with a sumptuous feast about Christmas-time and which encourages many kaka to visit Kapiti in some years, did not flower at all. These trees never seem to flower in wet seasons.

"Both the tui and bell-bird seem to have had a satisfactory season in spite of the fact that two of their main food-supplies were denied them at the time when it was urgently needed—food that is usually easily and quickly obtained. This was bound to affect them, and while we saw many young bell-birds about before January we knew of only two young tui, and they belonged to the pair that obtain almost a living from syrup supplied to them. As the breeding of birds is largely governed by the food-supply, the syrup this pair was able to obtain so easily probably induced them to breed somewhat earlier. The delay in their breeding operations, due to being upset in January, meant that most of the tuis would be late with their nesting arrangements, and this is proved by the fact that a batch of three young birds left the nest only a day or two ago.

"Robins also appear to have done well. There is no doubt about it, these charming birds have certainly increased during the last few years. There seem to be twice as many about now as there were in 1924. The remarkable growth of the vegetation that has taken place all over the sanctuary, particularly in those places where formerly there was no cover of any description, has provided this bird with more feeding-grounds. Species such as the robin and tomtit, that usually nest in holes in trees, are easy prey for the rat.