

# Quarterly Newsletter

**Auckland Section.**—The Section's chief item of interest is the offer of a piece of bush by Mr. H. Alexander, of Clevedon. Negotiations as regards this are proceeding.

In November last the Section had two field days both under the leadership of Mr. R. B. Sibson. The first was to the Firth of Thames, and with a special bus and private cars the number present was 61. In the course of the day a large number of different species were seen, among them being pukeko, godwits, knots, banded dotterels, turnstones, stints, pectoral and curlew sandpipers, Caspian terns, wrybills, and a pair of banded rail, as well as the more familiar gulls. Pipits, skylarks, starlings, yellowhammers and native pigeon were seen from the bus while travelling.

Under the auspices of the Section, Professor McGregor will be giving a series of talks on natural history subjects to junior members on Saturday mornings, in his lecture room at the Auckland University College. The Auckland Hon. Secretary asks that all juniors who have not yet let her know if they wish to be notified do so at once.

The second outing was by launch to Motuihi Island which, after being a quarantine station for many years and during the war a Naval Training centre, has now been opened to the public. The birds seen here were chiefly land birds, such as bellbirds, kingfishers and grey warblers. The children were principally interested in the gannets, gulls and terns; in this connection our Auckland correspondent, from whose account of the field day this is condensed, ends up with a remark which we have pleasure in publishing, "The interest of the young folk is the wild creatures' life insurance."

**Christchurch Section.**—Thirty members of the Christchurch Section visited the Heathcote Estuary on 7th November, 1949, to observe oyster catchers and stilts. A call was made at Ferrymead, where Mr. L. Shearman gave a talk on his observations on kingfishers made over a long period in his own garden. Then the party moved on to Scarborough Head, where at close quarters observations were made on the nesting habits of spotted and black shags, black-backed and black-billed gulls, and white-fronted terns.

Just prior to going to press we received the notice of the Section's first meeting for the year, on 19th April, at which movie films of the Castle Hill and Scarborough outings taken by Mrs. W. S. McGibbon and Mr. Hugh Denys were to be shown, also coloured slides of Lake Paringa and Milford Sound by Mr. McCaskill.

**Motu Maire Island.**—This island, which lies between Paihia and Waitangi in the Bay of Islands and is 10 acres in extent, has been placed by the Lands Department under the control of the Paihia Domain Board. Mr. Vernon H. Reed, Chairman of the Board, states that it is intended to plant the island with native trees and shrubs. The part of the island which is near Waitangi adjoins the position where H.M.S. Herald was anchored in 1840. The Waitangi National Trust will assist in

the work. Flowering trees and shrubs will be planted and berry trees to attract native birds.

**Toreparu Swamp Sanctuary.**—The Society has been successful in having the greater part of this swamp declared a sanctuary. It lies near Aotea Harbour on the west coast of the North Island. Owing to a peculiarity of land subdivision, the boundaries of the surrounding properties adjoin within the swamp, so that each landowner owns a portion of it. Mr. Harry A. Brown, of Te Mata, obtained the signatures of the majority of these to a petition, and it is the portion of the swamp owned severally by the petitioners which has been gazetted a sanctuary. As this embraces the greater part of the swamp, the whole swamp, to all intents and purposes, becomes a sanctuary. The Society regards the creation of this sanctuary with great satisfaction, as it places great importance on the preservation of a reasonable number of our remaining swamp areas in the interests both of soil conservation and the maintenance of our waterfowl.

**Importation of Vultures?**—A well-known writer on nature matters, writing in a New Zealand paper, mentions a suggestion that vultures be imported into New Zealand to deal with the many sheep carcasses which foul the streams and provide a breeding place for blowflies. He goes on to discuss which vultures it would be best to introduce! We hope he was writing with his tongue in his cheek. There is already a bounty on the head of kahu, the harrier, whose natural job it is to do this work, because he takes toll of chicken, pheasants, etc. We wonder how long it would be before the vultures found other easy sources of food, like the stoats which were imported to keep down rabbits, and have killed off untold numbers of native birds. Vultures are probably timid and do not tackle other than dead or very feeble animals in their natural state. But it must be remembered that the actions of acclimatised predators are unpredictable owing to differences in natural associations. In the vultures' normal habitat there are usually predatory animals which are not present, except in a minor form, in New Zealand, and it is quite possible, should he increase beyond the limits imposed by the supply of carrion and be driven to boldness by hunger, that he might, like the much-abused kea, soon learn that lambs and other domestic animals and fowls, are not so closely protected from predators in New Zealand as they are in his own country.

**Native Trees round Karapiro Lake.**—The Whangarei Forest and Bird Protection Society has asked this Society's co-operation in its requests to the Government that only native trees and shrubs be planted round this lake. The Society had great pleasure in complying. The lake and its surrounds are under the control of the State Hydro-Electric Department and 40 acres have been made a Domain under the Karapiro Lake Domain Board. The Society will continue to advocate, we hope successfully, this very worthwhile object.