

Wildlife Control

As populations increase, new settlements spring up, towns and cities expand, more land goes under the plough or is cleared and sown, all without thought for the creatures of the wild. Their future becomes gloomier and gloomier until their very existence is threatened. This was broadly the position when our Society was formed and our founder, with others who saw the need, pleaded with the authorities for a department of State to be set up charged with the specific duty of caring for the wildlife of the country.

In this issue we publish an account of the activities of the Wildlife Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs. We do so with considerable real pleasure, pleasure derived from the fact that the objectives of the branch have much in common with our own, and also from the knowledge that perhaps our influence had bearing on the decision to set up the branch in 1945. Our objects have much in common, though not always identical because the branch is concerned with attending to the needs of the sporting fraternity, who do not always harmonise with us in our objectives and indeed are at times at variance with us, although differences are seldom so acute that a little good will and common sense cannot overcome them.

At this moment there is a serious problem in which sporting bodies and our Society are both concerned, a problem which is ours as well as theirs, although may be for somewhat different reasons. We refer to the need for the preservation of wet-land bird habitat. Swamps are being drained, salt marshes reclaimed, rivers and streams straightened, and the natural cover destroyed, all thoroughly commendable activities under the right circumstances; but wet-land birds have their place in the scheme of things, a not unimportant place, and they are entitled to consideration, consideration not provided for them under the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act, and seldom given by individuals and local bodies, who could and should give a thought for our wet-land bird friends. There is room here for collaboration between Soil Conservation and Wildlife. (Our friends in Soil Conservation, by the way, have undertaken to contribute to our May issue.)

The Wildlife Branch has a man-sized job on its hands, a job doubtless hampered by the need for more money. It has accomplished much, but much more remains to be done when staff and time permit. It is a non-revenue-producing branch; necessarily its work calls for a great deal of research, and its operations must be largely educational, because it is by education that public support will be obtained. In a modern community, study and care of the creatures of the wild is a sign of national maturity, and the work now accomplished will in time provide the impetus for its extension.

Manapouri and Te Anau in Grave Peril

During the past few weeks a number of organisations and individuals have informed us that they had communicated with the Prime Minister and some Members of Parliament requesting that the present favourable opportunity to negotiate with the Comalco Company should be used in an effort to obtain agreement that the company will not exercise its right under the Act to raise the levels of Lakes Manapouri and Te Anau by up to perhaps 100 ft. and 20 ft. respectively. So far as we can learn none of the approaches have met with the slightest success, the replies received being more or less simply a reiteration of a statement that the scenic beauties of the lakes are protected under the Act. We cannot too strongly emphasise that, if the levels of the lakes are raised in accordance with the provisions contained in the Act, the natural scenic beauties of those peerless lakes will have been destroyed for ever, and the scenery-preservation clause in the Act will be known for what it is, a bitter sop given to the people to cover unthinkable, deliberate destruction in one of the world's loveliest scenic gems. Actually hundreds of miles of tree-lined shores in Lake Te Anau

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