

several other game species, numbering 125,000 birds in all. There is now a regular yearly trapping and banding programme covering several thousand birds. About this time the Onithological Society also commenced banding, and the branch has always been pleased to assist the society in this useful work, which now covers a variety of birds of many species.

The aim with game birds is to so manage the population that an annual crop can be taken. This requires technical officers to apply the findings of research and led, several years ago, to the appointment of two Game Management Officers. They are also concerned with any changes in habitat, as habitat maintained in good condition is vital for the well-being of wild-life populations. While much attention has been given to forest and mountain reservations, and while the importance of off-shore islands has been stressed, the fate of wet lands, shallow lagoons, and swamps, has only recently been highlighted. One of the urgent tasks has been to place before those persons concerned with development, the serious effects on water birds, both protected and game, which have arisen and will still further arise through widespread unrestricted land-drainage programmes.

Wildlife Administration Today

As two of its main functions, the Wildlife Branch has New Zealand-wide responsibility for the preservation of native birds and the conservation and management of stocks of game birds. Locally within the boundaries of their 24 individual districts, acclimatisation



Photo: Wildlife Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs.

Reserve fence on Stephens Island showing the regeneration of coastal forest to the right of the fence and grazing land to the left.



Photo: Wildlife Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs.

A typical group of off-shore islands. Some of the muttonbird islands, off the south-west of Stewart Island, viewed from Big South Cape Island.

societies share some measure of this responsibility, but in the Rotorua and Southern Lakes Acclimatisation Districts the branch is the local administration and also manages the trout fisheries.

Of necessity wildlife administration is a cooperative venture as it is a fallacy to think one aspect can be dealt with to the exclusion of others. Man sets up administrative fences but these don't keep animals in neat little compartments, and rarely is one species found only in a given area. So there is a changing pattern. The Department of Agriculture assumed control in 1953 over the importation of all animals, birds, and plants to strengthen preventive measures against the entry of pests and diseases, but the branch still acts in an advisory capacity to that department on importations of animals and birds. In 1956 control work on deer, opossums, and other grazing and browsing animals was transferred to the New Zealand Forest Service. However, the Rabbit Destruction Council, which handles rabbit destruction through rabbit boards, now carries out some control work on wallabies and opossums, while the Animal Ecology Division of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research carries out basic research on some animals and birds, including rabbits and, more recently, deer. The Marine Department administers marine mammals such as seals, also salt-water and fresh-water fisheries, except that local administration of the trout and salmon fisheries is exercised either by acclimatisation societies or the Wildlife Branch. Finally, some of the