

Notes from Branches and Sections

WAIKATO BRANCH

Last Easter members of Waikato Branch stayed at the North Egmont Chalet and at the camp house from Friday night to Monday morning.

Mr Jim Peacock, the ranger from Stratford, showed slides of Egmont National Park on Friday night and slides of Kapiti Island.

Members split into three groups on Saturday morning, the less active going to the Trig (3,875 ft) and back to the chalet via the Veronica Track. The second party spent the day on the Korito Track. They had done a good deal of botanising in the bush, where they discovered many unusual plants.

The remainder went with Mr Peacock to Holly Hut and some from there to Bell's Falls.

Many of the plants of Mt Egmont are unique to the area. This was an interesting trip broken by a few landslides, even though it rained very heavily and on the exposed ridges it blew very hard. The Holly Hut was already occupied when the party arrived for lunch, but after removing dripping parkas, we managed to squeeze in. While four of the party continued to Bell's Falls, an extra mile away, the rest returned to the chalet.

The weather turned bitterly cold on Saturday night, with a strong wind, but everyone was snug around the roaring log fire in the lounge of the chalet while the leaders of each group told of their day's activities.

On Sunday some of the party climbed up the mountain to enjoy the alpine plants and admire the view, and others went on the Kokowai Track. The children were taken to see the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust Park, and other adults travelled to Dawson's Falls and went on walks there, a very beautiful place to see.

Our thanks go to the organisers of a most enjoyable weekend: Mr David Wilson, Mr Geoff Jensen, and Mr David McAdam, and to Mr and Mrs Arnold for the catering.

— Kathleen M. Gray.

WANGANUI BRANCH

Wanganui Branch and Bushy Park Sub-committee held a dinner and presentation to Mr and Mrs E. A. Morrell on 24 June at the stately Bushy Park homestead.

Mr Morrell, who recently resigned from the branch's committee, has served for several years on the committee, and has represented the branch as a councillor. He has also served as chairman of the Bushy Park Sub-committee.

The presentation was made by Mr Stuart McKenzie, president of the Wanganui Branch and now chairman of the Bushy Park Sub-committee.

Mr Morrell said he had resigned because he had many time-consuming interests. He would remain interested in the Society and in further developments at Bushy Park.

— E. O. Turfrey.

SOUTHLAND SECTION

Summer activities for this year began with a trip to Lake Hauroko, where the Fiordland National Park ranger and two local farmers took our party by boat to Mary Island, a place of great Maori historical interest.

The next trip was to the Kaituna peat bog and not even showery weather stopped 70 members going. Dracophyllums and raoulias were particular interests of the day. Then followed a visit to the Society's lodge at Tautuku and to the Cathedral Caves.

A visit to the old Nevis Road at Garston brought the parties to views of the spaniards and of edelweiss. The final trip was to Forest Hill.

The outings have been by private car, as many of the roads are difficult for buses and the cost has been less for families.

HOROWHENUA SECTION

A month or two ago we left Levin early one morning to visit Kapiti Island. After a quick but bumpy trip by jet boat from Paraparaumu we landed on the island and were welcomed by the caretaker, Mr Rodda.

Kapiti Island was taken over in 1822 by the Ngatitōa tribe, who traded peacefully with the whalers who had established seven stations around the island. Toward 1840, when whaling had declined and most of the Maoris had moved to the mainland, farming became the main industry. Today Kapiti is a bird sanctuary.

On the way to the picnic ground we saw several wekas, which are numerous, and we were advised to keep our food off the ground. These flightless birds will come quite close and help themselves to food from packs and bags.

On the flat land at Rangatira, near the caretaker's house, we found an old whaling pot, a great iron pot used by the whalers to melt down whale blubber. Kakas were quite tame and sat or moved about in their tree while we photographed them. Further into the bush we saw two tuis and some North Island robins.

We set off for the top of the island, which is 1,780 ft above sea level. The track was fairly steep and rather slippery. On the rocky ground we found pockets of kohekohe forest with kanuka groves where there was a covering of soil. Stands of tawa trees are increasing, but most of the tawas on the island are less than 100 years old.

Friendly fantails accompanied us part of the way. We also saw bellbirds, whiteheads, and pigeons. Numbered discs along the track indicated places of interest.

At one place rotting skeletons of large rata trees were reminders of a fire which had swept the whole island. Where logs had been placed against trees opossum traps had been set above the reach of ground birds. Opossums devastate some vegetation, compete with birds for food and nesting sites, and