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**M**OST NEW-ZEALANDERS who have seen anything at all of Kapiti Island have seen it from Wellington's west coast beaches or perhaps from the deck of a passing ship. Few, or comparatively few, have been on it. That is because it is a bird sanctuary, owned by the Crown, and no one may go ashore there without permission from the Lands Department.

When you have your permit it still isn't easy to visit Kapiti. Three and a half miles of the Tasman Sea separate the island from Paraparaumu Beach, the nearest point on the mainland, and for passengers there is no regular transport. Fishermen who live on a little island just off the southern tip of Kapiti will take you if they can. But sometimes the sea breaks so furiously on Paraparaumu Beach and the steep shore of Kapiti that the journey across would be dangerous; too dangerous, indeed, for even the most experienced of launchmen.

The fishermen land you at Rangatira, a little bay on the east coast of Kapiti with bush-covered hills rising almost sheer behind it. In this bay lives the island's only regular inhabitant. He is the caretaker. About his house there is a small piece of flat land, behind which the island rises steeply to almost 1,300 ft. at its highest point. The

island is six and a half miles long and in area is less than 5,000 acres. At the northern end there is a flat of about 100 acres, which is part of 500 acres of farm land the Maoris own. The remaining 4,300 acres is vested in the Crown. The land belonging to the Maoris is separated from the bird sanctuary by a stock-proof fence, made necessary because sheep, cattle, goats, and pigs which were loosed on the island many years ago damaged the young trees and other growth and prepared the way for erosion. Now on the western side, where you look out over the Tasman Sea from a height of 1,800 ft., the cliffs are scarred by avalanches and cut by ravines. Once the bush grew thickly there. Now there is none.

The bush on the island's heights suffered, too. When the stock had cleared the undergrowth, gales sweeping in from the Tasman Sea heavily damaged the trees. Even now, when natural growth is aided by careful cultivation, you find huge trees which the winds have torn out by the roots. Perhaps these winds have had some part in fashioning the fantastic shapes of the trees which grow near the summit.

Goats caused a great deal of the damage, not only by eating the young trees but by running about on the