

some nine sections offered only one was taken up, chiefly, I believe, because of the restrictions imposed under subclause (2) of clause 232 of "The Land Act, 1892," and the result has been that fern and weeds have grown up, and during dry seasons will prove a great menace to the remaining bush.

The settlers in the locality have recently petitioned to have the reserve lifted from the forest reserve of 4,020 acres in the Takaka and Kaiteriteri districts; but it would be a great mistake to do so, as Mr. Sadd reports that it would have a very serious effect on the water-supplies to have this land cleared.

Some 11,585 acres at the head of Rainy River, in the Motupiko District, and 3,815 acres in the Tadmor and Howard districts have been marked as proposed forest reserves under Class A. The back country is generally of poor quality, and the land is only taken up along the main streams and adjacent slopes, so that this tract still held by the Crown should, I think, certainly be reserved.

In the Collingwood County there are considerable areas of Crown forest lands at the back of the settled portions. A great deal of this is not likely to be taken up for many years, but as settlement extends the reservation of the forest at heads of water-supplies must be steadily kept in view.

PROTECTION OF THE NATIVE FAUNA.

The conservation of the back forests is the most that can be done in this direction, but of late years the rapid spread of the stoat and weasel has almost exterminated such birds as the weka, kiwi, blue duck, kakapo, crow, and thrush in a great many localities, and this season settlers are complaining of the loss of lambs killed by these pests; one settler in the Ngatimoti states that some forty lambs were destroyed in this way. It seems a pity that the protection extended to vermin of this character should not be taken off, at any rate in this district, where the rabbits have never been too numerous to be dealt with satisfactorily by poisoning.

PROTECTION OF NATIVE FLORA.

The deer abound in all the forest country, especially in the Waimea County, and live chiefly on scrub and small plants and the bark of the smaller trees. Cattle also take to the bush in winter time, and wild goats in some localities do damage to the smaller growths. Considerable areas of mountain-tops are used for grazing sheep during the summer months, and quantities of the flowering alpine plants are eaten and destroyed, being preferred to the coarse grasses growing at high altitudes; but the most important source of danger to the forest is fire, the devastating effect of which in the Wai-iti District I have already drawn attention to.

It seems to be of little use to make forest reserves without making sufficient provision for enforcing the regulations under the New Zealand State Forests Act of 1885 and the Land Act of 1892. The Crown Lands Rangers are not numerous enough to do this—in this district only one has been appointed, and, though the officers of the Survey staff co-operate as far as possible, this duty can only at best be inadequately performed. I would suggest that Forest Rangers be appointed; in many cases respectable settlers in the neighbourhood of forest reserves might possibly act as Forest Rangers for a small fee, or some such privilege as free firebote.

The whole question of forest-conservation is now of such importance to the future welfare of the colony that it would seem advisable to submit the whole question for report to some expert. In this connection I may state for your information that amongst those who have been attracted to this district will shortly be numbered an officer in the Indian Forest Department, at present in charge of the forests of Ceylon, who has, I understand, at least twenty years' experience in the higher grades of the Indian forests service, and was for a considerable time Assistant Inspector-General of Forests. This officer, Mr. J. L. Pigot, is throwing up all his prospects in India for health reasons, and may be expected in Nelson next autumn. I would suggest that it might be advisable to take advantage of this gentleman's experience and presence in the colony, and secure an expert's report on the whole question at a nominal sum.

W. J. MURRAY,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.

The Surveyor-General, Wellington.

SCHEDULE OF FOREST RESERVES, ETC.

District.	Section.	Block, Square.	Area.	Remarks.
<i>Waterworks.</i>				
Waimea	VIII., Sq. 18	A. R. P. 1,416 0 0	}
Maungatapu ...	14	IV.	1,000 0 0	
" ...	1	"	3,200 0 0	
" ...	1	II.	107 0 0	
Maruia ...	17	I., 139		
<i>Forests.</i>				
Maungatapu ...	1, 3	I., IV.	800 0 0	}
Wai-iti ...	16	VI.	120 0 0	
" ...	17	"	160 2 8	
" ...	18	"	122 2 24	
" ...	19	"	99 0 32	
" ...	20	"	84 2 16	
"	