

With regard to the protection of native fauna, Open Bay Islands are the only places that I know of which might be made a sanctuary for that purpose, and, although limited in extent, yet I am certain they would support kiwis and wood-hens if introduced. These two small islands, of about 40 acres, are covered with dwarfed trees and an inexpressible tangle of kihikihi, and are extremely interesting in every aspect: they fairly swarm with insects of all sorts, have several varieties of land birds, and are the roosting and breeding places of innumerable sea-fowl, besides being the favourite haunt of the fur seal. No persons should be permitted to land on these islands, nor should any one be allowed to shoot in their vicinity.

I would suggest that no shooting be allowed along or in the vicinity of the main roads, nor on any of the proposed scenic reserves. If this were done we should soon have the forest-lined tourist routes of this district populous with birds, to the great delight of all travellers. And I would recommend the transfer of our ground-birds, such as the kiwi, roa, and kakapo, into the headwaters of the Bealey, Waimakariri, Otira, Hurunui, Teremakau, Rakaia, &c. All of these localities once swarmed with these birds, and would do so again if protected. The Maoris tell me that in old time these valleys were full of these birds, more especially the Rakaia and its tributaries. The "kakapo-tracks" are still in evidence on the grassy uplands. It may interest you to know that the last locality known to the Maoris here as the habitat of the notornis was in this valley, and one of my men in 1881 found an enormous "nest" on the ground in the scrub. He and others also averred that on several occasions they were awakened at night by what appeared to be the tread and rustle in the scrub of a large bird close at hand.

Touching "the prevention of the degradation of the surface of the mountains and high hills, and the deposit of detritus in the valleys" (object 3), little or no harm has as yet been done on this side of the main range, but the continued firing of the high country in Canterbury by the sheep-farmers has led to the destruction of enormous quantities of natural pasture, and where the slopes were smoothly coated with a firm sward of grass now there are simply bare, bald areas of the underlying till; the humus has been swept down by frost and rain into the gulches and lost for all human time. On this side certain of the settlers who are farming the high tussock lands have burnt these tops very severely, and it will take years ere these alpine pastures recover.

A notably sad example is to hand in the upper valley of the Rakaia (mentioned above), where, in 1880, the whole of the mountain-sides were intact, not a bare landslide nor shale-slope visible; every acre covered and held together by gnarled, twisted forest and the matted undergrowth of sub-alpine shrubbery. Now, visitors tell me of, and photographs exhibit, bald, scattered flanks, scarred and riven by numerous slips.

I would, therefore, earnestly suggest that some means be taken to prevent this indiscriminate burning, which should only be permitted at certain places and times.

With reference to object 4—viz., "In the low country to conserve scenic effect and shelter, and by preserving the forest and scrub along rivers to so maintain their banks"—we will, where necessary, increase the width of the road reserves, which, as noted before, are made along the banks of all our rivers, lakes, and larger creeks.

Under object 5—i.e. "To generally reserve all forest-clad gorges and other places of natural beauty, which may be available from a tourist point of view, and which also may serve to make the colony attractive"—I would recommend, first, that 5 chains in width on both sides of our main roads and rivers be specially reserved for scenic purposes, at such places as may be deemed desirable. Also that reservation be made in the following localities:—(1.) The Twelve Apostles Range, at Cobden; (2) Kakawau Range, at Greymouth; (3) National Park at Otira and Bealey, already temporarily reserved; (4) Mount Te Kinga and adjoining country; (5) upper Valley of Teremakau, with extension down Hurunui River in Canterbury; (6) surroundings of Lake Kanieri, including Mount Tuhua; (7) surroundings of Lake Mahinapua; (8) watershed of Whitcombe River, with extension down Rakaia Valley, Canterbury; (9) surroundings of Lake Ianthe; (10) surroundings of Lake Whahapo; (11) surroundings of Lake Mapourika; (11a) Okarito Lagoon; (12) in vicinity of Franz Josef Glacier; (13) in vicinity of Fox Glacier; (14) the watershed of Copland River, with extension to "Hermitage," Canterbury; (15) the surroundings of Lake Paringa; (16) the surroundings of Haast Pass; (17) Open Bay Islands. Other than the Native land within proposed reserve (2) above, I do not consider it necessary to acquire or resume any private holdings.

I would desire to recapitulate what I stated in my letter to you of the 22nd March, on the alleged "destruction of bush at Lake Brunner, &c.," viz.: "That in this densely-timbered district we must remember that the miner, settler, and lumberer have prior claims to certain areas." Hence I consider that in connection with these proposed reserves certain powers should be given to the Commissioner, or other person in charge, to permit the miner and lumberer to prosecute their callings on these lands where no permanent damage may accrue to the blocks from the scenic point of view.

Again, as noted in my former letter, I would also suggest that all officers and Road Inspectors, also all overseers and surface-men who are permanently employed on the roads throughout the district, whether under the Government or county control, should be appointed rangers with special power to prevent indiscriminate trespass and damage to the forest on such reserves.

To stop the pilfering of plants at Arthur's Pass, I would suggest that the drivers of the mail-coaches be also made warders for that place. This could be one of the conditions in the mail contract.

G. J. ROBERTS,
Commissioner of Crown Lands.