

## SCENERY PRESERVATION.

During 1907-8 meetings of the Auckland, Taranaki, Wellington, Nelson, and Canterbury Scenery Preservation Boards were held, and a number of recommendations submitted to the Governor. An area of 8,130 acres was acquired and proclaimed under "The Scenery Preservation Acts, 1903 and 1906," during the same period, and £5,484 was expended on payment for land and necessary expenses. Owing to the great extent of bush-fires during the summer it was deemed inadvisable to proceed with the purchase of large areas of forest country; but several matters that were thus unavoidably held over are now receiving attention.

Full details regarding this subject are given in a separate report (C.-6).

## SURVEY OF TONGARIRO NATIONAL PARK.

In January, 1908, Mr. E. Phillips Turner, Inspector of Scenic Reserves, and Dr. Cockayne, of Christchurch, proceeded to the park, with the object of thoroughly inspecting its present features, and reporting as to the advisability of enlarging its boundaries. Mr. Turner made a rough topographical survey of the whole area, and Dr. Cockayne made an exhaustive botanical survey of the ground. As a result of their explorations and inspections recommendations were submitted enlarging the extent of the park from 62,300 acres (as defined by "The Tongariro National Park Act, 1894," to 137,900 acres, including several areas of fine forest, which hitherto had been just outside the boundaries, the present mountain hut near Ruapehu and the road of access thereto, together with several typical "plant associations" or areas of land specially interesting on account of the characteristic examples of mountain vegetation they possess.

The original boundaries of the park were arbitrary lines and circles that embraced areas of steep slopes, mountains, and waste stretches covered with volcanic cinders and ash. The proposed new boundaries contain various fine species of beech forest, unique collections of the alpine flora, mineral hot springs, ice glaciers, mountain lakes, and streams, and are designed so as to afford much easier fencing boundaries and divisions, while all land estimated to be suitable for settlement has been carefully excluded.

The Tongariro National Park Board, constituted under the Act of 1894, is now taking into consideration the various recommendations submitted, with a view to the better utilisation and accessibility of the magnificent park we have in the midst of the North Island, whose attractions only require to be better known to insure increased visits from all classes of tourists and residents of the Dominion.

Dr. Cockayne's botanical report is made the subject of a separate paper, and the map attached thereto serves to indicate the extent of the park and its position with regard to the Main Trunk Railway and main roads in the locality.

## KAPITI ISLAND.

An interesting report on the birds of Kapiti Island, by Mr. J. Drummond, F.Z.S., is printed as an appendix to this report, and the Department is much indebted to Mr. Drummond for his contribution, it being undertaken solely at his own expense, and in the interests of science. The caretaker (Mr. Newson) having resigned, Mr. Richard Henry, of Resolution Island, was offered the position, and accepted the same. He hopes to take over charge of the island at the beginning of June. During the recent dry summer a fire started upon the Maori land at the north end of the island, but fortunately did not enter the main forest, and was confined to the fern and grass country.

## DRAINAGE OF THE HAURAKI PLAINS (FORMERLY KNOWN AS PIAKO).

For some considerable period the necessity of rendering available for settlement the large area of Crown land (some 90,000 acres) in the Ohinemuri and Thames Counties has been apparent, and from 1902 to 1907 comparatively small sums have been appropriated by Parliament with a view of securing a complete set of levels over the whole area, so that some well-devised scheme of drainage might be initiated. This preliminary work, involving an expenditure of £1,322, was excellently carried out by the Department of Roads, under the immediate supervision of the District Road Engineer at Auckland, Mr. A. B. Wright. It, however, became apparent that the magnitude of the work required the services of an engineer who could devote his whole time and energies to the work of reclamation. This Department was fortunate enough to secure the services of Mr. W. C. Breakell, C.E., who had recently so successfully drained the Makerua Swamp, in the Wellington District, and he assumed charge in August, 1907, though, owing to the exceptionally wet winter, little progress could be made until December. However, from August to the 31st