

This island was bought and reserved for the express purpose of creating it a sanctuary for our native birds; and I think, if people were allowed to settle on it, that the children, visitors, and cats of the settlers would be certain to prove inimical to the welfare of the birds. Moreover, the open portions of the land of the Crown are (with one exception) exposed and very poor, and nobody could make a decent living off them and pay a rent that would make it worth while to lease the land. It seems to me far preferable to get the open parts reforested so that the birds may have a more extended area on which to live and multiply. As a reason for leasing the open parts of Kapiti it has been asserted that the risk from fire would be much lessened. I do not think this would be the case at all, for in my peregrinations through the Dominion I find that in all cases (even on the steepest country at high altitudes) settlers burn off tussock and native grass so that their stock may obtain the young shoots that succeed; they burn off fern and scrub in the hope that it will by this treatment gradually give place to native grasses. Patches of bush in hilly country are burned as they hinder the mustering of the stock. With this apparently ineradicable proclivity it is probable settlers would prove a menace, rather than a security, as far as danger from fire is concerned. At present the danger from fire is very small, as only those who have permission may land, and safe camping-places are always shown to them by the caretaker. I think that the goats should be killed off as soon as possible. The animals feed principally (at least in summer) on the cliffy coast-line; they kill the shrubs and herbaceous plants, prevent the natural extension of the bush, and in many places they have so kept the plants under that there are now nothing but long slopes of slowly moving shingle where formerly shrubs and native grasses grew. I enclose a photo which shows the denudation that is taking place on the steep stony hills near Paekakariki (the coast-line of Kapiti—where not steeper—is similar). This hill has had a plentiful growth of karaka, ngaio, titoki, mahoe, and other trees, but owing to excessive grazing of stock the seedling trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants have nearly all been killed, with the result that the trees are dying from the above-stated causes.

I recommend the fencing of the boundary between the reserve and the land still held by the Natives. On the land still retained by the Natives (who, by the way, are quite Europeanized) there is very little bush remaining; so, under the circumstances, I do not advise its acquisition.

E. PHILLIPS TURNER,

Inspector of Scenic Reserves.

REPORT ON THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE SOUND SCENIC RESERVES.

It is with much pleasure I am able to report that during the past nine months no damage has been done to the scenic reserves in the shape of wilful lighting of fires, fires spreading, campers or visitors destroying the vegetation and other growth, or otherwise interfering with the natural and scenic beauties thereof. Indeed, it is very gratifying to me to be able to report that all campers, visitors, or tourists display a very marked tendency to do all in their power to protect the reserves as far as they are able. It is only a small section of the community, mostly local young men, who imagine they have a grievance in not being allowed to hunt and shoot over the reserves, who give me trouble.

Visitors, to date, have been far less in numbers than during any previous season; and of campers two parties only, one in Ship Cove and one in Kumutoto Bay: this, no doubt, is greatly due to the uncertain season we have experienced. As a favourite resort for visitors Kumutoto Bay takes pride of place, but general dissatisfaction has been expressed at the absence of sanitary conveniences at this place, which want, I am pleased to state, will soon cease to exist, as arrangements are already in hand for the erection of both sanitary conveniences and a fireplace for cooking purposes.

Fires spreading from adjoining settlers' bush burns: During the past season only one fire of this class was started—namely, adjoining the back boundary of the Houhou, Puroa Points Reserve. Owing to the nature of the bush, consisting in places of dry birch spurs and small scrub, the fire ran on to the reserve in some cases as much as 2 chains, but no serious damage resulted. Had it been a dry season, I am convinced the fire would have reached the water in places.

Destruction of enamel notices: It is with very great regret I have to report the destruction, by rifle fire, of the greater number of the enamel notices posted last season. This is generally accomplished by firing at them from passing launches, making it practically impossible to fix the offence upon the perpetrator.

Pig-hunters reported: On the 1st October ultimo I came upon a party, with dogs and guns, pig-hunting on the Ship Cove Reserve, which I duly reported to the Commissioner.

Complaints from adjoining settlers about pigs' breeding on the reserves and coming out and damaging pasture and killing lambs having been made, arrangements have been made by the Commissioner whereby adjoining settlers have the option of hunting and killing the pigs, under the supervision of the Rangers.

Cattle run more or less over the whole of the reserves. Not much damage is done while they keep to the top of the ranges, but should they find their way to the bays much damage would happen to the small growth. Particularly would this be so in regard to Ship Cove, the small flat of which would be completely spoilt from a scenic point of view.

Weasels are fairly numerous on all the reserves with the exception of Blumine Island, consequently bird-life is gradually becoming more scarce. On one occasion at Ship Cove I noticed a weasel run down a tree from a height of about 20 ft. On making investigations I found a tui's nest with the remains of three eggs, all of which had been broken and cleaned out. On Kumutoto Reserve during the past season I discovered the nest of a kiwi, and watched with considerable interest the hatching-out and growth of the young birds. Again, on Puroa Point I was fortunate to locate the nest of a pair of blue cranes, which remained undisturbed, so that the birds were able to hatch and rear their young without being molested.

HARVEY TURNER,

Caretaker Scenic Reserves.