

From this region will the major needs of Wellington, Nelson, Marlborough, and Canterbury be drawn during the years and generations to come. Fortunately for the Dominion, the chief forests of the West Coast have been proclaimed provisional State forests, and are now being subjected to study and examination preliminary to being placed on a sustained-cut basis. The other forest region of national importance in the South Island is situated in Southland, and in three groups—the Catlin's River country (as yet not dedicated as State forest), the country between Sandhill Point and Puysegur Point (which has been dedicated provisional State forest), and Stewart Island.

The aim of the service is to assure the practice of forest-management over these and all Crown forests which are on land chiefly valuable for forestry purposes, and at the same time by rational control of forest-exploitation to secure constant renewal and perpetuation of the resources. The State forests are for use now and are not locked up for future generations. All legitimate demands for standing timber and other forest produce from *bona fide* operators will always be met fairly and squarely by the State Forest Service. (All information as to suitable milling-areas, &c., will be gladly furnished by any officer of the service.)

#### *Grazing.*

It is apparent that a widespread use is made of the grazing opportunities offered by State forests throughout the country, for many thousand head of cattle and sheep are fed and sheltered in these areas. During the year an investigation was begun into the economic benefits secured by pastoralists through the exercise of this privilege, and also as to the damage or otherwise done to the forests.

It has been ascertained that little or no control has been exercised heretofore over stock occupation, nor has the revenue received from the use thereof been anything but negligible. It is proposed to continue the study of the effects of grazing, and to draw up a scheme of grazing-management whereby the objects of forest-perpetuation will be successfully attained, and at the same time a reasonable use of the forests for grazing purposes may be secured. It must be emphasized, however, that grazing within State forests must always be subordinate to the main objects of timber-production.

#### *Game and Recreation.*

The value of the State forests as production centres for the natural propagation of fur-bearing animals, game, and as recreation playgrounds is just beginning to be appreciated. Plans are being made so that in all timber-sales the natural beauty of the forest scenery is preserved where these timber-sales are situated along highways, bordering rivers, streams, and lakes. Every means will be given to prospective campers, tourists, and travellers to enjoy the recreational resources afforded by the State forests.

The increasing economic importance of the opossum indicates that in the protection of this animal in State forests there is a great potential source of revenue. Efforts are being made to co-operate with the Department of Internal Affairs and the various acclimatization societies in developing the possibilities of breeding and harvesting this valuable fur-bearer. (At least ten thousand opossums were taken in 1921 from State forests.) Game-protection has been made one of the regular activities of the field officers of the service, and in order to assist in this all Forest Rangers have been appointed Rangers under the Animals Protection Act, 1908, and the Fisheries Act, 1908.

#### *Forest-protection.*

The effective protection of the national forest estate against its arch enemy, fire, is the keystone of successful forestry. All the carefully made plans of management, regulation, cut, and exploitation count for nought if the growing forest capital is exposed to destruction by fire. This factor in forestry is as important in New Zealand as elsewhere. Just as soon as exploitation begins in the indigenous forests of this country there marches in that archangel of devastation—fire. During the past generation two and a half million acres of virgin timber-land has been destroyed, and in its place is useless barren waste—North Auckland, Thames, the central backbone of the North Island, the Nelson and Marlborough Provinces, and the eastern slopes of the Southern Alps. During this year the orgy of destruction was maintained, and well over 50,000 acres of State woodland went up in smoke.

Your Director is appalled at the apathy and indifference displayed at this wanton decimation; apparently "What is everybody's business is nobody's business." It is absolutely essential that this enormous drain—which may be conservatively estimated to result in a loss of £1,000,000 per year—be checked, and at once. Every individual citizen should concern himself and make his interest felt in the protection of New Zealand forests against fire. The whole question may be summed up in a few words: The residual forests must be saved from destruction by fire by vigilant and continuous control, or in a very few years there will be no merchantable timber forests nor young forests for the generations to come. Fire-prevention is the first step to forest-perpetuation. A general survey of the forest-fire situation was made during the year, and during the immediate danger season a provisional plan of protection will be in operation in the forest districts of high fire hazard—namely, North Auckland, the Wanganui River watershed, and Ruahine Range, through Nelson Province, and along the lower eastern slopes of the Southern Alps.

Other agencies causing forest-damage are deer and stock. A study of these factors is now under way, and within a year a satisfactory plan of control will be evolved.