

Island, Ruapehu (9,175 ft.), perpetually snow-clad; the active volcano of Ngauruhoe (7,515 ft.); Tongariro (occasionally active), (6,450 ft.); Te Mari (4,990 ft.), and the Red Crater—a group of mountains which, both from scenic and thermal points of view, are unique in many respects. On the crest of Ruapehu, surrounded by perpetual ice cliffs, is a lake of hot water, caused by the heat from beneath melting the overhanging ice walls; whilst in the saddle between Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe are seen the beautiful Nga Puna a Tama, whose bright-blue waters show to advantage in their sombre setting. North of the mountain group is Roto Aira Lake, one of the most beautiful in the North Island; whilst on the slopes of the Tongariro Mountain are active blowholes, and the Ketetahi Hot Springs, well known and used by the Maoris for many generations on account of their valuable curative properties, as well as the intermittently active crater of Te Mari and its steam-holes, and the intermittently active Red Crater, Te Wai-Whakaata a Te Rangihiroa, meaning “The Looking-glass Water of Te Rangihiroa”—now commonly called the Blue Lake. There is also a fine cold soda-water spring gushing out of the south-western side of Tongariro, near the source of Mangatepopo Stream. Another attraction is the beautiful Roto Pounamu Lake, which lies north-east of Roto Aira and 1,000 ft. above it, at the base of Pihanga. It is an extinct crater-lake nearly a mile long and three-quarters of a mile across, and the wooded hills surrounding it slope steeply down on all sides to the water's edge. The water has a greenish hue; there is no visible outlet to the lake.

Within the confines of the park are large areas of native forest, deep gorges, glaciers, active craters, hot springs, cold springs, rushing streams, waterfalls, and many attractive features of New Zealand scenery.

Although the soil of the park is not suitable for settlement purposes, yet it contains vegetation which is as attractive to botanists as it is to laymen, concerning which Dr. Leonard Cockayne, F.L.S., stated in a previous report, “There are various fine pieces of beech forest, the mountain-beech (*Nothofagus cliffortioides*) on the east, the toothed-leaved (*N. fusca*) and the silver (*N. Menziesii*) on the south-west and in certain deep gorges not far from Tokaanu Road. There are also fine collections of alpine plants, embracing such remarkable species as *Dacrydium laxifolium*, the smallest member of the pine-tree family in the world; the whipcord veronica, *V. tetragona*; the handsome *Veronica Laevis*; the charming eyebright; *Euphrasia cuneata*; mountain-daisies (*Celmisii*), and many other plants found nowhere but in the mountain fastnesses of New Zealand. One plant especially deserves mention, for so important is it that the red or purple hue of its stiff recurved leaves gives the characteristic stamp to the landscape, lighting up even the barren and otherwise gloomy scoria deserts. This is *Dracophyllum recurvum*, a low-growing scrub peculiar to the backbone chain of North Island mountain (Ruahine-Kaimanawa) and to the high lands of the volcanic region.”

As regards the bird-life of the park, pigeon, kaka, tui, bell-bird, parakeet, tomtit, rifleman, wren, pihoihoi, whitehead, grey warbler, blue mountain-duck are to be found. All the birds originally known in the park are still represented there. Mutton-birds, or ocean petrels, also come and nest on the slopes of the mountains. The young birds are a delicacy with the Maoris, who often take them before they are ready for their flight to the sea.

The source of the longest river in the North Island, the Waikato (known as the Tongariro River from its source to the lake) is considered to be on the northern slopes of Ruapehu, which it flows from, and passes through the great Taupo Lake, finally emerging on the western shores of the North Island; whilst on the eastern slopes is the source of the Whangaeahu River, which flows in a southerly direction. From the western slopes of Tongariro springs the great Wanganui River, well known as the principal scenic waterway of New Zealand. All the streams of the park are well stocked with rainbow-trout.

There are other scenic attractions too numerous to recount in a report of this nature, but it may safely be said that there is no playing-ground in the world that can excel the Tongariro National Park.

BUSINESS.

On assuming office the Board found that the following huts had been erected and maintained by the Government: (1) The Waihohonu, near the base of Ruapehu—access formerly from the east by the main road (Waiouru-Tokaanu Road), but now principally from Waimarino; (2) on the western slopes are the two Whakapapa huts situated at the base of the mountain, and about eleven miles from Waimarino; (3) on the west base of Ngauruhoe had been erected the Mangatapopo hut; (4) at the Ketetahi Hot Springs a hut had also been erected; (5) the Mangawhero hut, about ten miles from Ohakune Railway-station, at the top of the Ohakune track, containing twenty-two bunks. These huts provide sleeping-accommodation, but campers and visitors require to take their own bedding, provisions, &c.

At the first meeting of the Board on the 25th January the Board appointed the following officers: Warden of the park, Mr. John Cullen, I.S.O.; caretaker, Mr. A. Cowling; secretary, Mr. W. R. Jourdain, (Chief Clerk, Lands and Survey Department); treasurer, Mr. J. H. O'Donnell (Chief Accountant, Lands and Survey Department). The consent of the Public Service Commissioner was given to the last two appointments being made on a honorary basis.

The Hon. D. H. Guthrie, Minister of Lands, in addressing the Board, explained the Government's views with regard to the management and development of the park, and welcomed the members of the Board at the inaugural meeting.

A general discussion took place regarding the immediate objectives of the Board, and it was decided to invite offers for the erection by private enterprise of a large hostel on the Waimarino side of the mountain, and that arrangements be made for the construction of the necessary road of access. As an alternative it was decided to finance, if possible, the erection of the hostel, which would be part and parcel of the park. It was felt this would be the most satisfactory arrangement were funds only available.