

bush country between the Rangitaiki and Whakatane Rivers. Deer are also to be seen in the large basin which lies between the upper Rangitaiki and Whirinaki Rivers. These localities will undoubtedly become the future home of the deer, and the heavy bush country will give greater protection to the animals than the more open country adjacent to the homestead.

The Okareka herd, described by certain local sportsmen as being of an inferior type and valueless, was nevertheless well patronized. Owing to complaints from settlers as to damage done to their cultivations by deer, four stags and one hind were allowed to each licensee. The herd was thus heavily shot over, and some good heads were secured on the outskirts of the bush land, the best being a fifteen-pointer. As a result of the heavy shooting, most of the stags seen were young, the older animals having been shot.

The Rotoiti herd is fast becoming scattered owing to sawmilling operations and closer settlement. Some heavy heads of good quality were shot, and Mrs. Grace Brown, of Pongakawa, secured a well-shaped fourteen-pointer.

The Waikaremoana herd was also opened, the limit being three stags per license, and one of the finest heads ever got from the Waikaremoana forest was shot by Mr G. Ormond, of the Marau country.

The Mahia herd, the oldest established one in the Rotorua district, was closed last year, and heavily culled by Messrs. Ormond Bros.

*Feathered Game (Native).*—The game-shooting season opened on the 1st May, 1923, for a period of two months. It proved to be the wettest season on record for many years, and the swamps and lakes were flooded to a greater extent than usual. Many sportsmen procured limit bags of native game, of which the grey duck was the most plentiful. The black teal and black swan were also numerous, and though the turnstone and golden plover were not plentiful, good bags of godwits (kuaka) were obtained on the coast and estuaries or lagoons in Whakatane and Wairoa Counties.

*Imported Game.*—The imported game opened for shooting comprised cock pheasants, Californian and Australian swamp-quail. The bags obtained were above the average of the past three years. In several instances, in the Whakatane County, shooters secured the limit of ten cock pheasants for the opening day.

*Opossums.*—The open season for the taking of opossums in the Rotorua district commenced on the 15th June, and lasted for one month. There was no limit to the number of licenses or to the number of skins allowed to be taken. The license fee was £2 10s., and a royalty in addition of 1s. per skin taken, payable to the Government. Some sixty-three licenses were issued, and a revenue of £235 12s. 3d. was received from the proportion of half the net revenue from the fees, royalties, and fines collected by the Government from this source. This amount was the third largest on the list, Wellington easily heading the list with £1,315, and Otago second with £886.

*Pheasant Rearing and Distribution.*—This Department's ranger personally supervised operations at the pheasantry throughout the year, for the purpose of rearing young pheasants for liberation throughout the district to assist the natural increase of the present stock of wild birds, and also to infuse fresh strains of hardy birds of well-known types. The high standard thus secured was appreciated, as evidenced by the number of acclimatization societies in the North and South Islands who purchased from this Department the surplus birds. The total number of young pheasants reared this year did not equal the number raised during the previous season. This was partially owing to the smaller number of stock birds kept, and partially to the fact that the ranger was not able to give his entire attention to the pheasantry, owing to the pressure of other work. Most of the acclimatization societies in the Dominion which rear their own pheasants employ a curator who concentrates on this work alone, leaving ranging-work to be done by others.

For the last two years or so the Department has carried on with one man, and any one who has attempted to rear pheasants will readily recognize that one man cannot do justice to pheasantry operations and general ranging in his ordinary hours of duty, and other arrangements will require to be made in this respect. Special care was required to see that the stock of hen pheasants would be laying early during September, so that before the end of January the liberation of the young birds of not less than four months old was commenced, and continued till the end of March, by which period 285 birds had been liberated. The later hatchlings, amounting to 107 birds, will not be liberated until after the close of the shooting season (30th June, 1924), when a selection will be made of some special birds for the stock pens, and the balance liberated in the East Taupo County, Tongariro National Park, and in Wairoa County, H.B.

The Rotorua Acclimatization District is an area of over 7,000 square miles, much of which is broken country, and the number of pheasants liberated over this area seems comparatively small. The main idea, however, is that young pheasants should not be turned out before the shooting season, as so many of them would be slaughtered. The intention is to distribute the birds over a very wide area to assist the stock of wild birds, prior to producing fresh strain. With this end in view the birds have been liberated mostly in game sanctuaries and scenic reserves, in both of which shooting is prohibited. In the matter of conserving the game, the Department gladly acknowledges the great assistance given by the officers and members of the Whakatane and Wairoa Rod and Gun Clubs, both of which organizations have their headquarters within the Rotorua Acclimatization District. In both cases the members have helped the ranger freely in the work of distribution of pheasants. Experiments are being conducted at the pheasantry in crossing the golden and Amherst species of pheasants, and, though these beautifully plumaged birds are usually considered aviary show birds, the ranger hopes to produce a hybrid which will prove a fertile game-bird.

*Mallard Duck.*—In compliance with a request from the Department of Internal Affairs for some young mallard ducks for liberation in the Pouto Sanctuary at Kaipara Heads, four young birds were supplied. In order to secure a fresh strain, the ranger procured several wild birds, and Mr. James Rae, of Opouriao Valley, who has a very fine collection of English mallard ducks, kindly presented this Department with three settings of their eggs. From these sources fifty-eight young mallard ducks were reared by the ranger, and liberated in several lakes and sanctuaries in this district. It has been found that the mallard previously liberated in this district has successfully crossed with both the grey and brown duck, and the hybrids are very pugnacious. Owing to the steady increase of the mallard, it has been decided to open them for shooting during the 1924 season, with a limitation of six mallard per day per gun.