

Appointments of honorary inspectors were made as follows: Mr. W. Hickey, for the Waiotapu Scenic Reserve Extension; Messrs. J. M. Scott, G. Middleton, C. R. Dean, W. Walker, and F. O. Kurth, for the Maungatautari Mountain Reserve; Mr. J. Robertson, for the Te Arai Reserve; Mr. A. J. Duncan, for the Elsthorpe Reserve; Mr. J. Guthrie, for Scenic Reserves Sections 12, 12A, and 42, Block XV, Hautapu Survey District, Wellington Land District; Mr. H. Leov, for scenic reserves in French Pass, Wangamoa, and D'Urville Survey Districts, Nelson Land District; Messrs. H. R. Dix, N. G. Parker, G. J. Leech, J. C. M. Greensill, C. H. Jackson, and H. Leov, for all scenic reserves in that part of the Sounds County situated in the Marlborough Land District; Messrs. W. N. Masfield and E. A. W. Moore, for the Mangamaunu Scenic Reserves; Mr. F. R. Woodham, for the Saltwater Lagoon Reserve; Mr. I. McLellan, for all scenic reserves in the Fiord County situated in the Southland Land District; and Messrs. R. Hamilton, J. R. Haigh, and W. F. Sutton for the Curio Bay Reserve.

Good work is being carried out by the members of the special Scenic Boards appointed to control various reserves, and the Department is anxious to arrange for further appointments in suitable cases. The system of appointing honorary inspectors is also proving most satisfactory, and it is proposed to make additional appointments from time to time. Many inspections have also been made during the year by officers of the Department.

DAMAGE TO RESERVES, AND TRESPASS THEREON, ETC.

The inspections carried out during the year, and the reports supplied by Scenic Boards and honorary inspectors, have shown that the bulk of our scenic reserves are in good order and condition. No doubt some poaching of timber occurs now and again in various localities, as well as a certain amount of unauthorized grazing; but the public as a rule recognize that scenic reserves have been set apart for the benefit of the Dominion, and should be preserved in their natural beauty.

A conviction was secured in a case where an adjoining settler had cut and removed a small amount of fencing-material from a scenic reserve, and also in a case of allowing horses to trespass on a reserve.

GENERAL.

In connection with the setting-aside of Lake Rotoroa, as referred to in an earlier paragraph, mention may be made of certain difficulties experienced in the administration of this reserve. The lake provides the easiest means of access to the Sabine and D'Urville Rivers, which are favourite resorts of deer-stalkers. These rivers have, it is understood, been stocked from time to time with rainbow trout-fry by the Nelson Acclimatization Society, with the object of ultimately stocking the lake with trout. In connection with these activities it has been the custom of the society in the past to periodically destroy the shags and their nests around the shores of the lake. Now, however, that the lake itself, as well as the surrounding country, is a scenic reserve it is an offence punishable by a fine not exceeding £100 for any one to kill or take any birds or native or imported game on the reserve, or to carry or discharge any firearm thereon. The society protested to the Department against the lake being declared a sanctuary (by virtue of the scenic Proclamation), and intimated that it intended granting permits to its members to destroy the shags. The representations made were carefully considered, and the Department also obtained the opinion of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries on the matter. That officer concurred in the conclusion arrived at by the Department that in the case of Lake Rotoroa there was no justification for authority being granted for the destruction of the shags, pursuant to the powers in that behalf conferred on the Minister by section 2 of the Scenery Preservation Amendment Act, 1926. The Department therefore refused to recommend the issue of permits for the destruction of the shags, and the society was advised accordingly, its attention being drawn also to the provisions of the Scenery Preservation Acts with regard to any unauthorized carrying or discharging of firearms on a scenic reserve. If in the future a thorough scientific investigation proves clearly that the shags at Lake Rotoroa are the menace that they are alleged by certain interests to be, then the Department would review the position; but on the evidence now available the proper course is to refuse any applications for permission to destroy the birds.

As stated in last year's report, the public interest in our scenic reserves is rapidly increasing. This is wholly to the good, as a wider knowledge on the part of the general public of the beauties of the native bush and other scenic attractions must result in a stronger desire for their proper protection and maintenance. But the fact that any area has been set aside as a scenic reserve is not of itself a reason, as many appear to think, why it should be thrown open to public use without any restrictions whatever, and camping thereon allowed as a right. There is no inherent right vested in the public to camp on scenic reserves, and indeed in a great many cases it would be most inadvisable to grant any permission in that respect. The Department recognizes, however, that certain scenic reserves are suitable for camping purposes, and where conditions are favourable it does not propose to unduly restrict the use of such reserves.

There is another point in connection with the administration of scenic reserves that calls for mention. Many reserves are on the border-line between recreation areas and scenic reserves pure and simple. What is to be done in such cases? The Department feels that it would be failing in its duty to the general public if such areas were regarded too strictly as scenic areas to be kept absolutely in their natural state. It therefore permits certain improvements to be carried out, such as the grassing of small areas of flat and sunny slopes in cases where the land is in fern or rubbish, and other work likely to add to the attractiveness of the reserve from a recreation point of view. It is possible that in the future it may be found necessary or desirable to administer reserves of this nature as public domains under the provisions of the Public Reserves, Domains, and National Parks Act; but no move in that direction has as yet been made.