

WHAKAPAPA—MANGATEPOPO AND WHAKAPAPA—SCORIA FLAT ROADS.

To open up further fields of interest to tourists and visitors to the park it is essential that roads should be constructed from the Chateau at Whakapapa to Mangatepopo and from Whakapapa to Scoria Flat.

The general route of the first-mentioned road has been located right through from Whakapapa to Mangatepopo, a distance of about eight miles, and formation (14 ft. wide) has been completed to a distance of 1 mile 15 chains. The maximum grade on the completed portion is 1 in 13. This road when completed will provide easy access to the Mangatepopo Hut as a base for the ascent of Ngauruhoe and a radiating point to the many features of interest at the northern end of the park.

The Whakapapa—Scoria Flat Road will bring the ski-ing grounds on Ruapehu within easy reach of the Chateau. The engineering survey of this road has been completed for a distance of 3 miles 18 chains, which covers the full extent of the proposed road. The formation (14 ft. wide) has been completed to 1 mile 27 chains, with the exception of 12 chains at the Whakapapanui Stream, which has been left in abeyance pending the erection of a bridge. The maximum grade is 1 in 14.

The work on both routes has been carried out by relief workers under the supervision of the Public Works Department. Pending the completion of the last-mentioned road, it has been decided to put in a connecting link from the end of the present formation to the old track, so as to improve the access for the coming season.

WARDEN'S REPORT.

Mr. John Cullen, I.S.O., Warden of the Park, reports as follows:—

"At end of October sparks from a train set fire to the tussock on private land on the east side of the railway about half a mile north of Waikune Prison, and swept eastwards over the plains to the Mahuia Stream, destroying all the vegetation on that part of the park eastward of the private land referred to to the river, a distance of about three miles. The beautiful fringes of evergreen shrubs along the southern side of the Moturoa bush and the bush on the northern side of the Waimarino Stream abreast of Hauhungatahi were completely destroyed, as well as some of the smaller trees behind the shrubs. There are several isolated patches of bush on the plains over which the fire swept, and these have also been much damaged and disfigured as well as being reduced in size. I happened to be at Waikune Prison when the fire started, so there is no doubt as to cause of its origin. Two small patches of bush that existed thirty-five years ago on the fire-swept area have been completely wiped out by successive fires, and it is only a question of time till the existing patches disappear, unless steps are taken to preserve them from future fires. There is a beautiful patch of bush standing out by itself on the left-hand side of the old track to the Haunted Whare which is surrounded by a dense growth of snow grass, stunted scrub, flax, &c., and is in great danger of being partially destroyed should a fire reach it. The various patches of bush on the adjoining military reserve have been greatly damaged by fire in recent years. As the preservation of the native bush must naturally interest the Forestry Department, it might be well to bring under the notice of that Department the damage being done to the bush by frequent tussock-fires. I think a clearance of all growth a chain or so wide should be made at the edge of all the bush in the park and military reserve, the cost of which would not be great.

"Native bird-life in the bush in the park appears to diminish year by year, and, as weasels and stoats are now quite numerous, it may be that their presence may have something to do with the disappearance of the birds.

"Some good catches of rainbow trout have been made in the Whakapapanui and Whakapapa Streams during the season, many fish weighing over 9 lb. having been caught.

"Ngauruhoe has been fairly quiet during the past year, and the same applies to the vents on Tongariro. The lake on Ruapehu, which had been cold since the eruption of Ngauruhoe in 1926, has again become hot.

"A new wire suspension footbridge across the Whakapapanui, to replace the old one giving access to the Waiuku and Silica Springs, is badly needed, as is also one across the narrow gorge below the Taranaki Waterfall to give easy access to that waterfall."

WINTER SPORTS AND EXCURSIONS TO THE PARK.

Ruapehu Ski Club.

The Ruapehu Ski Club, Incorporated, has supplied the following notes dealing with the visits made by members of the club to the park:—

"The Ruapehu Ski Club, Incorporated, held its seventeenth annual winter sports excursion to the Tongariro National Park from 28th August to 9th September, 1929.

"The party, which consisted of approximately eighty-five members, was the largest organized by the club to date, this being rendered possible by the construction of the new Chateau at Whakapapa. The building was sufficiently completed to enable our party to occupy the whole of the second floor of bedrooms and a number of rooms on the first floor. Our members, however, realized that, under the circumstances prevailing during their visit, a certain amount of inconvenience was unavoidable, and endeavoured to assist the management to the best of their ability. In the past lack of sufficient accommodation had considerably restricted the number of persons able to partake of the club's annual winter visit to the national park.