

## WINTER SPORTS AND EXCURSIONS TO THE PARK.

The following clubs have kindly submitted short accounts of visits by their members to the park during the year under review, and extracts from these accounts are quoted :—

*Ruapehu Ski Club (Inc.).*—The Ruapehu Ski Club's annual winter excursion to the Tongariro National Park was held from 18th to 28th August, 1933, and was attended by ninety-four members, an outstanding feature of the occasion being the celebration of the club's twenty-first winter visit to the park.

Snow conditions at the commencement were not as favourable as in past years, but were improved considerably by the snow which fell during the first few days. Once again the various events of the Club's Ski Tournament attracted numerous entries, and provided keen competition, special enthusiasm being displayed by competitors in the ladies' and the men's open novice races, the entries for which necessitated four heats for the former event and five heats and a semi-final for the latter.

During the visit of the Minister in Charge of Tourist and Health Resorts, the Hon. A. Hamilton, opportunity was taken by the club to submit representations concerning the improvement of facilities at the ski-ing ground and the early completion of the road to Upper Scoria Flat, Mount Ruapehu. This took place on the snow at 5,500 ft., the highest altitude at which a Minister of the Crown has received a deputation in New Zealand, and was, therefore, a unique experience for the Minister.

During the year a number of visits have been made to the park in connection with the inspection of suitable hut-sites, and during the Easter visit club members climbed Tahurangi (9,175 ft.), Pareteaitonga (9,025 ft.), and Te Heuheu (9,040 ft.). Several members also participated in a Christmas trip, organized by the Alpine Sports Club, to Round Bush on the south-western slopes of Mount Ruapehu.

*Tararua Tramping Club (Inc.), August, 1933.*—The club's annual winter sports party was in residence at the Chateau from the 19th to 29th August. Forty-one members, together with eight representatives from the Hutt Valley, Manawatu, Paua, and Victoria University College Tramping Clubs comprised the party, the total being forty-nine.

The weather during the stay did not permit as much ski-ing as was desirable, but at no time during the ten days was the outlook sufficiently discouraging to make necessary a complete cessation of ski-ing activities.

During the whole period the snow was soft and sticky, and, consequently, did not make for fast ski-ing. There was not as much snow as in previous years; more rocks than usual were showing, and Lower Scoria Flat was almost bare. The shortage of snow appears to have been common throughout New Zealand, the Tararua and Otago ski-ing grounds also being sufferers. Referring to last winter, Dr. Kidson stated that "the mountains are unusually free from snow for the time of the year, while on low levels there have been no falls of consequence."

During those days when weather conditions prevented large numbers from going to the ski-grounds, members of the party went on almost all of the smaller side trips—namely, to Tawhia Falls, Taranaki Falls, Silica Springs, Whakapapanui Gorge and Valley, Waihohonu Hut. Motor excursions were made to Tokaanu and to the Ketetahi Mill, from which latter point the climb to the hot springs was made. Some members of the party were able to make successful ascents, in bad weather, of Ruapehu, Tongariro, and Ngauruhoe, while the main party found it impossible to climb Ruapehu owing to almost continuous bad conditions.

The road now connecting the Chateau and the Upper Scoria Flat will greatly facilitate access to the ski-grounds, and will still further popularize the sport of ski-ing. The formation of poled safety routes, the great improvement in accommodation, roads, tracks, and transport has enabled an ever-increasing number of people to enjoy the thrills of ski-ing and the exhilarating mountain air, which previously were limited to a comparatively small number from tramping and ski clubs. Needless to say, the standard of ski-ing in the North Island will continue to improve as the direct result of the improved facilities. The New Zealand National Ski Championships, to be held at Ruapehu in 1934, will also increase North Island interest.

No doubt the new road to the Upper Scoria Flat will be followed by a telephone to the Salt Memorial Hut. Such a convenience would be of inestimable value in cases of accident, and would also allow early visitors to the ski-grounds to report snow and weather conditions to the Chateau.

*Christmas, 1933, and New Year, 1934.*—Quite a number of members visited the park and climbed Ruapehu, Tongariro, and Ngauruhoe, as well as making a fairly comprehensive survey of the whole park. A few members, who camped on the Waipakiki River, crossed over to the park on the Waihohonu side.

*The Alpine Sports Club (Inc.).*—There have been two official club tours to the Tongariro National Park during the period under review. In August, 1933, the winter sports party made its headquarters at Whakapapa, lodging at the Chateau. A very successful trip was held, resulting in many members obtaining experience in ski-ing and having tuition who had not previously attended a winter sports meeting. In addition, many of the older members had a very enjoyable holiday.

Breaking fresh ground at Christmas-time, a large party of members visited the Karioi district, lodging at the State forest huts close to the south-eastern boundary of the park. Although inclement weather prevailed throughout the period, a very successful trip was enjoyed, and opportunity was taken of exploring many of the lesser-known districts of the park, in particular visits being paid to the Wahianoa Gorge and the rugged country surrounding Girdlestone Peak.

At both the winter party and the Christmas party opportunity was taken to make ascents of Mount Ruapehu, and a certain amount of ski-ing practice was indulged in on the slopes of Girdlestone, which became heavily covered with snow during the Christmas holidays, inclement weather having prevailed almost entirely throughout the trip.