

Plains before the park boundaries were extended to the Tokaanu Road. The extended boundaries later enclosed these small alien groups; but they are not the result of inconsistent policy on the part of the Park Board. The strictly logical procedure for a National Park Board would be to destroy them now; but it would appear that most of them (except possibly the larch plots) are doomed ultimately to die without regenerating their kind; and meantime within their scrubby shelter some few native shrub seedlings are appearing. It is just possible that they may serve as nuclei for the ultimate establishment of clumps of indigenous scrub on the red-tussock plains; and, if so, they will have served as it were by accident to enrich the indigenous flora of the plains. They certainly, although at present conspicuous, are less of a menace to the true objectives of national-park policy than is the abundant and uncontrollable heather (both common ling and bell heather) which is spreading freely in the tussock grassland in the north-west corner of the park in the same area as the exotics—*i.e.*, it was included in the 1922 boundary extension.

VOLCANIC ACTIVITY.

Mr. R. Cobbe, Manager at the Chateau, advises that the outstanding feature of the year was the unexpected eruption of Mount Ngauruhoe on 7th December, 1934. In the course of his report he remarks as follows:—

“On Wednesday, 5th December, I was camped with three guides in the Maungatepopo Hut at the foot of the mountain, and there was no sign of any volcanic activity whatsoever, though Guide Risberg, who ascended the mountain on this date, noted that the upper lip of rock had broken away, and it was possibly the partial blockage of the vent with these rocks that caused the eruption on the following Friday. For three days the sky was darkened with vast columns of volcanic dust and dense black smoke interspersed with outbursts of steam, some shots recorded by the photographer showing a height of over 1,400 ft. Observers did not see any sign of flames, but at times rocks and stones could be seen rolling down the mountain-sides. At 9 a.m. on the Sunday the roar of the explosions vibrated the ground at the Chateau for about ten minutes, though usually it was only the observers at the foot of the mountain who could hear the explosions. The ashes from the eruptions were found on the plains for a radius of ten miles from the base of Mount Ngauruhoe, but the fall was slight, and the evidence disappeared after the first rain.”

WINTER SPORTS AND EXCURSIONS TO THE PARK.

Mr. R. Cobbe, Manager at the Chateau, advises that winter sports are gaining hundreds of recruits each year, and that it would be reasonable to estimate that 15,000 New-Zealanders are now directly interested in various forms of snow sports. He states that there were no serious accidents during the year, and attributes this to the excellent organization of the various mountaineering clubs and their constant endeavours to warn climbers of the dangers of making ascents without guides and proper equipment.

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

The Ruapehu Ski Club (Inc.).—Several trips to the Tongariro National Park have been undertaken by club parties during the year ended 31st March, 1935, the most noteworthy being one at 3rd June week-end and the annual winter sports visit.

At the 1934 King's Birthday week-end snow conditions made ski-ing practice possible in the vicinity of the Glacier Hut, and some members climbed on ski to the Crater Lake and returned via the Whakapapa Glacier.

Pleasing features of the winter excursion in August, 1934, were the return visit of that Australian enthusiast, T. W. Mitchell, winner of the New Zealand Ski Championship in 1932, and the personal acquaintance of representatives from several South Island ski clubs.

The Ruapehu Ski Club's annual ski tournament provided opportunity for practice prior to the New Zealand Championships, for which conditions were considerably improved by snow which fell towards the end of the former meeting.

With a view to the provision of further safety measures at the park, representations have been made in regard to the installation of a telephone to connect the Chateau and the Salt Memorial Hut, and the clearing of the bush track near the Mahuia River which was cut by rescue parties during the eventful 1931 search activities.

Tararua Tramping Club (Inc.), (August, 1934).—The Tararua Tramping Club's annual winter sports visit to the National Park was held from 21st to 31st August. Sixty-five members, including representatives from the Hutt Valley, Manawatu, and Pawa Tramping Clubs, took part in the trip. The party was in residence at the Chateau for the whole period, during part of which some of the members took part in and others watched the events held in connection with the New Zealand Ski-ing Championships, which took place on 27th, 28th, and 29th August, 1934.

The snow conditions at the time of the visit were the poorest that have been experienced for some years. The total absence of snow on Lower Scoria Flat and also on the lower reaches of Upper Scoria Flat made it necessary for the more skilled members to proceed a little higher up the slopes of Mount Ruapehu for good ski runs. A number of smaller slopes about 100 yards above Salt Hut provided a practice ground for the novices, and later—when these members of the party had gained more confidence and skill—they were able to follow the more expert members.

A party of nineteen made a successful ascent to the crater lake on Ruapehu. A party of twenty-two members also made a motor trip to Ketatahi Mill, from which point the climb to the Ketatahi Hot Springs was made. While the majority of this party explored the wonders of this little known and extremely active thermal district seven of the party made a successful ascent of Mount Tongariro under very bad weather conditions.