

(1887), Aorangi Park—Hooker and Mueller Glaciers (1890), and Oira (1901) came into this category. And in 1900 the second of New Zealand's national parks was established -- that centring on Mt. Egmont.

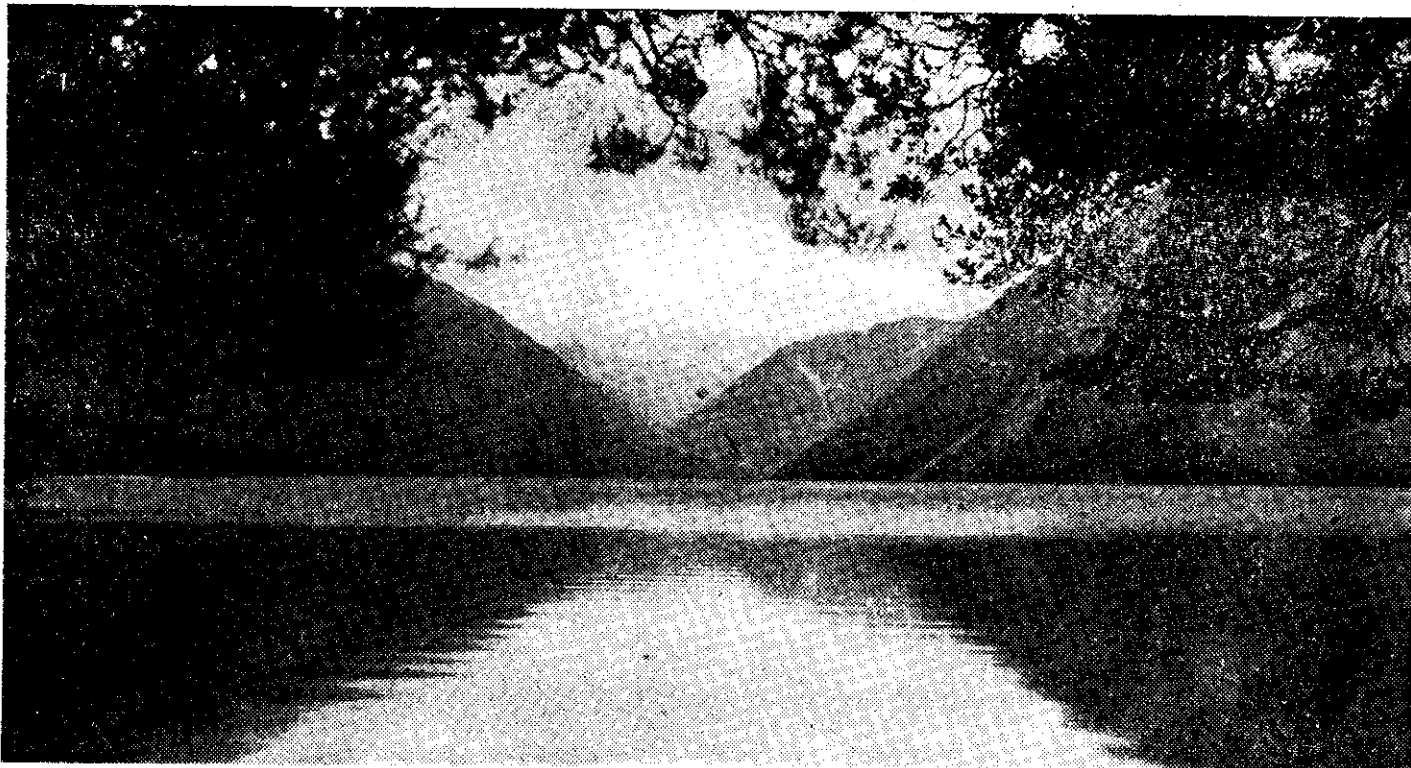
"In some countries," says the National Parks Authority's handbook, "the idea was that national parks should conserve scenery, vegetation, and natural wild life most strictly, allowing nature complete freedom without interference of any kind by man. Elsewhere, including North America and New Zealand, national parks became reserved natural regions which the public is permitted and encouraged to visit and which are developed with services and facilities that stimulate visitor traffic . . . in some ways the evolution of national parks in New Zealand has paralleled the American concept; in other ways it goes somewhat farther; in some, again, not so far."

By 1952 the Dominion had five national parks—Tongariro, Egmont, Abel Tasman and Arthurs Pass were administered by separate park boards, while Fiordland was technically a public reserve administered by the Lands and Survey Department. Over the same period, it became obvious that some kind of uniform control and administration on a national basis was needed, and the outcome was the National Parks Act, 1952, and the establishment of a National Parks Authority which would control in the national interest all such parks in New Zealand.

Since the 1952 Act the five parks have grown to eight; Urewera, Mt. Cook, and Nelson Lakes being the three new ones; and there has been in recent years progressive development of the areas so that the public may—in the words of the 1952 Act—"receive in full measure the inspiration, enjoyment, recreation and other benefits that may be derived from mountains, forests, sounds, lakes, and rivers."



T-BAR Ski-tow in action at Ruapehu (Tongariro National Park)



ABOVE: Lake Rotoiti (Nelson Lakes National Park). RIGHT: Trampers on the Milford Track

In the National Parks Authority's handbook there are small scale maps of each park, photographs to show their differing character, and some information on the amenities available. There are also sections devoted to brief surveys of the geology and vegetation of the areas, and a description of the bird life which is one of their greatest assets.

The parks vary in size and character and the scope of things to do is as varied as the terrain. The fringes of all the areas in summer attract the caravans and tents of campers, and the regiments of hikers who annually make the parks their destination as a matter of course. Further back, another kind of visitor is found. Here the amateur bird-watcher makes his hide, the artist sets up his easel, and the weekend and holiday botanists and geologists carry on their specimen hunts. The centre of the parks, however, attract a different type of user again. As most of the parks are hilly or mountainous or heavily bushed, these central areas attract mainly the young and active, those who tramp (rather than hike), climb, ski, or otherwise indulge in sports for the fit and experienced.

One area only of the parks is barred to the amateur explorer—the area of Fiordland between the Middle and South Fiord of Lake Te Anau, including the Murchison Mountains, that is, the known refuge of the Notornis. Apart from this one area, New Zealanders have almost one-seventeenth of their land as a playground for nearly unrestricted use—in terms of population, one of the largest playgrounds in the world.

