

THE FOUNDATION OF THE NATIONAL PARK.

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Hon. Secretary National Park Board.

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As in years to come the National Park will probably be of considerable interest to natural history students, a brief resumé of its foundation may be considered worthy of placing on record.

Several attempts have been made in the past to secure a sanctuary for the fauna and flora of Tasmania, but these have not been a success. In one instance, however, a reserve was proclaimed of the Freycinet Peninsula, on the East Coast, but, owing to the fact that it was easily accessible from the sea, and that no provision was made for a permanent ranger, the fauna was soon reduced. When the Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club held its Easter Camp at Wineglass Bay in 1908 (1) certain of the *Marsupialia* were plentiful, but on visiting the locality six years later (2) very few representatives of this order could be seen.

Several years ago Mr. W. Crooke drew attention to the advisability of forming a reserve at Mount Field. Meetings and deputations were organised, and a special association, known as the National Park Association, was formed, in order to support the plan for a National Park. The bodies who were prominently represented in the movement were the Royal Society of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club, the University of Tasmania, the Hobart City Council, the Fisheries Commissioners, the New Norfolk Council, and the A.N.A.

After protracted negotiations the then Minister of Lands (Hon. E. Mulcahy) agreed to a reserve of 500 acres being set aside near the Russell Falls. This did not give satisfaction to the promoters, and a change of Government gave an opportunity for further negotiations. The outcome of these was that the Minister of Lands at that time (Hon. J. Belton) agreed to the reservation of an area of 27,000 acres for a National Park. The area proclaimed embraces practically the whole of the Mount Field Range,

(1) Tas. Field Nat. Club. Easter Camp Report, 1908.

(2) Id. 1914.

the Russell and Lady Barron Falls, several lakes, including Lakes Fenton, Webster, and Seal. In addition, there are numerous small tarns.

The area, which is situated about 50 miles from Hobart, on the Derwent Valley Railway, includes a variety of country, the elevation varying from 500ft. above sea level at the entrance to over 4,500ft., the highest point being Mount Field West, 4,721ft. The general flora and fauna are well represented in the area, and with the additions that will be made from time to time, provided adequate supervision is maintained, the area should prove an invaluable store-house of examples of Tasmania's natural history for years to come.

The management of the Park was vested in a special Board (3), the members of which are to hold office for three years, at the end of which period the question of management will be reviewed by the Government.

The members of the first National Park Board were appointed on January 26th, 1917, the members being:—

The Chairman of the Scenery Preservation Board (Mr. E. A. Counsel).

The Engineer-in-Chief (Mr. T. W. Fowler).

The Government Botanist (Mr. L. Rodway, C.M.G.).

Representatives of the following bodies:—

The Royal Society of Tasmania (Hon. Henry Dobson).

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club (Mr. Clive Lord).

The Tourist Branch, Railway Department (Mr. E. T. Emmett).

The Fisheries Commissioners (Mr. P. S. Seager, I.S.O.).

The University of Tasmania (Professor Flynn).

The City Council (Dr. W. E. Bottrill).

The New Norfolk Council (Mr. Henry Shoobridge).

The National Park Association (Mr. W. Crooke).

The Australian Natives' Association (Mr. V. E. Wettenhall).

The Board immediately began development work, and on October 13th, 1917, the National Park was officially opened (4) by His Excellency the Governor, Sir Francis Newdegate, K.C.M.G.

(3) Gazette, Jan., 1917.

(4) Hobart "Mercury," October 15th, 1917.