

THE KERMADECS EXPEDITION

By A. BLACKBURN

Chairman of Expedition Committee

Arrangements were not sufficiently advanced to enable a report to members to be published in the June issue, but most of the problems confronting the Expedition Committee, particularly the vexed one of personnel, have finally been resolved. May I say that this happy position is due in large measure to the unremitting efforts of our Honorary Secretary, who, since the A.G.M. in May, has obviously devoted nearly all his time to Expedition matters, and to other Society affairs. At this stage, may I once again stress the fact that the Expedition is being wholly sponsored and financed by the Society, and again request those members who intend to give their support as Sponsor Members to forward their contributions without delay.

Objectives of the Expedition.

The Expedition Committee purposely withheld press publicity regarding the Expedition until 1st September, although some unauthorised statements were earlier given to Press and Radio. The objectives have perhaps been sufficiently publicised to members, but are again briefly summarised as (a) to mark in a worthy manner the twenty-fifth year of the Society's life; and (b) to increase our knowledge of the bird life, botany, and entomology of the Kermadecs. Elsewhere in this issue, J. H. Sorensen has produced a paper giving a complete summary of the recorded bird life of the Group; but much remains unknown, particularly of the out-lying islands such as Macauley and Curtis. The period 17/11/64 to 29/1/65 is designed to cover in part the breeding season of a number of the temperate zone sea-birds as well as that of some of the tropical gannets, terns and noddies, tropic birds, and petrels. The broad plan of work will be drawn up by the scientific leaders in consultation with Dr. Falla; details for its implementation can only be finally decided after arrival on Raoul.

Personnel

Administrative Leader and Scribe: A. T. Edgar.

Scientific Leaders: F. C. Kinsky and G. R. Williams.

Stores and Transport: D. V. Merton.

Botanist: W. R. Sykes, Botany Division, D.S.I.R.

Entomologist: Owen R. Wilkes, nominated by the Bishop Museum, Hawaii.

Ornithological Members: D. E. Crockett (Wanganui), J. A. Peart (Palmerston North), both teachers of science; C. N. Challies (Lower Hutt), P. Child (Alexandra), D. G. Dawson (Christchurch), M. J. Hogg (Auckland), and A. Wright (Lighthouse Service).

Transport

Through the valued co-operation of the Hon. Dean Eyre, Minister of Defence, H.M.N.Z.S. 'Lachlan' will transport personnel, perishable stores and equipment both to and from the Group. Without this help, the undertaking would have been beyond the resources of the Society. Bulk stores are being transported under C.A.A. arrangements on M.V. 'Holmburn,' leaving early in November, with D. V. Merton on board as an advance party.

Inter-island Work

The Committee has found it necessary to purchase a dinghy and outboard motor to work the Meier Group adjacent to Raoul, and of course these items will have a substantial resale value. The problem of providing transport for parties to the far outlying islands of Curtis and Macauley has not yet been solved, but we may possibly get assistance from yachts on summer cruising, to which end an article on the Expedition has been published in the August issue of the 'Pacific Islands Monthly,' a journal with a wide circulation amongst yachtsmen in countries bordering the Pacific Ocean. We have also reason to hope that for the final week transport of parties to these islands will be possible. A permanent camp will be established on Raoul Island, in the vicinity of the Meteorological Station, with satellite camps at Meier Island, Denham Bay, and other places where concentrations of breeding birds are found. The Officer in Charge at Raoul has offered valuable assistance to the Expedition in the way of vegetables, milk, fresh meat, and the use of certain facilities. Radio equipment for intercommunication between the camps is being acquired.

Publication of Results

It is intended that a book with popular appeal, after the style of Guy Mountfort's 'Portrait of a Wilderness,' be published on the activities of the Expedition. Such a book could have a wide sale overseas, and recoup for the Society some of its outlay on the undertaking. The scientific findings will be published in 'Notornis,' probably in a special issue, or issues. As is customary in such expeditions, members are required to sign an agreement not to publish any matter independently, without the sanction of the Committee.

Sponsor Membership

It was announced at the A.G.M. in May that Council had approved an invitation being given to members of the Society to become Sponsor Members of the Expedition by contributing the sum of Five Pounds. This would entitle them to a free copy of the book to be published, with their names listed as an appendix to the book. To date (20/9/64) the sum of £301 has been subscribed, and members still wishing to contribute are requested to do so now.

Patronage of the Expedition

His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Bernard Fergusson, has been pleased to accept the office of Patron of the Expedition. Until this important announcement could be made, and for other good reasons, no earlier publicity has been given to the Expedition.

General

A mass of detailed planning has been completed by the Expedition Leader and approved by the Expedition Committee. All manner of essential equipment has been provided for, from tape recorders to climbing ropes, from collecting gear to camp ovens. Unexpected items of expense have arisen, such as, for example, the need to take out an insurance for some thousands of pounds to cover the possible cost of the emergency evacuation of a casualty. Adequate emergency medical arrangements are available on Raoul, and first-aid kits are being provided. The Committee is grateful for the ready and extensive co-operation offered by the Hon. Minister of Defence, Civil Air Administration, the Captain of 'Lachlan,' and the Officer in Charge at Raoul.