

of manuka and tauhinu. It is doubtful if they are worth the cost of mustering and transporting to the mainland, and it will probably be necessary to destroy them.

Opossums have been kept in check by trapping, 1,850 having been taken in this way during the year.

In October, 1923, seven kiwis were liberated. One has lately been seen in Taepiro Valley, and one near the Government cottage, so there is reason to believe that they are increasing in numbers.

Mr. Johannes C. Andersen, who is well known as a close observer of the habits of our native birds, spent some days on Kapiti. The following notes taken by him during his stay are interesting and instructive :—

“ Having spent a week with you on the island at the end of September, I should like to say how the bird-life struck me. It was earlier in the year than usual for my visit, and I could not but notice the richness of the growth in the valleys, the luxuriance and freshness of the ferns and mosses, the vividness of colouring of the lichens. I was over a good part of the island, in Te Rere and on the spurs on either side, in my valley beyond Chappie’s camp, in the Waterfall Valley, and the basin at the head of it, in the Maraetakaroro Valley, and up the spur between it and Wharekohu, and in Wharekohu itself ; and, whilst I was on the lookout for goats, the only time I saw any was when on the spur at Wharekohu with you. The opossum-trapper was then out hunting them, and chased half a dozen goats in the direction we were in. Besides these, except for a kid in the Maraetakaroro Valley, I saw no goats at all. The only sheep I saw, too, were on the Wharekohu spurs.

“ The bush was looking well everywhere—seedlings in thousands, and young trees too. There is one pest, the nettle, that is coming on now that the goats are off. I noticed this especially thick in the Waterfall Valley leading to the basin.

“ There was no lack of bird-life : birds were both numerous and tame, so that I had good chances of watching them whilst they were singing—though they were not in full song—seeing the characteristic postures and actions of the various birds. The birds are, of course, constantly on the move ; and by sitting still in one place and watching, one gets a fair idea of what birds are in that locality. Seated thus in one place, at between 8 and 9 in the morning, I saw from twenty to thirty whiteheads, six bell-birds, two tomtits, one fantail, one kaka, and a flight of finches : I saw all these, and heard many more, all in less than half an hour. In another place, in as short a time, I saw also pigeons and parakeets.

“ I was pleased to see, on this visit, as many male as female bell-birds ; it is evident they are not together throughout the year, the two sexes being visible at different times. The numerous robins were tame as usual, but I was particularly struck by the tameness of the kakas, parakeets, and pigeons. These were plentiful quite close down to the shore, and I repeatedly saw them when at no distance at all from the shore. It was noticeable, too, that they pay no regard to the alarm-cry of the English birds. One day I was stalking what I took to be a blackbird, but it saw me first and flew off with its cry of alarm. A twig fell on me, and, looking up, there was a kaka feeding just above me ; he paid no attention to the alarm-cry or to me. The birds seem shy at different times of the year. This time the tomtit was rather elusive ; I heard him far oftener than I saw him, and had great difficulty in stalking him ; at other times he stalks me and shows no shyness at all. It is usually the solitary birds that are shy ; one pair of tomtits sat within reach beside me for a long time, so that I was able to note their colouring and general behaviour. The female seemed badly infested with vermin, and they occupied her attention most of the time they were in my company. I was surprised to see no tui : twice I thought I saw him, but his flight was noiseless, and I thought I was mistaken. I find, however, that the birds can, if they wish, be quite noiseless in their flight, or can ruffle and whirr with their feathers if they like. Once, a shadow passing was the only indication I had of a kaka alighting above me ; I looked up, and caught him in the act of folding his wings. The absence of the tui was accounted for when you told me that he occasionally deserts the island for a time, probably when a certain food is plentiful on the mainland. Two days before I left he was coming back, and I recognized his song at once. But he was shy, and as soon as he saw me observing him he noiselessly flew out of sight again, not ceasing his song, but singing in private. Usually his flight is quite noisy, and he sits in the open so that you may note him as long as you please.

“ Until this visit I had neither seen nor heard the warbler on Kapiti. On this occasion, however, I both saw and heard it, first at Wharekohu, then in the Waterfall Valley, and then in the basin. I am quite satisfied that the birds come and go ; the short stretch of water between the island and the mainland does not stop them, or certain of them. I have seen goldfinches and starlings on Kapiti before ; this time I saw, besides, chaffinches, yellowhammers, sparrows, and heard a blackbird or thrush. Larks have always been there. The presence of the English birds on the island caused me to remember a remark made by the fishermen at the mouth of the Waikanāe opposite. They said that the English birds were becoming quite common about their cottages : the lark sang all the year round, in summer and winter, in sunshine and in pouring rain. They also told me that two or three pairs of blue herons nested along the island last season, and that they were becoming plentiful ; you afterwards said the same.

“ I was pleased to see the blue penguin nesting, even if it was in your boat-shed. The difference in the nature of the weka and penguin was notable in this : the penguin was snappy when we wanted to see her egg ; a weka at a waterfall did not at all mind her clutch being seen, and even allowed herself to be lifted slightly for the purpose.

“ The skylarks share the flats with the pipits, of which I saw numbers, both at Rangatira and at Wharekohu.”

Mr. J. L. Bennett is still the resident caretaker on the island.

THOS. BROOK,  
Commissioner of Crown Lands.