

## OUTLAWED.

The following remarks by Mr. H. Guthrie Smith, well known as an accurate bird observer and ornithologist, on the question of the protection of shags, should be of interest to fishermen, and tend to show how the uninitiated may possibly jump to wrong conclusions:—

Except on my own lake at Tutira, I believe there is no part of New Zealand where the destruction of shags is not thought to be a righteous action. Everywhere these unfortunate birds are persecuted as the destroyers of fish, and fish they do undoubtedly take. On our rivers and fresh water lakes they are believed to harm the imported trout, and on our seas to be a menace to the fisherman's interests, and it may indeed happen that in some districts, under certain conditions, and for a time, shags are harmful. Those, however, who have most closely observed the conduct of feeding shags believe that the captures made in waters where both trout and eels abound are generally of the latter.

On the salmon rivers of Scotland, the dipper used to be shot down until he was proved to be not an enemy but a guardian of the salmon ova. In Victoria, too, the destruction of shags has resulted not in an increase but very great decrease of fish in the Murray River, its billabongs, and lakes.

Anglers and fishermen, like the rest of mankind, are too prone to rush to conclusions, based on insufficient evidence, and both in Scotland and Victoria persistent observation and experiments have shown that the birds, fed chiefly on the enemies of the fishes' eggs.

My local experience, too, goes to prove that the presence of shags in considerable numbers is no bar to stocking suitable water. On Tutira the trout are increasing fast, although on the lake and on the run I have allowed no shags to be molested in any way whatsoever; and it may yet prove in New Zealand that the indiscriminate slaughter of shags will turn out to be inimical to the very interests sought to be preserved.

In Stewart Island saleable fish is mostly obtained in the open sea, yet the shags of every species draw their main supply of food from the inlets. At any rate, it is quite unlikely that every species of shag does equal harm, and it may well happen that some of these persecuted breeds destroy crustacea that take the eggs and fry of the blue cod and other marketable fish.

## BREEDING WEKAS.

Mr. H. Urwin, of Tikokino, who breeds wekas, writes: Those my wekas hatch nearly always meet with some mishap before they are beyond the chick stage; either wild cats, rats, or weasels find them out (doubtless in the absence of the parent birds). A few years ago I had no trouble at all, and practically every chick grew to maturity, for they are quite easy to rear if protected from these pests.

## CONTROL OF WILD LIFE.

The following paper was read by Captain E. V. Sanderson at the annual meeting of the New Zealand Forestry League, held in Wellington on 16th July:—

As the welfare of our forests is so vitally affected by the control of wild life, and as such control has been so unfortunate in the past, especially in the out-of-the-way districts where it matters most, and where the interests of the small populations in such districts are so intermixed that it is quite impossible to expect them to take the necessary measures to enforce the law in relation to game, native birds, etc., it appears to be high time some more efficient and national means of attaining the desired end be sought.

The failure of existing methods to even approach anything like efficient protection, preservation where desirable, and control of our wild life is much to be deplored. The results have been truly depressing, and are a menace to the prosperity and well-being of New Zealand. They have failed even in that which has been the primary object sought to be attained—sport.

The well-being of all is intermixed with the control of wild life, in that destruction to our forests by animals or depletion of native bird life, etc., must eventually affect our rainfall and thereby our wool, butter, timber, and primary products, on the prosperity of which we are all so dependent. Thus the agriculturist and all are vitally affected by wild life control, seriously in the immediate future, and vitally at no very far distant date.

Let us look around, therefore, to other countries, where it has been the aim to preserve desirable wild life and at the same time retain the freedom of citizens so far as shooting, fishing, etc., is concerned, and where the methods of control and preservation of desirable wild life have been more successful.

Take, for instance, Pennsylvania, Cali-