

in the nature of an endeavour to lead people to look more kindly towards these animals. The annual returns from skins are quoted, and such like, forgetful of such facts that rabbits, for instance, furnish something like ten times the amount yielded by opossums, and yet we don't want them. The acknowledged damage done in the work of trapping, moreover, is kept strictly in the background. Insufficient regard for the future well-being of our forests, which are being sadly destroyed by animals, including opossums, which, with no natural enemies, are at variance with nature and true forestry, is much to be deplored and will surely bring its day of reckoning. An official publication of the Californian Fish and Game Conservation Commission, ("Conservation by Education") has a few pertinent remarks on the subject of the introduction of opossums which might well be heeded in New Zealand:—"We wonder what the future holds when we hear that this animal destroys garden truck, climbs fruit trees and eats the fruit, breaks into rabbit hutches and chicken coops to feast upon rabbits and chickens. It is very likely that the animal that is now tolerated will be considered one of the worst of introduced pests in the future."

#### PIGEON SHOOTING.

The following letter, typical of many others received by the N.Z. Native Bird Protection Society from a Taumarunui member, who is a sawmiller, emphasises the need for greater activities by all well-wishers of our birds and the necessity for improving our conservation methods. Such happenings are unfortunately rife in many other out-of-the-way localities.

"The society was formed to advocate efficient protection of our birds, but the birds, for the most part, don't live in and around our cities, as unfortunately the greater part of our forests are far removed from our cities. If we then betake ourselves to these forests we find that the only people who have anything to do with our virgin forests and their bird inhabitants are sawmillers and their employees and dependants—people connected therewith through trade, etc., settlers, Government employees of railway, postal, and forest services. Surely it is the business of such a society to get at the heart of the thing first, instead of the cities where the birds are few.

"I am very familiar with the district all through the King Country and Rotorua, but it is to the sawmilling districts from Utiku to Te Kuiti on the Main Trunk and Putaruru to Ngangataha, on the Rotorua line, that these remarks really refer. The pigeon is the chief victim, though other birds such as kakas and tuis are also shot. Two ordinary specific examples of the destruction might be mentioned, but such are of weekly occurrence.

"On 3rd August a party drove up to Oio from Taumarunui, and after three hours in the bush to the east of the railway line came away with 60 pigeons. On 10th August, in a small reserve lying to the north-east of Owango, on the left bank of the Whakapapa River, ten tuis and a number of pigeons were shot by youths. Any fine Sunday morning about 10 o'clock in the winter dozens of men and boys with firearms can be seen walking down the railway line from Owango, and many from Rauimu, in the direction of Oio, bound for a certain block of miro and tawa bush where the birds congregate, and thousands of pigeons and other birds are shot. As pea-rifles are generally used, a large number of birds fly away wounded besides those bagged.

"This is only one place on the line, but it is a fair sample of what takes place wherever there are good berries.

"Recently a party from the Forest Service was working over the Whakapapa from Owango, and a bridge erected by this party proved a ready means of access across the gorge for the pigeon shooters. I am glad to say the foresters did endeavour to check the destruction by seizing a rifle and taking some names. Nothing about any prosecution was, however, heard, and I learned the rifles were returned.

"There are plenty of decent people here who are against this poaching, and who would staunchly support the society if a vigorous campaign is initiated.

"The standard arguments are: 'The bush is going fast; let's have our whack of the birds before they go!' Or: 'If I don't bag 'em someone else will.' Sunday is practically the only day birds are shot.

"The talk one hears in cities about preservation is futile, and the laws which are supposed to enforce such are just as well enforced by our authorities on Mars as they are in these out-of-the-way districts where the birds are."