

Zealand Agricultural Department, writing from America, remarks:—

At the big Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard they have the customary belief held very strongly that all the indigenous birds of New Zealand are doomed, and that all attempts should be made to collect more while there is yet time. It is extraordinary how strong this feeling is. Personally, I think we shall yet be in time to conserve practically all the species that now remain.

With the growth of sanctuaries in New Zealand I should like to see a warning issued against the introduction of one race of species into the habitat of another—as has happened for instance in the case of the wekas on Kapiti, which are apparently all hybrids. This is a most deplorable thing. I have seen several cases. For instance, there was a quail on the island of Cuba, found nowhere else in the world. Actuated by some ridiculous idea of "improvement," the habitants introduced quail of a related form from Florida. The result is that it is now impossible to find a single pure native quail—all are hybrids, with the imported blood dominating. In New Zealand, while possibly all of our bird species have been described, the distribution of the geographical and other races into which they are divided has never yet been worked out. In some other countries well-meaning introductions, even of the apparent species from one part of its range to another have rendered this impossible. In New Zealand there is yet time and no irreparable damage of this kind has yet been done and it must be remembered that we want to protect species and not mongrels.

As an example of how much there is still to be learned from the birds of New Zealand and about them I might mention a paper by Lowe published some years ago but apparently overlooked in New Zealand. It is on the rather dry subject of the skeleton of the Chatham Island Snipe (the same remarks apply to the other species or races found on the snares and other subantarctic islands). We had always supposed this a rather queer snipe, both from its feeble flight and more or less nocturnal habits; but I think no one realised its full importance until Lowe studied the skeleton. The snipe family contains as its most typical members two groups of the snipes and the woodcocks. But the Chathams snipe is neither a snipe nor a woodcock, but an extremely primitive form probably very closely allied to the ancestors from which both these more modern groups