BIRDS

MAORIS FEEDING TAMED WILD DUCK, Kapiti Island. Eight birds failed to return in shooting season. [*Photo—Rangi Webber.*

ISSUED BY

N.Z. NATIVE BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY

E. V. SANDERSON, Hon. Sec.
BOX 631, WELLINGTON.

OBJECTS—To advocate and obtain the efficient protection and preservation of our native birds, a bird day for our schools, and unity of control of all wild life.

Affilated with the International Committee for Bird Protection.

The foundation of true conservation is in the setting aside of sanctuaries efficiently and rigidly controlled by men who know how.

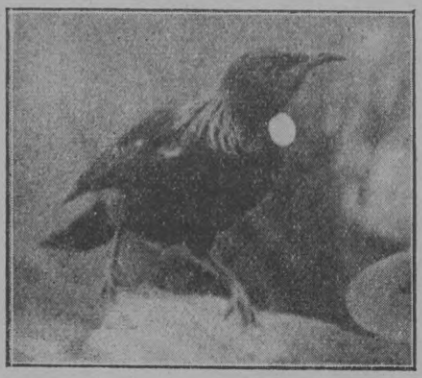
SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Life Members, £5; Endowment Members, £1; Ordinary Members 5/-; Children, 1/-. [Membership open to all.]

New Zealanders!

Protect Your Native Birds!

BULLETIN No. 15 JULY, 1928



TUI FEEDING ON SYRUP.

[*Photo—Wilkinson.*

TUI BRED BY MAORIS.
Kapiti Island.
Parent-bird feeding young.

[*Photo—Rangi Webber.*

TOMTIT ON NEST,
Kapiti Island.

[*Photo—Wilkinson.*

A TRUE NEW ZEALANDER.
Wood-Pigeon on tall Kanuka, Little Barrier Island.
[Photo—R. Falla.

Bird Preservation.

MAN cannot defeat Nature. She is well able to care for herself, but man can in his attempts to defeat her, who should be his ally, bring about his own destruction. Thus, if we destroy all bird life or even an undue proportion of it, Nature responds by increasing devastating insect life. Again, if we destroy our forests Nature replies by washing away the soil from which our food is obtained. A living tree absorbs large quantities of water during rain and returns this to the atmosphere in times of dryness, thus giving us that humidity of atmosphere which makes things grow. Chop the trees down and Nature responds with a harsh, hard, dry atmosphere in which plants do not thrive. Thus when we say: New Zealanders protect your native birds and forests, it would be more aptly said were we to say: New Zealanders protect yourselves and your race.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR BIRD PRESERVATION.

Resolutions, Declarations of Principles and By-Laws as adopted At Geneva Conference of Representatives of Many Nations, 21st May, 1928.

Declaration of Principles.

We believe that wild-bird life is of great importance in the world in helping to preserve the balance between species which nature is constantly seeking to adjust, that birds have a great importance for science, exercise a great æsthetic influence on all right-minded people, and are of great value to mankind as food, as destroyers of rodents and injurious insects, and as incentives for reasonable field sports.

We believe that, through ignorance, selfishness, and from an undue desire for gain, mankind is reducing the number of birds in many countries at an alarming rate, having in fact already exterminated from the earth various interesting and valuable species.

We are in sympathy with all reasonable methods taken to increase the number of game birds in order that the surplus may be used for food or sport. We commend the study of the food habits of wild birds, in relation to agriculture, horticulture, and forestry, and the publication of the information thus obtained in order that the people of the world may acquire a more accurate conception of the value of bird life.

We rejoice in all efforts being made by educational institutions of whatever nature, as well as by thousands of private individuals, in imparting to the general public knowledge regarding the appearance, habits, activities and songs of wild birds, so that adults and children alike may be taught to appreciate the æsthetic value of the living bird.

We believe that to bring about more adequate bird protection much good can be accomplished by the wider organisation of the International Committee for Bird Preservation.

We therefore approve of the above Declaration of Principles and the following By-Laws:

By-Laws.

Article I.

This organisation shall be known as the International Committee for Bird Preservation.

Object.

Article II.

Its object shall be to stimulate interest in all countries for a more adequate protection of wild life.

Officers.

Article III.

Its officers shall consist of a chairman, one or more central secretaries, and such other assistants as he may desire to appoint.

Executive Committee.

Article IV.

SECTION 1.—The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Chairman of the International Committee and the Chairmen of the various National Sections, and it shall represent the International Committee in all matters which may arise in connection with its work when the Committee is not in session.

SECTION 2.—The Chairman of the International Committee shall be elected on or about June 1st by a majority vote of the Executive Committee, either by correspondence or by personal approval at a meeting of the Executive Committee, this election to take place every two years, beginning with June, 1922.

SECTION 3.—The International Committee shall meet at such time and places as may be determined by the Executive Committee.

National Sections.

Article V.

SECTION 1.—A National Section of the International Committee shall be composed of institutions or membership societies interested in the preservation from extinction of all species of wild birds, and in the increase of those species of birds especially useful to mankind.

SECTION 2.—The people of any country in which there is not already a National Section of the International Committee may seek membership in that committee by organising a National Section of not more than eight institutions or membership societies, electing two members from each such institution or society to represent it, and by directing their application for admission to the Executive Committee of the International Committee or its duly authorised representative who shall have power to accept or reject such application.

SECTION 3.—All organisations wishing to be included in a National Section must indicate to the Chairman of the International Committee their acceptance of the Declaration of Principles as given above, and their approval of the existing By-Laws.

SECTION 4.—Each National Section shall elect a Chairman, and effect such other details of organisation as its members may desire.

Voting.

Article VI.

At all meetings of this International Committee each country represented at such meeting by one or more members of its

National Section shall be entitled to one vote on all matters of business.

Amendments to By-Laws.

Article VII.

The by-laws may be amended by a majority vote at any regularly called meeting of the International Committee or at any other time by a majority vote of the Executive Committee.

Resolutions.

The International Committee for Bird Preservation welcomes the fact that the interest in birds has greatly increased in recent years. The strengthening of legislation for bird protection and the formation of bird sanctuaries, the increasing number of articles and illustrations in the press, the popularity of films dealing with birds, and the introduction of bird study into many colleges, high schools, and the primary schools of various nations, are all proof of the rapidly growing interest on the part of the public. This therefore seems an opportune moment to plead for further action, which is greatly needed. Although it is obvious that the protection of birds must largely be left to individual effort and unofficial action in the different countries, the fact that the vast majority of birds are migratory and therefore international in their habits, often crossing many different countries between their winter and summer homes, clearly demonstrates that international action is necessary if protection is to be really effective.

The recommendations of this Committee are therefore divided into two parts:—

(1) Recommendations for unofficial action.

(2) Recommendations for official action.

These are based on the principle of fair treatment for the birds themselves, and fair treatment as between nation and nation.

1. Recommendations for Unofficial Action.

(*a*) The Committee desires publicly to congratulate and thank all those who, by their work, their writings, their talent as photographers, artists or lecturers, have so largely contributed to the increasing interest in living birds. It wishes to encourage all those who have an insight into the ways of birds to impart that knowledge to others and so enlarge the circle of those who take a friendly interest in birds.

(*b*) The Committee notes the success achieved in many countries by the formation of bird sanctuaries which have, in many cases, re-established as regular breeding species birds which had become rare almost to extinction. The Committee strongly re-

commends the formation of such sanctuaries, or reserves, in every country.

(*c*) The Committee considers that the practice of collecting large numbers of clutches of eggs of rare species of birds is particularly dangerous to such species, is generally objectionable, and unworthy of a good naturalist, and we disapprove of the commerce in shells of bird eggs.

(*d*) The Committee recommends that the laws against shooting with the use of artificial light should be strictly enforced everywhere.

(*e*) The Committee recommends that all hunting of birds for food during the birds' period of mating and rearing their young shall everywhere cease, that the employment of pole traps, snares and nets in taking birds be discontinued, and that the use of repeating shot-guns and the practice of shooting wild-fowl from motor-boats be prohibited. The Committee deplores the killing of wild birds which are shot exclusively for the purpose of securing their feathers for the millinery trade; and we recommend that the best methods (*i.e.*, Weigold) of illuminating the towers of lighthouses be generally adopted. Especially does the Committee wish to urge the authorities of universities, colleges, high schools, elementary schools, museums and nature-preservation societies of every character, to make all possible efforts to educate the public to a better knowledge of the name, appearance and usefulness of the birds of all kinds in their respective countries.

(*f*) In order that we may have available data regarding the amount of educational work in bird study and bird preservation which is to-day being carried forward, we ask the Chairmen of all national sections of this Committee to collect information showing the extent to which in their countries all educational institutions, museums or societies are giving instruction on these subjects; also the national Chairmen are asked to compile the names and addresses of all men or women in their countries who give public addresses on birds and the extent and number of such public talks, and to send these facts to the Chairman of the International Committee for Bird Preservation or his authorised agent.

2. Recommendations for Official Action.

The Committee believes that, owing to the diversity of legislation and of custom in the different countries, the best chance of promoting international agreement which would be acceptable to a large number of States and also effective for the protection of birds, is to confine its recommendations to two very definite proposals which it suggests might be considered by an International Conference.

The first proposal is intended to protect migatory birds during what is for them the most important season of the year, namely while on their way to, and while in, their breeding haunts; but the Committee recognises that there must be some exceptions to complete protection of every species and this must be left for future settlement.

The second proposal is intended to prevent the destruction of birds by oil pollution in navigable waters.

The Committee accordingly recommends:

1. That a Conference of Government delegates should be summoned either under the auspices of the League of Nations, the International Agricultural Institute of Rome, or in any other way considered appropriate, with full powers to sign an international convention embodying the following provision:

That to protect migratory birds during the period of their spring migration and while engaged in rearing their young, all shooting, trapping or other destruction of birds, together with their sale or exposure for sale, shall cease not later than March 1 in Europe, Asia and North America, and not later than September 1, in countries in the Southern Hemisphere, and that such prohibition shall continue until the opening of the shooting season in the autumn. In countries north of 53 latitude North, moderate spring shooting of some species might be allowed through Government license about twenty days on account of their different climatic conditions.

2. As an aid towards the attainment of such an international agreement the Conference respectfully invites the International Agricultural Institute at Rome to publish a short report containing a summary of the information in its possession on the value of birds to agriculture.

3. That, as recommended by the preliminary conference of experts from thirteen countries held at Washington in 1926, a conference of Government delegates should be summoned for the purpose of drawing up an international convention on oil pollution of navigable waters, and that it take into consideration the great loss of birds from this cause.

The Conference asks its Chairman to request the Secretary-General of the League of Nations to call the attention of the Council of the League to the recommendations for official actions Nos. 1 and 3.

Furthermore, be it resolved that the Chairman of each national section of this Committee shall be asked at once to communicate with his Government and urge that favourable action be taken on the subject of these official recommendations.

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR BIRD PRESERVATION.

GENEVA, MAY 21-22, 1928.

Additional Resolutions.

Resolution No. 1:—

The International Committee for Bird Preservation wishes to convey to the National Association of Audubon Societies and its President, Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, the expression of its deepest gratitude for the remarkable work of creation and organisation which enables us to exist.

We have to thank personally Dr. Pearson for the work he has done for six years to further our action.

Resolution No. 2:—

The Conference presents the expression of its gratitude to the Government of Great Britain for having officially called together the countries of Northern Europe in order to protect the migratory water-fowl, and approves the resolutions made in the Conference of London, October 12-14, 1927.

Resolution No. 3:—

Since our last meeting, three members of our International Committee have been claimed by death. They were—

Mr. Raous Lavoie, a representative of the Provancher Society of Natural History of Canada (Quebec).

Prof. Francesco Severio Monticelli, a representative of the Institute Zoologico, Naples, Italy.

Dr. Albert Hess, Chairman of the Swiss section, representing the Societe Suisse pour la protection de la Nature.

The International Committee for Bird Preservation desires to convey to the families of our late friends its deepest sympathy.

PROBLEMS OF INTERNATIONAL BIRD PROTECTION.

Address delivered by Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, *President of the International Committee for the Protection of Birds,* at Geneva, Switzerland, 21st May, 1928.

To the Members of the International Committee for Bird Protection:

Every thinking person of our time is deeply impressed with the necessity for taking energetic steps to preserve the bird fauna of the world. This fact is brought afresh to our notice by the number and the quality of the persons who are present at this meeting in Geneva to-day.

The great public attaches too little importance to the question of utilising the ornithological fauna for the greatest good of

humanity, and the responsibility for enlightening them falls on those who have mastered the subject in all its details.

In certain sparsely-peopled regions of the globe, where primitive conditions of life still prevail, the destruction of birds and wild animals for food may be considered a necessity of human life; but in more highly developed countries this absolute necessity no longer exists. Nevertheless, the slaughter of wild birds throughout the entire world increases at an alarming rate. Man has already wiped out certain species and is on the point of exterminating others.

For the moment let us group arbitrarily the different categories of bird-life, for which better protection is needed, under the following heads:

1. Gamebirds of upland regions. (This merely means land game birds, as distinct from 2.)
2. Ducks, geese and shore-birds.
3. Birds which feed on insects and on the seeds of weeds.
4. Birds of prey.
5. Birds which are killed for their plumage.

Game-birds of Upland Regions.

Many land-birds, good for food, are reared on lands belonging to private individuals. Altogether these constitute a great wealth. There is no logical reason why States should not act in the same way—in other words, take the necessary precautions to increase the game-birds and permit the use of the excess for food and for sport. As in the case of the private breeder, the State should naturally do all that is necessary to preserve the stock, with a view to ensuring a sufficient annual excess.

This principle applies more particularly to countries where there prevails what one can call the system of free hunting, and where pheasants, grouse, partridges and similar species can thrive. The United States of America is only one of numerous countries where the game-birds of upland regions have greatly diminished and where it is necessary to apply with more care these principles of game-regulation, such as are already in force in private estates, as for example, in Scotland. States, by their negligence regarding the solution of the problem, are losing important advantages from which they might otherwise profit.

At London I have seen, in the market, numerous grouse which I was told were wild birds killed in European and Asiatic countries and sent to England.

In spite of the Argentine law of 1926 forbidding the exportation of the bodies of Tinamous, tens of thousands are still sent from South America to the northern markets.

Game-birds (other than those reared in private estates) can hardly withstand the immense commercialisation rendered possible by refrigeration and by rapid modern transport.

Water-fowl and Shore-birds.

The adequate protection of migratory birds is still an extremely complicated problem. Different species of wild ducks and geese, for instance, annually traverse in their migrations numerous degrees of latitude. In some cases they cross a certain number of States which have their special laws and where the inhabitants think they have the right to catch their whole share. Consequently, unless these natural desires are restrained by willingness to co-operate and to make concessions, it does not seem possible to maintain the important stock of the valuable game-birds of the world. Private interest is a powerful motive governing human action, and the hunter of game is not exempt from this natural law, whether he inhabits New York or Lima, Tokio, Geneva or Cape Town.

Between 1750 and 1760 the ships of Massachusetts made "feather voyages" to Labrador. Not only did they collect on the coast down and eggs, but they slaughtered Labrador ducks in summer when they could not fly. The last known specimen of this bird died in the State of New York in 1875. It is not encouraging to see the considerable number of duck netted to-day on Lake Erie, along the coast of Denmark, and elsewhere.

In the market at Mexico City I have seen migratory ducks in heaps ten feet high, and sold at the price of 10 centavos each (about twopence half-penny per duck). In the hotels of numerous countries and on steamships, one finds golden plovers on the bill of fare. In the United States we now forbid the hunting of these birds, because we fear for the future existence of the species.

I know an amateur hunter who told me he had killed in his life more than 50,000 wild duck. Dr. Uchida records that from 15th October, 1924, to 15th April, 1925, the hunters of Japan caught more than 500,000 ducks. In the United States 7 millions of hunters were in the field last year; no one knows the number of ducks killed, but it is estimated at between 6 millions and 10 millions.

One can say very much the same for nearly every country in the world. If man continues to kill water-fowl at this rate, what hope can there be for game-birds in the future

I shall now enumerate the destructive human influence tending to diminish the wild water-fowl and shore-birds:

1. The free market for the sale of dead birds, offering great encouragement to systematic slaughter on a grand scale.
2. The hunting of game in spring, killing birds paired for the season.
3. The use of motor-cars and motor-boats to carry hunters rapidly from one ground to another.

4. The considerable increase in the destructive action of modern firearms, above all of repeating shot-guns.

5. The absence in many countries of laws restricting the number of birds which may be killed in one day.

6. The destruction by drainage of feeding and breeding-haunts.

7. The oil spread on lakes, rivers and coastal waters.

8. The considerable use of eggs by the peoples of Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions.

9. The destruction of game-birds by nets, night-shooting with lights and other means of mass-destruction.

10. The general indifference of many hunters to the present restrictive laws.

Birds which Eat Insects and the Seeds of Weeds.

The considerable use for food of birds too small to present any food value whatever, and yet known to be useful destroyers of noxious insects and weed-seeds, is a question which has long claimed the attention of naturalists and bird-lovers. In many cases the small bird sold in the market for a franc (2d.) would, if left alive, render to the farmer and the forester services of an annual value of a considerable amount.

The pleasure with which the people of Italy, Southern France, Belgium and Spain, eat small birds is well-known. I have been told that millions are killed every year for this purpose. Some of us have been surprised to see that this section of the European bird fauna has not shown a diminution much more marked.

Agricultural communities need supremely a great number of insect-eating birds, but in spite of this, the use of traps, nets, bird-lime, snares, decoys and shotguns continues with only the feeblest legal restrictions.

Destruction of Birds of Prey.

The breeders of game wish quite naturally to protect their young pheasants and grouse against birds and beasts of prey, and they habitually try, with the help of steel-traps and guns, to suppress all the falcons, owls and hawks which appear near their rearing establishments. In fact, every wild bird which can be considered, in any way whatever, as injurious to young game-birds, is looked on as a good victim by most game-breeders. In many cases, the opinion of the breeder, often based on scanty knowledge, is alone to decide whether a certain bird is injurious and should therefore be killed. In America I knew a man who killed woodpeckers as vermin, and in England I was told, perhaps in joke, of a game-rearer who shot the nightingales because, he said, they kept the young pheasants awake. Poultry-breeders also show hostility towards birds of prey.

Up to now I have spoken only of man's abuse of species which would be more practically valuable to him if they were permitted to live in greater numbers. We use not only the annual increase, but we destroy our breeding stock. We foolishly eat our principal, instead of limiting our appetite to the natural interest. We kill also species which are more valuable to us alive than dead, and we adopt too violent an attitude to certain species of birds of prey.

Destruction of Birds for the Plume Trade.

Can I mention now a class of birds which do not ordinarily serve as food and which have not been proved to be economically valuable as destroyers of insects? I am thinking especially of the Birds of Paradise and the Egrets, which are killed *en masse* during the mating season for ornament. This traffic in the plumes of wild birds slaughtered during the season of egg-laying, with the sole purpose of money-making for man and ornamentation for woman, has certainly little to recommend it. There are those among us who consider that there is little excuse for the continuation of a trade of this kind.

The Aesthetic Value of Birds.

Let me draw your attention to the human value of birds from the point of view of sentiment.

If wild birds belong to man in general, the rights of all classes of society ought to be taken into consideration. Many men and women have no interest in killing birds, but experience the greatest pleasure in studying their habits and behaviour. For them the sight of a planing Falcon, the note of a hooting Owl, the song of a Skylark, the twittering of Swallows, arouses feelings of a nearly spiritual kind, and they shudder at the thought that birds are killed for sport or food, or that birds can be hunted which others desire to see spared for a time in order that *they* may kill them later.

One can classify in the following way the different groups of people who are interested in birds:

1. The sportsman, who kills generally a very limited number of game-birds for sport.

2. The gunner, the fowler and the trapper, whose principal object is to catch birds for food or the market, or to get their feathers for trade, or who kill merely wantonly.

3. The working naturalist who generally kills moderately, and for the purpose of studying the plumage, the anatomy or the feeding-habits of birds.

4. The nature-lover, who does not kill, and who likes to see the living bird. Naturally there are people who might be included in two or more of these groups.

Conclusion.

I have tried to pass briefly in review some of the human activities which tend to reduce the bird life of the world. The question is, what can we do about it. Naturally, laws and treaties of an efficient kind occur to us, and we ought to exercise all possible pressure to reach such aims. Perhaps if the attention of the League of Nations can be drawn seriously to the situation, it will be possible to obtain rapid and beneficent action on the part of Governments. Separate government legislation is also necessary. Most of us, I believe, have noticed that in democratic countries legislative bodies are disposed to pass laws for which there is an insistent demand on the part of their constituents. In such countries, the surest means of attaining our goal seems therefore undoubtedly to be that of training the spirit and the conscience of the public until they insist on the passage and the enforcement of efficient bird protection laws.

I know that the restrictive measures regarding animal destruction, like those of the United States and the Dominion of Canada, have not arisen from the initiative of Government authorities, but because certain organised minorities, in the form of bird-protective associations, have pressed the public to call for better legislation. Must not efforts of this kind be made in every country? By recording the exact data indicating the value of birds to humanity, by combining these data with reports carefully authenticated, showing the extent of the destruction at present taking place, and by suggesting what should be done to remedy the present situation, shall we not accomplish an important task? In other words, ought we not to arrange and carry out more intensive campaigns of education with aid of the newspapers and the magazines? Ought we not to publish and distribute more leaflets and arrange for numerous and able speakers to deliver public lectures to young and old? Shall we not do more good at present in bringing our cause directly before the public, rather than in depending entirely on our limited number of members, to capture the legislative strongholds?

The International Committee for the Protection of Birds is composed of men and women representing officially associations of sportsmen, naturalists and bird-lovers in Australia, in Austria, in Canada, in Czechoslovakia, in France, in Germany, in Great Britain, in Holland, in Hungary, in Italy, in Japan, in New Zealand, in Norway, in South Africa, in Sweden, in Switzerland and in the United States—some seventeen countries in all. We hope, by joining our efforts, to do much more for the great cause of the conservation of wild birds. May our deliberations be conducted at all times with the most elevated spirit of goodwill and with every consideration for the interests and the opinions of all interested groups!

THE NEED FOR BIRD PROTECTION IN NEW ZEALAND.

Read at Geneva Conference on 21st May, 1928, by J. G. Myers, Sc.D., F.E.S., New Zealand member of the International Committee for Bird Preservation.

New Zealand is noted for some of the most remarkable birds in the world. No fewer than 78 of the species, including practically all the land birds, are endemic. Nor is this all, for a number of the families and very many of the genera occur nowhere else in the world. I need only mention the *Apterygidae* (kiwi), the *Strigopidae* (kakapo), the *Xenicidae* (wrens), and need then emphasise no further the scientific interest of New Zealand birds, and the paramount ornithological importance of their efficient preservation. The economic value of the indigenous birds has been treated at length in a series of articles by Atkinson and the present writer. It emerged that the vast majority of the species are directly or indirectly beneficial to agriculture and forestry. The forests of New Zealand are immeasurably important from the viewpoint of timber, of water conservation and the prevention of erosion, and their existence is indissolubly linked up with that of the birds which are confined to them. No fewer than 15 per cent. of the forest woody plants and trees are pollinated apparently exclusively by birds, while the seeds of 60 per cent. are dispersed by the same agency. This is apart altogther from the value of birds as destroyers of noxious insects.

The effects of colonisation on the indigenous avifauna have been very great, but it has long been the fashion to exaggerate their inevitability. It *is*, of course, inevitable that country which is permanently settled should in time take on the semblance of an English landscape without that mellow beauty which is England's own; but there still remain in New Zealand large tracts of forest, and probably a greater proportion of sanctuaries and reserves compared with the total area than in any other country. The effects of colonisation on the birds may be briefly referred to under the following heads:—

1. Total Destruction of Habitat, with consequent wholesale alteration of food supply. The marvel is, not that the indigenous birds should have decreased and in some cases disappeared from the settled districts, but that so many of them should have adapted themselves more and more to such an unparalleled change of conditions. As Guthrie-Smith has remarked, it is almost impossible for a true bird of the forest to live in fields of grass or of turnips. A very pleasing feature is the coming of

the tui (*Prosthemadera*) and the bell-bird (*Anthornis*) into the middle of some of the larger towns to feed at the flowers of the introduced Australian *Eucalyptus* tree. Buller once believed the latter of these two honey-eaters to be extinct on the mainland; yet it is now common in many suburban gardens.

2. INTRODUCED ANIMALS.—Here is undoubtedly the second greatest factor in the decrease of New Zealand birds; a factor, however, of far less importance than (1). Cats, dogs, stoats, weasels, ferrets, rats, pigs—some introduced accidentally, others intentionally—all are taking toll of the native birds, and no measures of any kind whatsoever are being employed to check them. As usual, of course, man himself is one of the most destructive of these introduced animals, either in his capacity of hunter or of collector. The opinion is still widespread that the native birds are doomed, and that we may as well take our share of them, whether for the pot or the museum, before it is too late. But this is a grossly exaggerated view. After a stocktaking of the endemic species, I wrote in 1923 that "eight endemic species have either increased in one or more localities, or appeared in places in which they were hitherto unknown; five have definitely decreased since 1905; and thirty are either easily and obviously maintaining their ground or in no worse position than in 1905. Four species were extinct long before 1905, chiefly through fires and collectors." Of the remaining species there was insufficient evidence of former or present status, or both, to venture an opinion.

In addition to the weasels, some 26 species of foreign birds are naturalised in New Zealand. Research is needed into the the effects of their competition, direct or indirect, on the native birds.

3. FIRE.—This is the chief weapon of the farmer in the conversion of forest into grassland, and as such is the chief agent in (1) above. But, in addition, there is considerable evidence that grass fires on the original tussock plains of the South Island were the principal factors in the total extinction of the New Zealand quail.

It remains now to indicate what is being done to protect the birds which are left, and what ought to be done to preserve them more effectively. There are two kinds of bird-protection—passive and active. So far as the first is concerned, New Zealand probably leads the world; for under the Animals Protection and Game Act of 1921 almost every native bird is absolutely protected, while a small number is placed on a game schedule which permits their being shot at certain times and under very restricted conditions. It is now the policy of the Government to refuse collecting permits to non-residents, and in the event of specimens

of native birds being granted to foreign institutions, such specimens must be shot by an official of the New Zealand Government.

It can fairly be said that as far as Government action is concerned this is all that is done to preserve the birds of New Zealand, and on paper it would seem to be all-sufficient. How lamentably inadequate it is in practice is indicated by two very paradoxical sets of facts: Firstly, those birds which are not protected, but on the contrary strenuously outlawed—for instance, the kea parrot, the shags, and the harrier hawk—are probably more abundant than ever, and in some cases extending their range; secondly, the indigenous birds of Cuba, as I had an opportunity to observe in 1925, seem in no worse case, if in no better, than those of New Zealand, yet so far as I could find they were shot or trapped without restriction. So far, then, as the protection laws in New Zealand are concerned, we can probably suggest no improvement.

With regard to *active* protection, what are we doing to counteract the deleterious influences outlined above, and what can we do? First and foremost, the laws, excellent in themselves, should be enforced, as they are most emphatically not to-day. To quote from the latest report of the New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society: "The Act does not, however, state definitely whose business it is to enforce the conditions, and we have been unable so far to fix the responsibility. The Department on which responsibility falls primarily has no apparent means of checking poaching and other breaches of the Act with reference to these absolutely protected birds. Further, all the income from wild life sources appears to be set aside in the interests of game-bird and fish conservation, excepting a half-share of opossum skin royalties allotted to the State Forest Service for the purpose of destroying goats, deer, etc. This latter, now amounting to a large sum, awaits utilisation. Our most valuable birds are thus left out in the cold. The State Forest Service, so far as their special reservations are concerned, some Acclimatisation Societies, and occasionally the police, interest themselves, but the whole matter of enforcing the conditions of the Act, so far as these specially listed birds are concerned, appears extremely vague and certainly requires elucidation." Finally, the sanctuaries and reserves themselves are under the control of a number of different Government Departments and Boards. One of the greatest aims of the Bird Protection Society is to secure unity of control in all matters related to conservation.

With regard to the sanctuaries and reserves, there exists the same notion that a mere paper declaration is all-sufficient to obtain the end in view. I am glad to see that Dr. Hill, the Director of Kew Gardens, during his recent visit to New Zealand, criticised very strongly in the local Press this mistaken policy. He writes: "The setting aside of areas as reserves is a very laudable policy,

but what I would like to know is what exactly is your object in establishing these reserves? Are they merely beauty spots set aside for picnic parties, or are they reserves for the preservation of native plants? If, as I hope is the case, they are the latter, it is nothing short of a scandal that in the Tongariro National Park, for instance, heather should have been introduced, and that goats should be allowed to wax fat on the growth on Mount Egmont. In Switzerland reserves are reserves, and the greatest precautions are adopted to prevent the introduction of alien plants. In New Zealand, in some instances at any rate, your policy seems to be to create a reserve and then fill it with foreign plants or animals, much to the detriment of the native growth. Your native flora is such that it needs no outside assistance to make it attractive. What is needed seems to me to be a botanical expert to advise upon the policy in respect to your reserves." And we would suggest also an ornithologist, for the welfare of the birds and the forest is intimately connected.

The mania for acclimatisation, or the establishment of foreign animals and plants, perhaps more prevalent in New Zealand than in any other country, is a most insidious form of vandalism. In reserves and national parks it is a sin against posterity, and an everlasting reproach to New Zealand, that such a process should not only be allowed, but should actually in many cases be deliberately and actively encouraged by persons in authority whose patriotism, scorning those natural beauties which embody the very spirit of our country, rises no higher than a desire to create in New Zealand a paltry imitation of other lands.

The second line, then, which active protection must take, is a vigorous campaign against aliens—plant and animal—in the sanctuaries and reserves, above all, against the rats, feral cats, stoats and weasels. The two latter were intentionally introduced as a measure against the plague of rabbits, themselves also deliberately imported. But Australia, which suffers far more than New Zealand from the rabbit pest, refused to believe that two wrongs could make a right, and has therefore never followed New Zealand's bad example in introducing stoats and weasels. In the latter Dominion an Order-in-Council in 1923 declared stoats and weasels to be the natural enemies of the rabbit throughout the country, and so these bloodthirsty little animals, widespread through the forests where rabbits do not exist, *may not be destroyed* save by special permission granted by Inspectors of Stock, and effective only on sanctuaries, poultry-farms, and game-raising establishments. In any case, a campaign against vermin cannot be undertaken without vastly more caretakers and skilled rangers than are at present employed. No fewer than 39 islands and groups of islets round the coast are gazetted under various Acts as bird sanctuaries, but only two have curators.

There is another very dangerous side of the acclimatisation question which should not be overlooked. Once a sanctuary is created in a favourable situation, there is a regrettable tendency to stock it, or wish to stock it, with species of native birds not already present, but confined to different localities, or even to other islands. In the case of the confusing medley of species and varieties in the kiwis (*Apteryx*) and the wekas (*Gallirallus*) this practice leads inevitably to inter-breeding, and perhaps prevents for ever the elucidation of puzzling forms. It is *species* we should preserve—not *mongrels*.

Finally, there is great need for education. A healthy public opinion, freed from the erroneous notion that the native birds are doomed in any case, would do more to enforce the protection laws in the backblocks than all the police in the world. This is the task of the Native Bird Protection Society, and I can confidently report that it has the work well in hand, and is receiving very hearty support from the Press and from the Government Departments concerned.

To summarise briefly, the greatest needs of bird protection in New Zealand are as follows:—

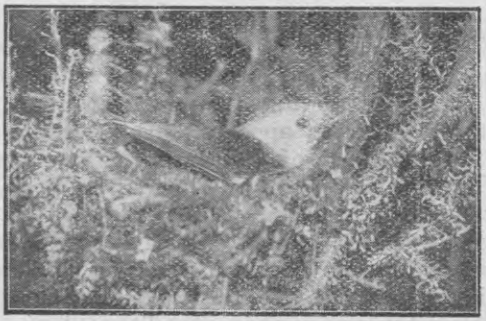
1. Adequate enforcement of the protection laws.

2. Unity of control of sanctuaries and reserves.

3. A campaign against aliens—plant and animal—in the sanctuaries.

4. Intensive research into the problem why some species adapt themselves to changed conditions, while others disappear.

5. Education of young and old in the value and interest, scientific, economic, and aesthetic, of the native birds of New Zealand.



POPOKOTEA OR WHITE HEAD ON NEST.
[*Photo—Wilkinson.*

NATIVE BIRDS AS NATIONAL MONUMENTS.

By J. G. Myers, Sc.D., F.E.S.,

New Zealand Member of the International Committee for Bird Preservation.

It is always interesting to know how other people and other nations are tackling the problems which engage our own attention. In situation, extent and geographical conditions, Japan has much in common with New Zealand. It has also an abundant bird fauna, much richer in species than our own, although with a very much smaller percentage of peculiar forms. It should be of special interest to New Zealanders to know how the Japanese regard their birds, and what steps they take to preserve them amid all the dangers of a rapidly increasing population and an ever-extending industrialism. We know, of course, that Japan has been phenomenally quick to adopt the most enlightened features of Western civilisation, and we remember also that her own culture is unequalled for its appreciation of natural beauty—an appreciation so widespread among the masses that the Nordic vandalism which crops up far too frequently in our country is probably quite unknown there.

Dr. Nagamichi Kuroda brought with him to the International Committee Meeting at Geneva in May, 1928, a mass of most interesting information on the present position of bird protection in Japan. To a New Zealander the greatest and most striking difference, as the problem presents itself in Japan, lies in the very dense population—a population which, even more than in the thickly-peopled lands of Southern Europe, looks considerably to the birds as a source of food. Man is thus there potentially a much greater direct enemy of birds than in New Zealand.

There are three main reasons for protecting birds—the economic, the scientific and the aesthetic. Japan, by a stroke of administrative genius, welds the two latter together and, under the Law (1919) for Preserving Scenery, Historic and Natural Monuments, protects all her more distinctive species as "natural monuments." In preserving the breeding-places and special haunts of these birds, an appeal is made also to the popular veneration for the things of Old Japan. These areas are protected as "Breeding places of birds famous in Japan," as "Places famous for these birds flocking there," "as "Valuable breeding places of famous birds" and so on. It is interesting that long before these sentiments were expressed in modern legislation they were in many cases felt very strongly among the people. Thus Whooper Swans visit one locality only in large flocks and for this reason: "The inhabitants of this district have, since the olden times, regarded swans as messengers of God, protected

them very carefully and excluded any hunters from elsewhere. In this manner they are adequately protected and preserved in this district." (Uchida). In the same way the ptarmigan of the Japanese Alps has long been preserved on traditional religious grounds by the peasantry, but is now in danger from mountaineers, *i.e.*, tourists, who have gained some of that Western enlightenment which prompts us to scatter waste-paper and empty bottles in scenic reserves and heather in Tongariro National Park.

So much for the special protection of Japan's more distinctive birds. It is prohibited also to capture any other birds or mammals save those actually listed as game. With a poor and dense population there is a strong tendency to widen the conception of game, and Japan is no exception. Japanese "game" includes such unlikely birds as albatrosses, shags, falcons, crows and ravens, sparrows, thrushes and finches, besides such others as pheasants and duck, which alone excite our own gastronomic interest. But none of these birds may be captured or shot save by license, and during a restricted season.

New Zealand also has very definite and very comprehensive bird protection legislation and game laws. Wherein lies the Japanese superiority, which it is the purpose of this article to show? It lies in the fact that, whereas in New Zealand at least in the back-blocks the bird protection laws are practically a dead letter, in Japan they are enforced in such detail that the Government is able to supply an exact numerical return of the number of birds caught every year. Thus the list for the open season of 1925 (October to April) includes 10,524,542 birds, among which may be mentioned, for instance, 2,240,121 tree sparrows and 1,338,218 dusky ouzels (a kind of thrush) (Uchida, 1928). This rigid enforcement is effected by strict and direct Government control, the game laws being administered by the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the hunting licenses issued by the Governor in each Prefecture. Experts are stationed at all the local prefectural offices for seeing to the local affairs regarding the protection of birds and mammals." (Uchida). In addition the Government maintains an Experiment Station for Ornithology and Mammalogy; breeds game-birds for distribution throughout the country, and sends out as many as 19,000 nest-boxes per year for small insectivorous birds. A hundred stations are installed at lighthouses, schools and so on for observing bird migration.

Hunting is entirely prohibited in sanctuaries, of which Japan has 444. In addition there are 20 other areas in which certain special kinds of birds or mammals only are protected; 129 hunting grounds in which only very restricted hunting is allowed, and 28 "Villagers' hunting grounds," where the privilege of

netting ducks is confined to the inhabitants. Finally it is forbidden to catch birds of any kind in strategic zones, precincts of shrines and temples, public gardens, highways and graveyards (Kuroda).

In New Zealand, we have a vastly greater proportion of distinctive birds than Japan. Nearly all our land-birds are found nowhere else in the world. But so far from counting them among the greatest and most glorious of our natural and national monuments, we have replaced them, as far as possible, in all the settled districts by foreign birds. The birds of pakeha New Zealand are sparrows, starlings and thrushes as much as its currency is pounds, shillings and pence. May the present era of intense national feeling bring to the Dominion a proper pride in her own natural productions while there is yet time to preserve to posterity, in extensive reserves, at least a semblance of the real New Zealand!

OPOSSUMS AND OPOSSUM TRAPPING.

Apart from the depredations of these animals on birds, about which there can be no question, as an examination of the stomach contents will frequently show during the nesting season, there is the damage done to the forests by the trappers with axe and slasher, and the number of birds killed with the traps. Kiwis, wekas, and all forest living birds, including pigeons, fall frequent victims, and in many cases die a lingering death owing to the loss of one or both legs. The process of trapping so far as the opossum is concerned is surely cruel enough in itself, and can only have a lowering effect on those engaged in the pursuit. Trapping is now, however, going rapidly out of date, as no *bona fide* trapper can hope to compete with the poisoner, who can lay twice as many effective baits as the trapper can lay traps in the time available. Poisoning is, of course, quite illegal, but the method is certainly more humane, as it means a quick death in place of a lingering death to the opossum and but little if any harm appears to be done to bird life.

The usual method adopted by the poisoner is to mix two pounds of sugar with two pounds of flour at night-time, and add to this one teaspoonful of aniseed. In the morning the mixture is well shaken to further ensure intimate mixing and the poisoner sets forth with this and a flask or bottle of cyanide, which has been previously crushed to as fine a powder as possible with a hammer or other means. The opossum poisoner is guided by his bush sense in choosing likely spots to lay his baits, which are laid by taking a teaspoonful of the flour and sugar

mixture and placing this in a conical heap. The apex of this cone is then lightly pressed with the finger tip in order to form a depression for the reception of the cyanide. A small saltspoonful of poison is then placed in the depression, and the flour and sugar mixture drawn up from the sides of the cone-shaped mass to cover the cyanide and the bait is laid. The poison quickly becomes non-effective if wetted by rain or other means.

The poisoner usually lays a short line of traps for the edification of any chance ranger, but detection is rare and difficult, and the chance of being caught does not make the illegal getter of skins lose any sleepless nights, as rangers are few and far between.—(E. V. SANDERSON.)

The Part of Good Citizens.

A people without children would face a hopeless future; a country without trees is almost as helpless; forests which are so used that they cannot renew themselves will soon vanish, and with them all their benefits. When you help to preserve our forests or plant new ones you are acting the part of good citizens.—*Theodore Roosevelt, the Friend of the Birds.*

YOUNG LONG-TAILED CUCKOO

[*Photo—Wilkinson.*

CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The first competition under the auspices of the New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society for a prize of £5 was won by Miss Joan Berry, of Ngapotiki. The essays on any chosen native bird were numerous, emanating from all parts of the Dominion, and even as far away as Chatham Islands. Mrs. Moncrieff, of Nelson, who judged the essays for us, writes:—"It was most delightful reading these essays, and I only wish I could give many more prizes. I am sure it should put a grown-up person to shame to read the remarks on the lack of bird protection, and it was most delightful to read such remarks as: 'Fancy a world without birds, what a cheerless place it would be. How lovely it is in the country, besides a running stream with the blue sky above and the trees giving their shade, to lie and listen to the sweet songs of the birds on every side. It is the sweetest music in the world."

REDBILLS.

(*Winning Essay by* Miss Joan Berry.)

Our native redbills are fairly tame birds. They are about the size of a pigeon, but are shorter and fatter in stature. Their plumage is black, but white feathers are visible under the wings when the birds are in flight. They have short tails, red eyes, long red legs, and very long red bills. Their legs are not quite such a bright colour as their bills. They haunt lonely sea-coasts, but are unable to swim, as they have not webbed feet. Their call resembles that of a paradise duck about to rise from the ground, with the addition of one shrill note on the end. When calling, redbills usually stand on one leg, bob their heads up and down, opening their bills wide at every note. They are poor fliers, rarely rising more than a few feet from the ground, and never flying very far at a time. Their usual way of progress is a little quick run with which they advance very swiftly. When running away from anything, redbills hold their heads down. Their chief food is small insects, found in seaweed, although I have often watched them standing on a rock in about six inches of water and securing small fish from the incoming tide. They often sleep, standing on one leg, during the day. I think the redbills here sleep on some rocks on the end of a point at night. They usually go about in pairs.

They nest early in December, generally selecting a bleak spot near the sea. I once watched a female redbill making a nest in the pebbles. She turned round in a circle, beating the sand into place with her wings until a shallow hole was formed. Redbills lay from two to three greenish brown eggs, blotched with black and brown. They are about the size of hens' eggs, but are more the shape of turkeys'. The eggs take three weeks to hatch, and

during that time the female leaves the nest only long enough to get food. While the female is setting, the male is often seen standing on a rock or piece of high ground near the nest keeping watch. If danger approaches, he gives a sharp call, at which the female leaves the nest and either hides or flies away. The chicks are covered with black down, and have large red bills when hatched. They are fed on insects found on the sand or in seaweed, and soon become very active, although it is some time before they fly. The parent birds teach the chicks to find their own food when they are quite young, and they are often seen searching in seaweed together. The redbills are clever at hiding their chicks and misleading an enemy if one goes near. As soon as they lose their down the chicks get the plumage of an adult redbill, instead of having a less conspicuous plumage the first year, as the young of some species of birds have.

A PLEA FOR THE HARRIER.

Lack of knowledge is the chief reason that many species are placed on the "black list." Thus, birds of prey generally are almost universally condemned. Yet, as with the kestrel, Britain's most numerous "hawk," common - sense, backed by observation, is gradually replacing prejudice. On many game reserves to-day this little falcon goes unmolested after generations of persecution, for it has been found that partridges, pheasants, etc., are only taken when very small, and even then the pressure of hunger seems to be necessary. On the other hand, it devours large numbers of rats, mice, moles, etc., to say nothing of various species of injurious insects.

So with our own harrier. May we not be premature in making it an outlaw! One frequently sees the same controversy revived from time to time in the press: "Is the harrier harmful or beneficial?" Sportsmen generally and Acclimatisation Societies in particular condemn it on account of an occasional pheasant or quail. Here it may be as well to point out that very few people indeed have actually seen a harrier strike a game bird. In the majority of instances it is a case of having seen the bird rise from a carcase. This, however, proves nothing. Nearly everyone knows how partial the harrier is to carrion as witness the easiness with which it is captured by a baited trap. Even though the victim's body be fresh and even warm, that proves nothing, for the harrier has remarkable sight and quickly discovers a tasty tit-bit.

Some farmers also condemn the harrier because they maybe lose a fowl. This loss is usually impressed upon them by the wild

commotion that occurs in the poultry yard, or the discovery of scattered feathers and picked bones.

Other farmers are more observant. They see things more fairly. The remains of a fowl, like the remains of a pheasant, do not prove that the harrier captured the bird in the first place. It may have been a cat or a stoat, and in some instances a rat. Should a "hawk" be caught red-handed, they endeavour to shoot or trap it. This is the most logical course to pursue. We do not seek to destroy *all* dogs because one or two become renegades and worry sheep.

The harrier does quite a considerable amount of good by catching rabbits, the young ones in particular falling an easy prey. It also devours a very large number of rodents and insects such as crickets and grasshoppers, and here we open up a fresh question: How much grass do these pasture-haunting insects devour? This subject would yield some surprising results to an enterprising observer. If some idea was gathered of the amount eaten by one individual and this multiplied by whatever was considered the average number to an acre, I venture to say the loss in grass would be astonishing. It is not everyone who is fortunate enough to have unlimited time at his disposal, but if the opportunity occurs, it is worth while watching the ravenous appetite of a grasshopper and seeing the rapidity with which even a coarse pasture leaf like paspalum is devoured.

Judging by the amount of really reliable information we have, it would seem that the good done by the harrier at least balances the harm. Yet it is condemned. Surely the Powers-that-be are not so ignorant of that wonderful thing called Nature, as to take the birds of prey as a class and label them a menace to other bird life! On the contrary, the dashing falcons keep the species they prey on from becoming degenerate by continually weeding out the weak and undeveloped. Perhaps, had New Zealand possessed a reasonable quota of preying beasts and birds, we should not have to-day the degenerate kiwis, wekas, and other birds with their useless or almost useless wings. They would be better able to hold their own against the carnivora we have introduced.

But the harrier lacks the dash and courage of the falcons, so can hardly be considered detrimental in any way to our native birds or of even playing an important part in preventing degeneration. I do not advocate allowing the harriers to multiply unchecked, for that would probably result in an insufficiency of food for all, and in consequence the bird would become a nuisance. Nor do I agree with the plan of putting a price on each bird's head (or rather feet), for this tends to encourage ruthless slaughter.—(S. D. POTTER.)

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