

THE WHITE HERON.

Lake Okarita, on the West Coast of the South Island, is a charming sanctuary only recently gazetted as such, and is the only known nesting place in New Zealand of the beautiful White Heron or Kotuku. Only about a dozen birds are to be found on the lake at present, but as they are jealously guarded by the nearest residents they should increase. Amongst the Maoris this bird is considered sacred, and that death quickly befalls any person who kills one.

GAME BIRDS AND OTHER BIRDS.

BY S. D. POTTER.

I do not always agree with the methods and opinions of Acclimatisation Societies, because, speaking generally, this interest in "wild life" commences and ends with the word "game." Further than that they seldom go. If certain native birds are on the increase, providing they are not those that the Societies are warring against, well and good. If those same birds are on the decrease it is still well and good, providing that whatever is the particular fad of the moment is flourishing.

Really there is not much fear of any game bird being exterminated, whether imported or native, while there are proper game laws. Sportsmen themselves see to that, the various species concerned are watched, their numbers estimated, close seasons appointed, and the number to be killed limited. Further, there is invariably a reserve of "new blood" to be liberated, or the necessary money to procure it.

Here we touch a sore point. Why should a few people be allowed to introduce alien species to the detriment of our native birds and forests, just because they are willing to pay for the privilege of killing them?

Just now these Societies have opened hostilities on the shag, because it takes a few trout. Well, so do the people employed in destroying shags. After all, shags are native birds, and there are fifteen species, and it must be admitted that they are of some use or they would not be here, no matter how ignorant of their habits we may be, or how warped our minds. Nowhere in the world are useless species to be found, it is against all the laws of Nature. Once the use for any particular animal has gone, that animal, too, disappears. However, it is to be presumed that for a long time yet there will be people who are not happy unless they are killing something. So we will return to the point where I mentioned that there is little chance of any "game" being exterminated under proper game laws. As an example, fox-hunt-