

ing gives a true idea of what can be attained, and without even protecting the fox by law.

Foxes would have disappeared from England years ago, had there been no fox-hunting with long purses behind the various "packs" to recompense farmers and others for damage done by the hunt followers and foxes.

However, in the matter of rats, I am entirely in accordance with Acclimatisation Societies. They undoubtedly are one of the greatest, if not the greatest menace to our bird life—native or imported.

The strength of the rats' position lies in its remarkable powers of reproduction. A European statistician worked out the theoretical progeny of a single pair of rats after ten years as reaching the astonishing figure of 48,319,698,843,030,344,720 ! Of course, this calculation is really of little use, as it assumes that each rat becomes a parent and allows for no deaths, whereas the mortality is in reality very high, thanks chiefly to certain natural enemies.

Now Acclimatisation Societies state that in certain areas opossum trappers catch large numbers of rats and that in these districts native birds are in consequence on the increase! I should very much like to know who started this story, because to anyone who has the welfare of our birds and forests at heart it sounds very much like an attempt to further the interests of those in the "fur trade." I wonder how many rats the average trapper does catch during a season? (Those I know must be extremely unfortunate, as they very rarely catch any.) I also wonder how many woodhens are caught. Then the question that comes to my mind is how many rats would each trapped woodhen have accounted for?

It should be fairly clear that we cannot cope with the rat unaided. We must have assistance. We must find its natural enemies.

No doubt some people will say: "It has no natural enemies in New Zealand, because it is not a native, it was brought here," etc., etc. But stay! Both the black (or British) rat and the brown (Norway or Hanoverian) rat came here from Britain. Britain, it must be admitted, has many natural enemies of the rat, principally owls and hawks.

For instance, the British Board of Agriculture and Fisheries made first-hand observations, examined the disgorged pellets, and carefully weighed all reliable information obtainable. The Board states the food of the Barn Owl to consist chiefly of mice, voles, bats, rats, large insects and a small percentage of small birds, and concludes by saying: "The statement that the chief food of the Barn Owl consisted of game birds has been dis-