

# BIRDS

ISSUED BY

**New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society (Inc.)**

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WAITING FOR BREAKFAST AT A BIRD-LOVER'S GATE.

[Photo by J. N. Easdale.]

**OBJECTS**—To advocate and obtain the efficient protection and preservation of our native birds, a bird day for our schools, unity of control of all wild life, and the preservation of sanctuaries, scenic reserves, etc., in their native state.

Affiliated with the International Committee for the Protection of Wild Birds.

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 per annum. Ordinary Members, 5/- per annum  
Children - 1/- per annum.

(Membership open to all.)

***New Zealanders! Protect Your Native Birds!***



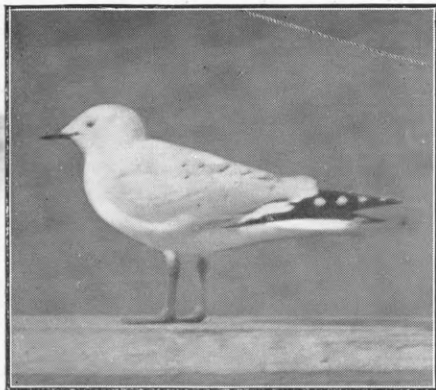
**SILVER-EYE AFTER A VISIT  
TO FEEDING STATION.**

[Photo by  
Stewart V. Robertson,  
St. Kilda.

**YOUNG KAKA.**

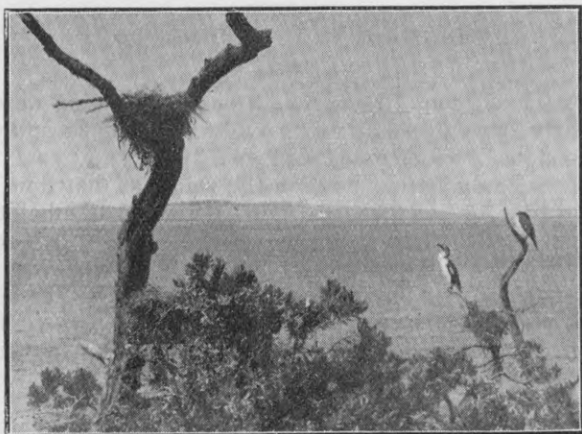
Mayor Island.

[B. Sladden, Photo.



**BLACK-BILLED GULL.**

[Photo by  
Stewart V. Robertson,  
St. Kilda.



NESTS OF PIED SHAG.  
Bay of Plenty.

[Photo by B. Sladden.]

**N**EW ZEALAND might well be likened to a business or even a warehouse in that it has so much goods to sell in the shape of wool, meat, butter, cheese. It follows axiomatically that if the main concern is doing well all subsidiary concerns have the opportunity of doing likewise. Therefore, because the welfare of the Dominion is inextricably allied with the welfare of the forests, it is every citizen's business to see that the native forests are preserved lest, owing to the depredations of animals, fire, etc., erosion assumes the mastery and our lower lying productive lands become more or less masses of stony debris. Periodic depressions come and go, but the depression following forest depletion stays for all time.

## "SHALL WE DO IT?"

(By CAPT. E. V. SANDERSON.)

Mr. A. H. Gibson, J.P., writes a very interesting description of the early days in Akatarawa Valley (about 25 miles from Wellington) as it existed in 1884.

"I was the only settler living in the valley at that time. True, there were one or two whares, but they were uninhabited. It was a lonely valley right in the heart of the bush, but beautiful as only New Zealand's unspoiled beauty is. Mine was a two-roomed whare on Section 389, which had about 50 acres cleared and in grass. I slept in a hammock slung to the wall-plates. Have you ever slept alone in the bush miles from anyone? If not, then you don't know how our far-off ancestors lived long before towns were invented. The sighing of the breeze among the pine-tops, the distant murmur of the river, the call of the weka or the morepork, and then when the winter gales blow, afar off the crash of some mighty monarch of the forest as he falls to the earth from which he sprang hundreds of years ago. And then the coming of the dawn; a note from a distant tui on some branch in the forest quickly answered by another close by; a kaka's shrill cry from the big rata on the opposite hill; then a whole chorus in which tuis, kakas and bell-birds join, mingled with the first morning breath of the breeze from up the river. And now a shaft of sunshine strikes over the hill to the east and lights on the tasselled tops of the rimu, where already pigeons are wheeling, their white and bronze breasts gleaming against the blue sky. In the elbow of the river, just where the water glides under an overhanging tree-fern, a blue mountain duck with her brood of young is paddling up stream. And now the huias call from over the river where the rangiora is in full bloom, and the old hinau rears its worm-eaten boughs on high. Some parraquets are chattering in the honeysuckle, whose red blossoms hold that nectar they so love, and on the very top of the dead pine in the clearing perches a bush-hawk. The kakas in a body of some 20 or 30, screaming loudly, wheel round the crimson rata, in whose wide-spreading boughs they sleep every night, preparatory to flying far over the bush-ranges to other feeding-grounds. A warm scented breath from the heart of the bush steals on the ambient air. Day has begun on the Akatarawa Valley. . . .

Often I would go eeling up the river with a bob made of interlaced worms dug from the garden. It is dark and muddy on the river bed. Great trees loom up on either bank, dark and mysterious. All sorts of noises come from the

depths of the bush. Think of the ages and ages these hills have been here with their forests, hiding strange sights and sounds long ere man ever entered this lovely land! All round in the river you hear the 'chug, chug' of the eels snapping at the mosquitoes now everywhere in evidence. And now a dim light constantly growing steals round you, and over against the ratas on the distant skyline the rising moon is outlined like a silver globe, and round the dead trees in the clearing is heard the chattering of the bats as they dart to and fro in pursuit of insects. Close by a weka sounds his eerie, mournful note, while a morepork, perched on an overhanging bough, screams shrilling. A puff of the light breeze comes laden with an earthy smell from the bush depths where rotting logs lie, the remains of trees that fell perhaps many, many years ago, and are now only a shell covered with creepers and mosses. How it brings to me dim, ancestral memories that no residence in crowded foetid cities can ever wholly stifle."

Again, Mr. Gibson writes of the early days around Mt. Egmont:—

"In those days the chorus of birds in the early mornings in the bush surrounding the clearings was most beautiful. Tuis were everywhere. There were also large numbers of pheasants, and on the occasions of earthquakes you could hear the alarmed cries of the cock birds before the 'quake. Later, I lived near Nelson, and on one occasion rode with a friend through the Rai Valley to a relative of his at Whangamoa. In the valley the kakas were so numerous and made so much noise that speech was impossible. They were everywhere, also parraquets, bell-birds, tuis, pigeons, fantails, tomtits, and the friendly little bush robins. In the lagoon at Whangamoa, the ducks and black swans seemed countless. There were Paradise ducks in abundance. I was the first settler in the Akatarawa Valley, off Upper Hutt. A whole spring and summer (in 1884) I was there alone. It was most beautiful. There was a large rata on a hill close by, and the kakas roosted there every night, leaving soon after dawn for their feeding grounds elsewhere. The song of the birds in the early morning was delightful. Huias were plentiful; they always went about in pairs, and you could hear their calls in every direction. In the tops of the lofty rimus pigeons were nesting, and often you would see them flying around, their breasts flashing in the sunlight. Parraquets, tuis, robins, wekas (or woodhens) and many others whose names were unknown to me were in multitudes (no exaggeration). In one tawa alone I counted thirty pigeons one day busily engaged eating the black damson-like berries. In the creek were often ducks, sometimes several of the blue mountain duck variety, which were very

tame, quite different from the other species. The note of the large variegated cuckoos could be heard frequently, and at times bush-hawks would perch on the topmost branch of a dead rimu in the clearing. Woodhens were very numerous, but I never heard (as I used to on my brother's farm in Okoke, Taranaki) the kiwis' note. Great flocks of parraquets were feasting on the fuchsia berries. With the lovely tree-ferns bending over the river, the rangiora and wineberry in bloom, here and there the crimson blossom of the rata, or of the honeysuckle, the waving branches of the rimus or kahikatea, with the birds everywhere singing at the top of their voices, it made a scene I shall never forget.

"As to your Society, however, I fear you are too late on the scene. The introduction of ferrets, stoats, weasels, and other vermin, which, leaving the rabbits untouched and made straight-way for the birds, was the end of them. Afterwards, as this was not enough, the little German owl was brought out. Then deer, thar, chamois, elk, goats, and other such pests, ruinous and destructive to our native bush, were introduced. I have seen acres of bush ruined for all time by these pests, the bark stripped, the branches of many broken down with their teeth, the seed-beds beneath trodden hard and ruined by their feet. You will never now rid the bush of these destructive pests. The bush in New Zealand is doomed, together with the native birds. The mountains will eventually become heaps of debris, slipping into the river beds and covering the lower lands with stones and soil. It will for ever be a lasting monument to the insensate folly of man, who, without thought or reason, has brought a lovely and beautiful forest-covered land, replete with unique and exquisite bird life, to ruin. I repeat, sir, and with deep regret I say it—you are now *too late* to save either the birds or the forest they live by and which also depends on them."

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Now should we just give in and say we cannot, or should we act in that spirit which made Britain great? Once the public can be brought to realize the economic importance of bird and bush, conservation is easy; but the public must be on the side of the forests and birds, and it is in their interests to be so. Our forest-inhabiting birds were evolved for those conditions prevailing at the period Mr. Gibson writes. Return our remaining forests to their natural condition and the birds will be there. Plant-eating animals and fire are now the greatest menace to the homes and food supplies of our forest-inhabiting birds. Good progress has been made since the inauguration of the Native Bird Society. Let us carry on, and with the help of all the better thinking, the impossible shall be done. Mr. Gibson has offered to lend his help too.

The case is by no means hopeless, because when fire and animals are removed from our forests the regeneration in a few years is almost unbelievable, and the birds promptly increase amazingly with the enhanced food-supply and more favourable conditions, as the writer has seen on a limited area.

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## ARE WE PROGRESSING?

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Present-day carelessness in regard to forest fires would receive a decided check if the penalties therefor enforced in the days of Frederick the Great were re-enacted. In a proclamation on December 3, 1775, the Emperor decreed that "Anyone starting a fire in or within 100 paces of a forest, or using a pitch torch or any fire when fishing in any lakes within and on streams or creeks flowing through a forest, or who smokes tobacco during the dry or summer season within a forest, even though no damage be done, shall be punished with a 4-week gaol sentence, and, if any damage results, shall pay such damage. Any person wilfully or maliciously starting a fire in a forest, with intent to damage said forest, shall be punished with a 10-year penitentiary sentence at hard labour, and upon establishing the moral responsibility the sentence may be increased even to the death penalty."

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## AMBULANCE WORK.

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Out in the midst of traffic fluttered the wounded sparrow, its broken wing dragging. Cars whizzed by, each wheel a threat charged with death. Few of the motorists saw the bird, but finally one woman driver noticed the pathetic little creature and swung her machine to the curb to rescue it. Just as she was about to pick it up, however, recounts a news story in the "New Orleans States," two other sparrows alighted one on each side of the injured bird and, catching its wings with their bills, dragged it to the sidewalk. Then, with the skill of human workmen lifting a heavy piece of furniture, the two rescuers hauled it over the curb and into a clump of bushes.

A somewhat similar happening to this occurred at Paekakariki, near Wellington, where a silver-eye was seen to lead its mate, which had a hurt wing, up into a ngaio tree by hops and jumps right up to a feeding tray placed in the tree. While the wounded bird fed, its mate drove off all other silver-eyes.

Similarly, snipe have been reported to be well up in splint methods and are credited with being adepts at mending legs which have been broken by shot, with odd bits of grass, etc.



## NATIVE BIRD-LIFE IN ANCIENT MAORILAND.

(By GEO. GRAHAM.)

The native birds of this country were to the ancient Maori people an important factor in their daily life. So important indeed that the customs dealing with bird-life occupied quite a prominent part of Maori culture. These customs were based on various mythological beliefs, and were enforced by the strict observance accorded them.

Of the multiplicity of those old-time customs concerning bird-life I can now only briefly speak.

All things pertaining to the forests—the trees and plants and the bird-life—were the children of Tane, the God of Forests.

Then each forest had its particular subsidiary deity—a presiding, protective spirit; the forests, and the floral life as well as the bird-life therein, were under the tutelage of Tane, and that local subsidiary spirit.

Therefore, before certain observances were first fulfilled, no trees might be felled, foodstuffs gathered, or birds hunted within the forest.

For that purpose there was a fixed ritual—and an elaborate series of ceremonies was gone through to propitiate the Forest Spirits and Tane the Overlord.

Nor were any sylvan operations undertaken except in the season recognised as appropriate. Those seasonal restrictions were in themselves the result of the deep knowledge the Maori possessed of nature lore, and that was the outcome of keen observation over many generations of time.

All forests were within the definite areas of particular tribes, and their boundaries as between tribe and sub-tribe were defined as a matter of common knowledge. Rivers, ridges, mountain-peaks, and coast-lines marked those boundaries.

No unauthorised persons presumed to trespass therein. Such transgressions led indeed to penalties, and even inter-tribal wars. Thereof Maori history is all too replete with examples.

Thus it was that the protection of forests and the bird-life therein went hand-in-hand. The inter-relations thereof the Maori fully understood—and thereby the balance of nature was preserved.

Therefore in former days the Maori had his code, a recognised set of game and forestry laws. These laws had as their motive, the preservation of nature and the protection of the bird-life from indiscriminate slaughter.

Such laws were therefore the equivalent of the forestry and game-laws of our European ancestors.



This forestry and game-code had also as its purpose the reservation to particular families of leading rank—each its particular rahui—or bird-hunting area. Even particular trees therein were reserved to the privileged ownership of such families during many generations of time.

Those ancient proprietary rights thus have become the basis of very many Native family titles, and held by them by virtue thereof at this present day.

In the protection of the already rarer birds there was also a still stricter rahui—equivalent indeed to an actual tapu\* in its stringency.

The white crane, huia, and several other such birds were so specially restricted from being hunted. Only, therefore, by the men of highest rank, the actual owners of such rahui rights, might such sacred birds be taken.

Here, again, the apparent object was to ensure the perpetuation of these rarer birds, as also to reserve them for the use of the people of foremost rank.

About this time of the year, September-October, we again hear the call of the koekoea, which bird now arrives from beyond seas on its annual visit to New Zealand.

It was, indeed, the flight of this bird, observed in mid-ocean by the older Polynesian navigators, which guided those vikings of the Pacific to these shores.

Again, it was the call of this cuckoo that indicated to the Maori the beginning of his New Year. For the arrival of the koekoea was the harbinger of Mahuru—the spring season.

Then, in obedience to the cuckoo's call, and on the summons of the tohungas,† the men-folk brought forth their digging implements (the ko). They then assembled in the village ceremonial place, where was performed the appropriate agricultural ritual, before they repaired to the plantation areas.

For the call of that bird was "Koia! Koia! Koia!" It was the summons to prepare the land with the digging ko for the coming planting season now at hand.

Bird-life was of much utilitarian value to the Maori. Here he had found a land practically devoid of animal life. But, as the result of the almost entire absence of natural enemies, it was a land teeming with bird-life.

The Maori had, therefore, to depend *almost* solely on birds for his flesh-foods. Almost, I say, for he had the rat and the dog—both mammals introduced by him from Polynesia.

Lucky, therefore, was the tribe which had within its domains an extensive forested area, wherein was set aside the necessary hunting grounds to ensure those supplies.

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\* Tapu: Holy or sacred.

† Tohunga: Expert or Priest.

Apart from the gathering of forest game for immediate consumption, large quantities were also potted down for winter foods, or to provide for coming banquets and tribal assemblies.

Similar large quantities also provided the necessary supply for a regular system of barter with other tribes, and which was maintained as an annual system of exchange for food products peculiar to other districts.

For example, sea-coast people bartered preserved sea-foods for the potted birds and other forest foods of the inland regions.

In the personal adornment of the people, bird feathers and plumage were of importance and therefore in much demand.

The feather-decked garments of the Maori are some of the most artistic productions of any Native culture; and, happily, this is an art still extant.

Such feathered garments of kiwi and pigeon, and the plumes of huia, gannet, and other birds, were the proudest possessions of the people of rank.

In their houses, canoes, and even weapons, were introduced artistically-considered schemes of feather decorative work.

Huias were so prized that they were often confined to cages. The white-tipped tail feathers were valued and worn by chiefs as plumes. From the kiwi cloaks are made, and these, too, only worn by those of rank. These feathered garments were the proudest decorative possessions of the people of rank or rangatira.

I have already spoken of the Maori code of forestry laws, the *rahui*, and how that code effectively secured to each tribe and family thereof their respective hunting grounds. And how also that primitive code ensured the conservation of bird-life to succeeding generations.

It, indeed, effectively protected the birds from the extinction that the absence of such customs would have doomed. Those ancient restrictions in their day served well their purpose; for when European settlement first began to encroach on the primeval wilderness of New Zealand, its forests teemed with a wealth of bird-life. The *rahui* code of the ancient Maori regime had efficiently fulfilled its duty; nor was it until those olden customs came to be disregarded that the native bird-life was seriously interfered with.

The old mythological beliefs which had aided to support the ancient forest laws then gave way before the new ideas of Pakehadom.\* All the old respect for the *rahui* and *tapu* restrictions was set aside, nor did effective European laws take their place. Then also the comparatively harmless Maori hunting methods became obsolete. The snares and hunting-spears and decoys were displaced by the deadly shot gun.

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\* Pakeha: White Man.

The former forest silences were now disturbed by that dreaded weapon. Immense destruction of native bird-life then began, and has so continued for nigh a century of time to at least very recent years.

Added to these disturbing causes are others still perhaps more effective in their destructiveness. The felling of the forests for timber, and in the progress of settlement, has diminished the bird-life habitat. This factor has also depleted the food-gathering and breeding areas.

Apart also from these detrimental operations of the European, there are several other factors in bird destruction which Man has here introduced. These are the exotic animals which have proved grave natural enemies of native bird-life—dogs, cats, rats, stoats, weasels are some such. The wingless and ground-birds are thus specially affected, and perish annually in great numbers.

It is also possible, as the Maori states, that many introduced insects and foreign birds are aggressive enemies of the native birds. These foreigners, they state, drive the native birds away from their ancient breeding and feeding-grounds. The Maoris also assert, and they are accurate observers of such things, that foreign birds even spread their peculiar diseases, to which the native birds are fatally susceptible.

In order to counteract these various destructive agencies, man's active interference is necessary. He must aid to undo so much that he has hitherto so thoughtlessly done.

To that end, his assistance can be effective in various ways, some of which I may suggest.

An extension is essential of the system of bird sanctuaries. This can be done by including all suitable islands and inland areas.

Every property-owner might preserve reasonable areas of native bush, fencing the same off where practical, and excluding dog and gun therefrom.

Such areas might be respected as bird-sanctuaries in the strictest sense.

The planting of native trees should be extensively undertaken wherever possible. Thereby would to some extent be provided food and shelter preserves for native birds where none now exist.

These efforts can even be assisted to some extent by town and suburban dwellers; for we have many native birds, visitors to the city and suburbs, seeking furtively even here food and shelter in times of scarcity.

But for the effective preservation to future time of our beautiful native birds there must go hand-in-hand with the above suggested efforts a conservation of native flora in all possible localities. And not only in the conservation of what remains, but also the restoration of much that in the past has been too thoughtlessly destroyed.

There must be added to these activities mentioned above a general observance and respect for the laws framed for these purposes; a return, in fact, to the Maori ideals of *rahui* and *tapu*; for only by this loyal respect for and the observance of laws based on some such principles, can the operation of same be made effective.

To achieve these ends much depends after all on our children, the men and women of the time to come. By making Nature-study a feature of our educational system, our schools can greatly influence and aid. Thereby we may hope that New Zealand's unique and beautiful flora and bird-life may be preserved as a prized heritage to a future time. But if the matter be now delayed, that delay will lead to neglect tending to destroy that which can never again be restored to us.

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#### SUPPLEMENTARY REMARKS BY MR. E. H. NEPIA.

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Let me briefly tell of the prominence given to birds in symbolic references and proverbs relating to daily life. Some such are as follows:—

“He *kaka* ki te *ngahere*; he *wahine* ki te *kainga*.”

As is the parrot in the forest; so are womenfolk in the home.

Again:

“He *parahako* i te *koekoea*.”

An (egg) abandoned by the *koekoea* (cuckoo).

(The cuckoo left its eggs in the nest of other birds to be hatched as an abandoned child.)

The grey warbler (*riro-riro*) is immortalised in the proverb:

“I *whaea* *koe* i te *tangihanga* o te *riro-riro*?”

Where wert thou when the *riro-riro* was calling?”

(A remark made to shame a person who came to seek food not having made a cultivation of food in the planting season—*i.e.*, when the *riro* (also the *koekoea*) calls.)

Then again:

“Me he *tarakihi* e *papa* ana te *wawaro*.”

Like unto the locusts is the din of many voices.

(Said of people overlong at meals and jabbering away senselessly—a reminder to get back to daily tasks.)

Certain birds are held in respect because of their supposed omen-giving significance.

If a newly-married man dreamt of tattooed heads decorated with huia feathers, that was regarded as an indication that his wife had conceived a daughter; whereas if the plumes be those of the kotuku (or heron) that was an omen that a son may be expected.

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### KAIBAB RESERVE.

[The following extracts, culled from "Bird Lore," with reference to the Kaibab Reserve in Arizona, make interesting reading when our own deer meance is considered. It will be noticed that the special committee set up to report recommends that the natural enemies be preserved lest the vegetation is completely destroyed. In New Zealand the natural enemy is, of course, absent. What will become of our forests?]

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One of the most peculiar and difficult problems in connection with the management of game-animals is that which has developed in the Kaibab Game Preserve, of Northern Arizona, established by Act of Congress in 1906. For a number of years all hunting of deer was prohibited. Several hundred cougars, thousand of coyotes, as well as many wildcats and a few gray wolves of the region were destroyed.

The deer, relieved of the destructive effect of their wild and human enemies, quickly began to show a marked increase in numbers, and soon the officials of the United States Forest Service, who have charge of the preserve, became conscious of the alarming decrease of available food-supply. Since the autumn of 1924 restricted hunting has been permitted with a view to trying, if possible, to save the range. Despite this action, tesimony on all sides indicates that great numbers of deer have died of starvation, and the range has steadily deteriorated.

The Kaibab area is a forested plateau on the north rim of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River. It is approximately 1,052,000 acres in extent, something more than two-thirds of the area being within the Game Preserve, the rest being included in the Grand Canyon National Park. Roughly, we may say it is bounded on three sides by cliffs which almost everywhere are inaccessible, and on the remaining side by deserts. The region, therefore, so far as the deer are concerned, is about as isolated as if they were on an island.

At an altitude of from 8,000 to 9,000 feet, the deer pass the summer, dropping down in winter on the west and east sides to altitudes of from 4,000 to 5,000 feet.

A few months ago the United States Forest Service requested a number of organisations to appoint official representatives who would compose a Committee to investigate the Kaibab region and to study the conditions by actual observations and make to the Forest Service such recommendations as it saw fit. The Committee traversed all sections of the Kaibab area traveling approximately 650 miles in actual field of examination. It observed every forest type of the area during the period June 8th to 15th, 1931.

In its report to the Forest Service the Committee stated in part:—

"It is the conclusion of the Committee, after carefully reviewing the general condition of the Kaibab range, and also observing the degree of recovery within the fenced experimental plots, that the Kaibab area is not now producing more than 10 per cent. of the available and nutritious forage that this range once produced.

"No doubt the entire accessible Kaibab area has suffered at least two periods of severe range depletion; first, by domestic grazing animals, and then by deer. In the words of a financier, the capital investment, which in this case is the forage, has been used up almost completely.

"The forage of the entire Kaibab area is yet in a deplorable condition, and with the exception of the east-side winter range, it is doubtful whether there has been any considerable range recovery due to the reduction of the deer-herd. It is believed, however, by those who have studied Kaibab conditions over several years, that in places there is slight suspension of range deterioration because of the reduction of the deer and domestic stock.

There exists a most urgent need for reducing the present number of deer in the Kaibab area to a point much below the present limited carrying capacity of the range and maintaining the deer-herd at such a level until such time as the various species of shrubs and young trees upon which the deer depend for browse are re-established. Thereafter, by careful game management, the deer may be permitted to increase to such numbers as the natural food-supply may sustain. During this necessary period of re-establishment, we recommend that all forms of natural wild animal life, other than deer, in the Kaibab area be left undisturbed, except for necessary scientific purposes, or where serious damage to private property is being done, and that suspension of Federal and State predatory animal killing be continued; also, the area should be closed to private trapping and hunting of flesh-eating animals until adequate annual reductions of deer are made."



## PEACE AND GOODWILL—A CONTRAST.

(By P. MONCRIEFF.)

Xmas had come, and with it perfect weather. In the cities, towns and villages people were opening their Xmas cards and reading messages of peace and goodwill.

It was holiday time, the season when everyone pursues his favourite pastime.

As the day broke, away across Nelson Bay sailed yachts and numerous launches.

On the beaches at Torrent Bay and Astrolabe folk were gathering to fish or bathe. One party, on exploration bent, wended its way up a creek, following the stream inland.

It was hot work climbing uphill, through thickets of supplejack, kiekie and tall ferns; therefore, the party hailed with delight the suggestion to return to the shore and bathe.

Into the deep, cool sea they plunged, crying out that the water was so clear they could see the bottom. To and fro they swam, amidst granite rocks, against which the wavelets splashed. Overhead the sky was cloudless, and round a headland sailed a small white Sea-Swallow. It was not timorous, for it hovered over the bathers for a second, whilst they exclaimed at its graceful movements; then pursued its way, like a large white butterfly; the embodiment of life and freedom.

"Must have a nest nearby," said one of the party. "See how it swoops to settle on yonder rocks."

Bathing over they ate their lunch; then lay outstretched on the hot, sun-baked sands beneath a gigantic rock which afforded shelter to their heads.

"What a perfect day," sighed the woman of the party, gazing with contented eye at the vivid green of a broad-leaf tree spreading above the rocks. "Where could one find a more peaceful spot to spend Xmas? The whole place preaches peace and goodwill. . . . We must come here to-morrow."

The following day found them returning to their paradise. Overhead the sun shone as before; the sea still sparkled as it splashed against the granite rocks. The picture seemed the same, but not quite. One thing was different.

On the spot where the woman had laid her head the previous day they caught sight of a small white object.

"Who is the untidy one who left the paper about?" demanded the joker of the party; then, horrorstruck, recoiled.

At their feet, wings outspread, his black-capped head touching the sand, lay the joyous Sea Swallow they had admired the day before. Dead! Shot by some person in a launch.

There he lay close to a fresh water creek, nothing but a



heap of snowy feathers, whilst in silence the party gazed down upon him and a feeling of rage and disgust threatened to choke them.

In each one's mind the question arose: "Why must some men express their feeling of happiness by taking life?"

It was not as if the little bird had been killed for some purpose. For he was valueless as food; only a little sea-bird not worth the shot that had slain him. Yet whose value was greater than the murderer realised.

For there were those whose happiness had been enhanced by his beauty; whilst who can estimate the value he was to his Creator, or the little ternlets who waited in vain for his return.

Silently the party turned and left the spot. For them the place was haunted. Where was the feeling of peace and goodwill they had experienced? Destroyed by a careless being who perhaps laughed as he saw the correctness of his aim.

Yet Christians call Xmas the season of peace and goodwill!

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### WHY NOT IN N.Z. ALSO ?

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Warning signs reading "Look out for the trains" no longer mean danger to game birds and other wild life in Missouri. They are only invitations to dinner.

Three railroad companies operating in that state have designated their rights of way, stretching into thousands of acres, as game and bird sanctuaries. They have ordered that all natural food and cover be saved, and requested trainmen to help the game and fish department to distribute food during the winter.

The Kansas City Southern, Missouri-Kansas-Texas and Missouri Pacific lines issued the orders in response to an appeal from John H. Ross, commissioner of fish and game.

It is estimated that thousands of bushels of valuable bird seed will be preserved from the customary practice of burning over or mowing the rights of way. Shelters and inviolate nesting grounds for the birds will be provided along fence rows, where they are badly needed because of intense farm cultivation in many sections.

Food furnished by the conservation department and scattered by trainmen along the rights of way during the snowy season will also save birds that would otherwise starve because of a shortage of natural food after the drought.

Missouri and other northern states have enlisted the aid of rural mail carriers, Boy Scouts, agricultural students, Campfire Girls and many sportsmen's groups in their winter feeding campaigns.

Conservation groups in Missouri alone last winter distributed 88,000 pounds of food.—*American Game*.

## WHEN MAN MUST REDUCE NATURAL ENEMIES.

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Man must reduce (not exterminate) certain natural enemies of birds: (1) when he attempts to rear poultry or game birds in excessive numbers; (2) when, because of the disturbance of the biologic balance caused by extensive agricultural operations, he needs to increase the number of insectivorous birds beyond what the land naturally would support; (3) when the most sagacious natural enemies of birds, like the fox and the crow—their own enemies having been reduced or exterminated by man himself—take advantage of the extra protection and food afforded them in civilised communities and thus become too numerous and too destructive; (4) wherever man hunts and destroys wild game he may also reduce somewhat the number of the enemies of the game and thereby relieve the game of a part of the pressure brought to bear against its increase. In all such cases discrimination must be used, and it is unsafe to reduce too far the numbers of any but the most powerful predatory animals.—“*The Natural Enemies of Birds*,” by Edward Howe Forbush.

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## THE HOUSE CAT.

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Missouri Game and Fish Department reports that every time a hunter kills a semi-wild cat he can easily figure that he has saved his daily bag limit of bobwhite quail. A check-up of the results of the co-operative pheasant egg hatch shows that after the 26,000 eggs had hatched, cats caused more deaths of young pheasants than died of natural causes. The toll taken by predatory animals and hawks was very meagre in comparison to the toll taken by cats, the report filed by the 1,600 persons who received eggs revealed. Sportsmen are urged to do their part in curbing the depredations caused by the common house cats permitted to run wild.

Farmers who permit cats to roam on their places are keeping away birds which aid materially in destroying insect pests. City dwellers must be content with only empty bird houses if they keep cats, bird authorities point out, as feeding places, houses and baths are not sufficient incentive for birds when their greatest natural enemies, the cat, is about.

More than 300 semi-wild house cats have been killed in Southern Butte County by an expert hunter for the Feather River Rod and Gun Club in California, according to reports coming to this office. Stomachs of 100 of these cats were opened and in 99 of them was found bird meat, principally duck and quail. Only one cat was found to have fed on mice.

This gives some idea of the importance of eliminating these clever creature from our game lands.—*"California Fish and Game."*

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### RED SQUILL FOR RATS.

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Red squill was brought into prominence during the war, when it was desired to produce a poison for rats which would prove harmless to everything else. The plant bearing this name grows in Sardinia and the islands and coast in the vicinity. In appearance it is a handsome plant terminating at the base in a large onion-like formation the size often of a coconut. The plants grow on rocky soil in small communities.

Mr. B. C. Aston, our Government Chemist, to whom we are indebted for much information on this matter, brought out a number of plants and one or two survived.

Recently, the United States Department of Agriculture instituted exhaustive experiments as to the effect of the poison on domestic animals. Dogs, cats, poultry, etc., generally refused the baits, and upon it being forcibly given, vomited it up. Doses were also taken by one gentleman without very evil effects.

The Native Bird Protection Society will shortly be able to supply Red Squill, believing it may be of great value in lessening the rat plague so much in evidence as a menace to bird life and which takes such a heavy annual toll of our food supply, besides being a prolific agent in spreading disease.

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### DUCK CRISIS.

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Following on two dry seasons, a great duck crisis has occurred in Canada and America. The birds have failed to compete against the modern gun, modern transport, baiting for the gun, poaching, etc. Shorter seasons, lessened bag limits have been of no avail. All the time the excessive destruction by man has been going on many hunters' organisations have stated that ducks are holding their own, etc., just as is done in New Zealand, where it only needs a similar combination of adverse circumstances to bring about like results. The remedy lies in more rigorously protected duck havens, where the birds should be fed as a set-off against cowardly baiting for the gun.

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