

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.