

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.

* Tapu: Holy or sacred.

† Tohunga: Expert or Priest.