

TRANSFERRING RARE BIRDS.

(By CAPTAIN E. V. SANDERSON.)

Bird students of the individual bird are prone to advocate the transference of rare birds to sanctuaries in order to save threatened extermination. But there are two sides to this matter, and the advantage of transferring them to an island sanctuary is that they are free at least from the attacks of stoats and weasels in some cases. Resolution Island is said to be an exception to this rule, and there is no doubt that an island requires to be a considerable distance from the mainland in order to avoid these animals obtaining access. Island sanctuaries, however, are not themselves free from undesirable enemies and frequent reports state that Little Barrier has a numerous wild cat population. Unless steps are taken to check this evil they will of course increase, having no natural enemies, and finally menace the existence of the bird life on the island. Both this island and Kapiti Sanctuary are fully stocked, and it does not seem politic to keep thrusting extra species on to an already fully stocked area. Kapiti, too, has its enemies against wekas, kiwis and kakapo, besides which rats are present in extraordinary numbers, and those on the island inform me that nests are depleted of their contents time and time again. In past years many different species have been introduced on to this island, and it cannot be said that they have prospered. Some indeed have never been heard of again, while only one kakapo has been seen in many years. Notice should certainly be taken of the sayings of that eminent young scientist, Dr. Myers, now holding an onerous position in the British Museum. He says:—

“The mania for acclimatisation, or the establishment of foreign animals and plants, perhaps more prevalent in New Zealand than in any other country, is a most insidious form of vandalism. In reserves and national parks it is a sin against posterity, and an everlasting reproach to New Zealand, that such a process should not only be allowed, but should actually in many cases be deliberately and actively encouraged by persons of authority, whose patriotism, scorning those natural beauties which embody the very spirit of our country, rises no higher than a desire to create in New Zealand a paltry imitation of other lands.

“There is another very dangerous side of the acclimatisation question which should not be overlooked. Once a sanctuary is created in a favourable situation there is a regrettable tendency to stock it, or wish to stock it, with species of native birds not already present, but confined to different localities, or even to other islands. In the case of the confusing medley of species and varieties in the kiwis (*Apteryx*) and the wekas (*Gallirallus*) this practice leads inevitably to inter-breeding,