

# BIRDS

ISSUED BY

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

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PEACE! A FAMILY PARTY.

**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.)

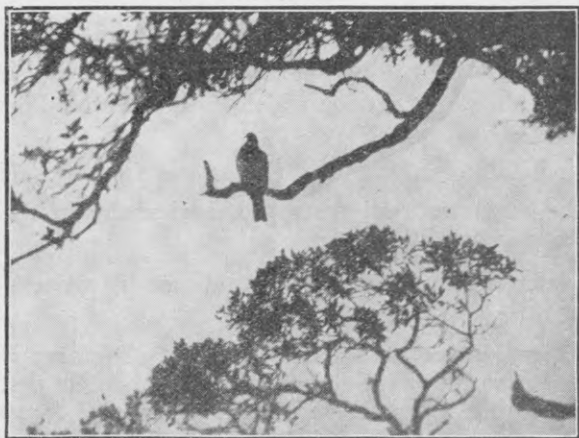
***New Zealanders! Protect Your Native Birds!***



WHITEYES FEEDING ON WASHHOUSE CHIMNEY,  
SECURE FROM CATS.



LITTLE BARRIER SANCTUARY.



PIGEON ON POHUTUKAWA.  
Safe on a Sanctuary.

SOME realisation of the practical value of forests and birds is now arising in the public mind in New Zealand. Will a full realisation take place in time to obviate the inevitable results of the past non-realisation? Already, almost universally, our steeper hill sides show much exposed sub-soil, and in many places rock, the result of the loss of the vital top soil. The over-utilisation of our steeper country and the loss of the forests thereon is telling the story in deteriorated highlands and floods and destructive loss in the lowlands. At the same time plant eating animals and fire are taking a heavy toll of our remaining mountain forests, while so far as birds are concerned such happenings frequently occur as the indiscriminate and illegal poisoning of all birds whether harmful or beneficial, protected by law or unprotected, and the organised and illegal collecting of all birds' eggs in defiance of the law and to the detriment of the national wellbeing. Shall we apathetically look forward to exist in poverty in an eroded and insect infested land, or realise the fact in time that a wise care of forests and birds is essential to national prosperity?

## THE PRACTICAL VALUE OF BIRDS.

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Michelet long ago said:—

“If it were not for the birds no human being could live upon the earth, for the insects upon which birds live would destroy all vegetation.”

Very much later a writer in *“Forest and Stream”* said:—

“If the birds were all destroyed, agriculture in the United States would instantly cease.”

Still later Forbush, one of our foremost writers on the subject, said:—

“An acquaintance with useful birds of the farm is as important to the farmer as is a knowledge of the insect pests which attack his crops. . . . Were the natural enemies of forest insects annihilated, every tree in our woods would be threatened with destruction, and man would be powerless to prevent it.”

These startling assertions are not the vain vapourings of dreamers and sentimentalists. They are the conclusions of trained scientists, based upon a great accumulation of information acquired only by the most painstaking and tedious investigation. Most of the very extensive literature upon this subject in America is written by investigators connected with the United States Department of Agriculture and various State Agricultural and Horticultural Departments and Societies, largely appearing as public documents, but a great deal of it, partly written by independent experts, scattered through scientific periodicals.

In some instances there has been a tendency to exaggerate the facts and to make assertions too extravagant concerning the value of birds. It may even be that if all birds were destroyed, other enemies of insects would be able to take care of the situation before desolation would become complete, but that no one can know. We do very definitely know that birds destroy a vast number of injurious insects, rodents and weed seeds every year, and are to be considered one of the most important factors in checking the increase of such pests, which, if unchecked by any means, would quickly prove very disastrous to the human race because of their wholesale and widespread destruction of vegetation. It is quite definitely known that ruthless slaughter of insectivorous birds has been followed locally by immediate increase in the numbers of insects, to the great injury of forest and agricultural crops; that wholesale destruction of birds of prey has been followed by “plagues” of mice and other mammal pests.

Through a very large amount of scientific research it is now known that the great majority of wild birds are highly beneficial to man, that many other species do much more good than harm, and that very few do more harm than good. This information forms the foundation of the laws for the protection of non-game birds which have been enacted in many States, not at the behest of sentimentalists, for aesthetic reasons, but upon the urgent recommendation of the Department of Agriculture, for purely practical reasons. So thoroughly is the economic value of birds now established that even Italy, where destruction of small birds was greatest, has enacted laws for their protection.\*

Some species are with us the year round, others remain only during the summer, while others come in from the North to spend the winter months. Thus the good work goes on winter and summer, from the peep of dawn to the late hours of twilight, the owls even working on night shift. The birds, with their extremely variable but in a very large measure useful food habits, fill a large place in the Economy of Nature. It is strange that men were so long in coming to recognise the value of the feathered tribe, and even at the present time there is appalling and widespread ignorance of the real facts, even among otherwise well-informed people.

Perhaps it was the fact that in some European and other countries insectivorous song birds are still considered a source of human food, or possibly the fact that not a great while ago such useful birds as the Flicker were sold in the open markets of the United States that inspired this bit of verse:—

I saw with open eyes  
Singing birds sweet  
Sold in the shops  
For people to eat,  
Sold in the shops of  
Stupidity Street.

I saw in a vision  
The worm in the wheat,  
And in the shops nothing  
For people to eat;  
Nothing for sale in  
Stupidity Street.

—Ralf Hodgson.

—Extracted from "*The Practical Value of Birds*," by Junius Henderson.

\* *Science*, n. s., XLIII., 65, 1916.



There is one California man who is keenly interested in the weather probabilities. Convicted of leaving a camp fire burning in a forest, he was sentenced to stay in gaol "until it rains."

## VERMIN (?).

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As Mr. McAtee (in charge of Food Habits Research, U.S. Bureau Biological Survey), so well states, the interest of the sportsman and hunter, which primarily concerns itself with a comparatively few game-birds and mammals, should not be permitted to dominate the whole field of wild-life conservation, inasmuch as there is a large and constantly growing number of persons whose interest in wild life is largely aesthetic and sentimental. Doubtless it hasn't occurred to those who are most energetic in sponsoring wholesale campaigns of "vermin" eradication that, as a matter of fact, all living creatures of the animal kingdom are in the truest sense predatory, for somehow in the scheme of Nature, in order to survive at all, they must prey upon other creatures. In this sense, undoubtedly, man is the greatest predator of all. At any rate, more than any other species, he has transformed and marred the face of Nature by the destructive processes which he has set in motion. Through the diversity of his activities and his conflicting desires, he also has brought about a problem which seems well-nigh impossible of satisfactory solution to all concerned.

We feel that all people should be broad-minded enough to be interested in preserving from total extinction all species of predatory birds and mammals, even though at times and in certain situations some of them may become destructive to man's interests and may have to be brought under control. To the scientist, many such forms represent types that have come down to us out of a very remote past and, moreover, their presence lends an interest and charm to the wilderness or to the countryside, and their total extermination would, to him, represent an irreparable loss. On the other hand, the naturalist and nature lover, with equal breadth of mind, should be able to sympathise with the viewpoint of farmers, fruit-growers, stockmen, and game-breeders who suffer losses through the depredations of predatory species. Their sympathies, moreover, at least should go far enough not to show active antagonism towards reasonable measures of control.

Stated briefly, therefore, our task is to work out in good faith, impugning the motives of none and taking all facts into consideration, a solution of the problem along lines which, as nearly as possible, will bring the most benefit and satisfaction to the greatest number of people.—*"Bird Lore."*





Photo of the Bell-bird Picture appearing in the Bird Album which is being issued shortly by this Society. The size of each of the 24 coloured pictures is 9 ins. x 5½ ins.

## "PIP."

(By HUGH ROSS, of Invercargill, Junior Member.)

Pip I call him, the name certainly seems to suit him. I have taken a great fancy to the little fellow; he interests me so much, but why I cannot exactly say. I have seen dozens more of his kind every bit as cheeky and perky as he is, some even more so. Perhaps it is because, with all his perkiness, he has a shyness that attracts me—for shy he is. He will advance to within three feet of where I stand, but beyond that distance he will not venture.

I first noticed this little tomtit a few weeks back. He was perched on my spade-handle where I was chipping gorse. Immediately I started work he was round after grubs, small slugs, scuttling ants, small worms, anything in the creepy crawly line he seemed to regard as a great luxury; I also fancy, as a great joke. The instant I moved back from upending a gorse bush he would pounce upon some fat grub or other, fly with it to a nearby willow tree, and there with a violent criss-cross movement of his beak, kill the insect against the perch he was sitting on, then very deliberately swallow it; after which he would hop up and down for a moment or two, trill his little song, then back again for more.

He does not seem to care a bit about his personal appearance, though he is by no means bedraggled or untidy. Nothing seems to damp his good spirits. Even the day a clod flew from the end of my spade and knocked him headlong off a wire fence into the mud, he did not seem to mind particularly. True, he went away for about half-an-hour, but back he came to his old perch on the willow, and it was not long before he pounced upon a grub, having apparently forgotten the accident altogether. An accident it certainly was. I am glad he regarded it as such; for I am very proud of the little insect-eater and would not hurt his feelings for anything.

Pip, although he is by no means proud, has reason enough to feel that way. For a small bird he is quite good-looking. With his \*yellow breast merging to grey-white near the wings, then to black, he is indeed handsome. His legs are reddish-brown, his tail black with a few white feathers. He has a white patch on each wing, patches that glitter like snow when he flies. The little round glossy head is armed with a miniature bill, ridiculously small it appears to be, but nevertheless it is a formidable weapon when used against the small fry on which he preys. Above this little bill is a tiny white spot that seems curiously to suit him. Sometimes I wonder if it is part of nature's plan for something I have never been able to discover.

\*White in North Island.



One thing my little friend is proud of, that is his hunting ground. He guards it jealously. Silver-eyes, red-polls, an occasional dunnoek (hedge sparrow) he promptly chases away; they seldom come back. Once a little hen tomtit ventured to trespass, and to my surprise he dealt out the same treatment to her. I have never seen her come back.

In the food line Pip is becoming particular. Where before he ate any and every insect that ventured to show above the ground, he now chooses a species of grass grub, a small wire worm. From morning till night he does little but eat. His holding capacity appears to be enormous. I estimate that he eats about fifty grubs an hour at that rate for about ten hours a day; the most optimistic of people could not but suppose that something dreadful is bound to happen. I used to think so myself. Yet it never does. What's more, he stubbornly refuses to get any fatter. At the end of a day he is as hungry looking, as energetic, and as perky and cheerful as when he is waiting for me in the mornings.

I often wonder where Pip goes to roost. I have never been able to discover that. He appears to be busy as long as there is daylight, hunting, ever hunting grubs. Perhaps to-night he is asleep in some gorse bush, his head tucked under his wing, confidently awaiting the morrow, dreaming maybe of the grubs he will catch for his endless meal; for full well I know he will be there waiting for me in the morning and ready to share with me the duties of the day.

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### A REAL FRIEND.

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(By a Dunedin Naturalist.)

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We tamed a pair of tomtits this winter, and this month (September) they nested across the road in a neighbour's garden, and for three weeks I have not seen the hen. A part of our garden is dug every day so as to feed the male bird, and I keep a special feed tin in which to put the grass grubs and other insects as they are dug up, and our little friend comes along and empties it in good time. One Sunday I put 15 grass grubs in the tin and timed him. In exactly 30 minutes he had utilised all the grubs. Of these about one in three he ate, the others he took to the hen, which is perhaps a greater share than most husbands give to their wives. The following Saturday I was all day in the garden and counted the grubs actually given the bird as he followed me around. He took 43 from me, apart from those he found on his own account. When one observes that he has a regular round of about six gardens you can realise what a big bit of good one good little bird can do.

## THE PUKEKO'S STORY.

### THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE.

(By E. T. FROST.)

The other swamp birds call me redhead, but I am rather proud of that colour as it matches well with my blue breast and white under-tail coverts. My mother once told me that, as she was feeding quietly in a roadside lagoon, on some juicy raupo roots, that some boys were walking along the road singing a song, and every now and again she heard the chorus: "Hurrah for the Red, White, and Blue." She was conceited enough to think at first that they were singing about her fine colours, but when she found it was about their country's flag she felt prouder still.

We live for the most part in the swamps, but sometimes we find a kind farmer who grows a nice crop of oats or wheat near our marshy home, and we like to come out and help ourselves at times. Some of the farmers get angry, but we also eat up a lot of grubs and insects that would help themselves to his crop, so we really earn our food. In the large flax swamp, where man cuts down the leaves to take away to a mill to get the fibre out of them, we really do an immense amount of good by eating up the grubs that do harm to them. I, only a few weeks ago, heard two men, who were walking through a flax swamp, say that since most of our family had been killed or chased out of the swamp, that the grubs were getting very bad, and that he would not let anyone come on the place to shoot any more of us. If we only had more of these kind thoughtful men, life would be much more secure and pleasant for us.

Although not web-footed we can swim quite well, and think nothing of crossing a deep creek or lagoon. I must tell you of one strange habit we have when swimming if anything alarms us. We dive to the bottom and hang on to any weeds that may be there, until we are drowned. The brown people who used to be so plentiful in this country before the white man came, knew of this habit, and they used to chase us out of the swamps into the water wherever they could, and when any of us dived they would come in after us and take many for food. It was a foolish habit, and caused many a fine pukeko his life.

We build our nests of grass and don't mind at all if the water rises around it. My mother told me once that she had made a lovely nest and was sitting on five nice eggs, when a big flood occurred and the whole nest floated off, and came to rest again a long distance away from where she had built it. When

very young, we are like small balls of black velvet, and we can run and hide very quickly when alarmed.

Our voice, like that of many other birds of bright plumage, is not at all musical, but it serves a very useful purpose. We have several notes of alarm which are sounded when danger is near. Not being strong fliers, we have an enemy who hovers overhead looking for a chance to pounce on any unwary member of our family: Should this enemy, the hawk, swoop too near one of us, the alarm note is sounded and we who happen to be near will fly to the rescue.

Mr. Hawk cannot stand the din we set up and flies away in disgust.

We are not afraid very much of men, and some of us who are fortunate enough to live near a bird lover are often lucky enough to get many a meal when the farmer's wife calls her hens for their morning and evening food. We soon get used to such kind people and I often wish there were more of them about.

We were in this land long before the white man ever saw it, and all we ask is a small corner here and there to make a home in. So whenever you see the red, white, and blue colours just have a kindly thought for the pukeko whose homes have been destroyed in many parts of the land, and do your best to see that some small portion at least here and there is reserved for them to live unmolested in.

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## WINTER FEEDING.

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Winter feeding of birds was very extensive and in many cases very successful during the last winter. The most striking effort which came under the Society's observation was the work of the Maoris who own the north end of Kapiti adjoining the sanctuary. Here some hundreds of tree lucerne trees, besides kowhai and ngutukaka, had been planted, which proved a great winter attraction for many birds such as tuis, bell-birds, kakariki, etc., besides this some 60 ducks were hand fed, and it is a pretty sight to see these apparently wild birds come winging across the water and pitch in the garden to be fed from the hands of the Maoris, who are extremely skilled in the ways and habits of our native birds. As a bird attractor during the winter and early spring months, the tree lucerne, combined with the ngutukaka, kowhai and poroporo, form an attraction which will bring bell-birds and tuis from long distances, but it is essential that the plants should be in considerable numbers, as an odd tree or two is quickly run over by any visiting birds, and is insufficient to keep the birds permanently in any vicinity.

## WHAT FUR NAMES MEAN.

By JEAN INGLIS BULL.

The following furs were originally rabbits: American Seal, Arctic Seal, Australian Cony, Australian Rabbit, Australian Seal, Baffin Seal, Baltic Black Fox, Baltic Brown Fox, Baltic Leopard, Baltic Lion, Baltic Red Fox, Baltic Seal, Baltic Tiger, Baltic White Fox, Bay Seal, Beaverette, Belgian Beaver, Black Hare, Black Lynx, Black Seal, Bluerette, Buckskin Seal, Cape Seal, Castorette, Chapchillas, Chinchilla Rabbit, Chinchillette, Clipped Seal, Coast Seal, Cocoalette, Cony, Cony-Beaver, Cony Kit, Cony Leopard, Cony-Mole, Cony-Seal, Ermeline, Erminette, Fox Hair, French Beaver, French Chinchilla, French Cony, French Leopard, French Sable, French Seal, Galland Squirrel, Geller Seal, Hair Fox, Hair Sable, Hare, Hudson Bay Seal, Imitation Ermine, Jap. Rabbit, Kit Cony, Lapin, Laskin Seal, Le Meuse Seal, Leopard Cony, Leopardine, Mar-Konie, Marmotine, Mendoza Beaver, Minkony, Molin, Moline, Muskratine, Near Seal, New Zealand Seal, Northern Seal, Nu Nutria, Nutriette, Polar Seal, Polo Seal, Red River Seal, Roman Seal, Russian Leopard, Russian Taupe Fox, Sable Hair, Seal Musquash, Sealette, Seeline, Southern Seal, Squirrelette, Squirreline, Twin Beaver, Visonette.

Sheep serve to provide the following furs: Afghan Lamb, American Broadtail, American Wombat, Astrachan, Bagdad Lamb, Beaver Lamb, Bokhara, Broadtail, Caracul, Caracul Paw, Chekiang Lambskin, China Lamb, Dahtung Lamb, Galyak, Half Persian Lamb, Iceland Fox, Iceland Lamb, King Broadtail, Krimmer, Lagoon, Laskin European Lamb, Laskin Lamb, Lawressa Lamb, Leg Cross, Lincoln Lamb, Lykkoon, Mandel, Manderian Lamb, Mand-o-coon, Mediterranean Sheep, Merlushka, Mongolian Lamb, Persian Lamb, Persian Paw, Pieced Persian Lamb, Processed Broadtail, Queen Broadtail, Salt Persian Lamb, Salzelle, Shantefu Lamb, Shearling, Shiras, Slink or Lincoln Lamb (usually foteus), Thibet, Thibetine, Tibet, Triebel, Ukrainer Lamb, Wombat Lamb.

Goats provide the following: Blue Japanese Woli, China Bear, Chinese Goat, Ercomine (Imitation Ermine), French Wolf, Dalyak, Giraffe Kid, Goat, Kid Caracul, Kid Cross, Kid Skin, Leopard Kid, Leopardine, Moufflon.

We draw upon the alpaca or South American "camel" for: Alpaca (form of guanaco specialised for wool), Guanaco, Llama (dyed to imitate Fox or Wolf), Guanaquita.

Dogs are transformed into: Belgian Lynx, Black Poiret Fox, Chinchow Dogskin, Chinese Dogskin, Isabella Fox, Manchurian

Black Fox, Manchurian Dogskin, Manchurian Fox, Manchurian Poiret Fox, Manchurian Wolf, Newchang, Wolfox.

Cats provide Black Cat, Domestic Cat, Genet, House Cat, while the horse gives us the Russian Pony, and the cow—Calf and Karova.

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## DESTRUCTION OF INSECTS BY BIRDS.

An examination of numerous bird stomachs has shown that the larger proportion of insects taken is made up of vegetable-eaters. This is not surprising when we stop to consider that the vegetable-eaters far outnumber the other forms in nature. Both are destroyed in proportion to their numbers.

It so happens that, as in the case of the cabbage-caterpillar, the vegetable-eater is not destroyed by parasites until great damage to crops has been accomplished. The second generation, it is true, is reduced in numbers, but not before the first generation has inflicted serious loss upon the farmer. Birds, therefore, by consuming the caterpillar, though with it a number of parasitical larvae may be destroyed, are saving the farmer from a direct money loss.

As a matter of fact the agriculturalist is more indebted to birds for the preservation of his growing crops than to any other living creatures. In the predatory insects he finds true help-mates who destroy much of the smaller fry; but the rapacious caterpillars, cicadas, and grasshoppers are too large for them to attack. Parasites deal with these forms, but their action is slow and affects the immediate crop little.

A few years ago the United States Department of Agriculture set aside a tract of land in Maryland with the view of determining the exact status of birds on a farm. It was necessary, in order to get at their stomach contents, to shoot a great number of individuals. In all, 645 birds were killed during the experiment. The results proved interesting. Virtually all the birds, at one time of year or other, included insects as a part of their menu. Twenty-four species fed on grasshoppers, twenty-one took leaf-mining beetles, thirty-nine consumed ants, and forty-four had eaten weevils. Most birds took two, three, or all the forms of insects mentioned. About one-third of all the food consumed by the 645 consisted of insects, 27 per cent. of which were harmful to crops and less than 4 per cent. were beneficial. These were the average birds—robins, catbirds, swallows, woodpeckers, king-birds, crows and the like—that are found on any typical farm of the eastern United States.—“*The Importance of Bird Life.*”

## CAT CONTROL.

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New Zealand might well take a hint from the International Cat Society of New York as some such organisation is much needed here.

"Cats which are well cared for by their owners make splendid pets," the Society states, "but the stray cat, a victim of human heartlessness, having been turned out of his home by its owner, is a menace to the community in the way of spreading disease and is one of the worst enemies of our bird and small game life."

The programme of the Society calls for the licensing of cats just as dogs are licensed throughout the entire civilised world. At its first meeting the Society voted overwhelmingly for cat license laws as the best way of solving the problem of the stray cat from a humanitarian point of view.

Literature issued by the Society states that there are 120,000,000 cats in the United States, sixty per cent. of them strays. Outside of the cities, it states, these stray cats live in the forests and their food consists of birds and small game.

Noted ornithologists, the Society declares, have studied the question of cats and birds. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that the damage done to trees and farm produce in one year by insects amounts to more than two billion dollars. Birds destroy these insects and wherever insectivorous birds are plentiful the damage to crops and trees by insect life is small. The ordinary person going into the woods finds it difficult to be convinced stray cats do much hunting, Dr. Forbush points out. This is because the cat does most of its hunting at night and in the mating season when its destruction of young birds in their nests is tremendous."

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## DUCKS DECREASE.

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A call for private philanthropy to create wild-life sanctuaries and remedy the critical water-fowl situation before public sentiment forces legislation to prevent hunting was made recently by T. Gilbert Pearson, President of the National Association of Audubon Societies. He urged men who used to hunt "to repay to the Nation, in the form of living birds, the sport afield which they have enjoyed during their more active years," and suggested that the owners of shooting preserves might turn these into sanctuaries for the preservation of wild-life.—*"Nature Magazine."*



## SEED-DISTRIBUTION.

The winter before last we furnished an interesting and definite demonstration on native plant seed-distribution by birds by Mr. McCaskill, hon. secretary of the Society's Otago Branch. These particulars were published in a recent Bulletin, and were obtained by cultivating a plot under his feeding station. The experiments were continued last August, and the following plants were taken from the plot and planted elsewhere. It will be noticed that only two exotics appeared as having furnished bird food:—

	April, 1931.	April, 1932.
<i>Pittosporum</i> spp. (kohuhu and tarata) .....	85	50
<i>Coprosma</i> spp. ....	37	37
<i>Carpodetus serratus</i> (putaputaweta) .....	10	1
<i>Nothopanax Colensoi</i> (ivy tree or orihau) ...	3	2
<i>Pseudopanax crassifolium</i> (lancewood) .....	5	2
<i>Melicytus ramiflorus</i> (whiteywood or mahoe)	4	4
<i>Griselina littoralis</i> (broadleaf) .....	0	6
<i>Cordyline australis</i> (cabbage tree) .....	0	2
<i>Fuchsia excorticata</i> (kotukutuku) .....	0	1
<i>Solanum aviculare</i> (poroporo or bullibulli) ..	0	2
<i>Muhlenbeckia australis</i> .....	0	9
<i>Aristolelia serrata</i> (makomako or wineberry)	0	1
<i>Cotoneaster Simmonsi</i> (introduced) .....	0	2
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## THE NATIONAL MENACE.

Quite the most obvious of all the laws of nature is the one that requires all living organisms to consume food in one form or another to enable them to survive and multiply. This food as a general rule consists of other living organisms. Plant life alone is able to obtain sustenance directly from the chemical elements of the soil.

Deer, for instance, relish as food the blades of grass; but the wolf and certain other carnivorous beasts equally relish the flesh of the deer. And it is fortunate for the welfare of the grazing race that this is so. Without a host of deadly enemies,—including disease, climatical alterations, and the elements, as well as living creatures—deer theoretically would multiply at such a rapid rate that the North American continent would be over-run within a few decades. The soil could not produce sufficient

fodder for their needs; the verdure would be grazed to death. As a result, the deer would starve; the species would die out, exterminated by its own prolificacy.

One of the chief instruments chosen by nature to combat this excessive production is the carnivore; and the deer, however paradoxical it may sound, is really saved by its most feared and deadly enemies. The Balance of Nature is maintained, and it is this Balance which permits the world to carry on where otherwise it would choke itself to death.—“*The Importance of Bird Life.*”



HARRIER HAWK'S NEST FOUND NEAR CARTERTON.

The remains of over 50 rabbits, besides those of rats, indicate that the hawk is a helper to the farmer, even though it may destroy an odd game bird or an odd fowl.

## GRASS GRUB.

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The activity of the grass grub throughout New Zealand is causing much concern to our agricultural and pastoral workers, and it appears that the starling and sparrow, numerous as they are, are not capable of holding the enemy completely in check. Grass grub not only takes grass but rushes, flax and other plants. Indeed, experiments and observations carried out with yellow leaf in flax indicated that the withering of the leaf was merely the result of attack by grubs on the root system. The birds mentioned undoubtedly do a lot of good work in lessening the grass grub, but it looks as though they are incapable of attacking the pest at any depth, and merely secure the grubs near the surface. It is evident then that we miss such birds as the kiwi, weka and pukeko, which with their strong beaks were able to work in a much more vigorous manner. Unfortunately, it is difficult to see how the first two of these species can be reinstated, as owing to opossum trapping, dogs, and other detriments to them, their re-establishment does not appear feasible. During one season, in one locality only on the West Coast, over a hundred kiwis were caught in opossum traps; some killed outright, and many wounded so that they had to be killed.

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## GERMAN OWLS.

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(By L. W. McCASKILL.)

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In January, 1929, I spent some time on a sheep station in Southland. Small patches of bush were within a few miles, but most of the trees in the place were introduced pine plantations. Round the homestead, which had acres of trees and shrubs, the following birds were common: Fantails, warblers, tomtits—ground larks were seen quite close to the house. Only an odd owl was seen or heard.

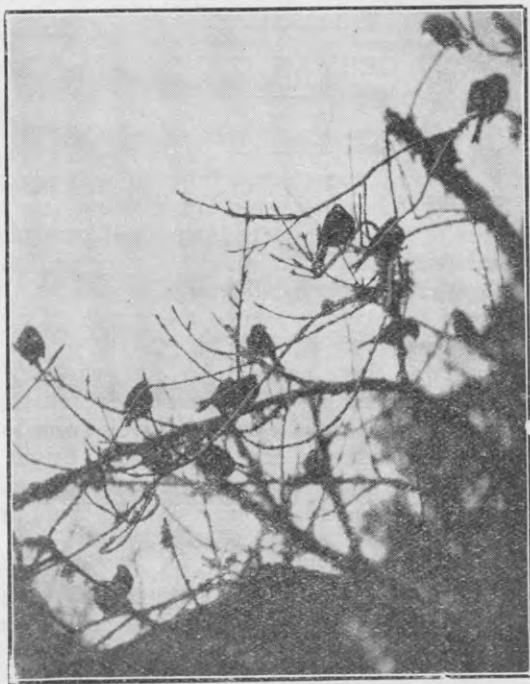
Last month I was there again. An odd warbler, very shy and keeping well in cover, and one tomtit were all that I saw. Ground larks keep to the tussock country away from the plantations. Owls are very common, and are active in bright daylight. They call at each other even in the brightest sun, and are particularly active in the late afternoon, when the birds are having their last feed.

Blackbirds, thrushes, starlings, and so on, seem to have no fear of them at all, which is quite opposed to Philpott's description some years ago. The introduced birds have re-learned the cunning which enabled them to escape the owls in the Old Country.

## YET IT CONTINUES!

Probably of all the countries in the world, Australia and New Zealand have suffered most by the introduction of exotic species of birds and mammals, and the report of the Dominion Secretary from New Zealand vividly portrays the disastrous results which have come to that country from the introduction of deer, which have increased to such an extent as to actually threaten a progressive defoliation of the island. An intensive campaign of wholesale destruction has therefore been carried on, and bounties have been paid on 100,000 tails. Government experts also have rounded up and exterminated entire herds. These actions are said to make a considerable difference in favour of the forests and of bird-life.

As we reflect upon the many perplexing problems confronting our conservation friends in the antipodes, who are interested in the cause of wild-life preservation, we are moved to extend to them a cordial expression of sympathy and understanding.—  
*"Bird Lore."*



BELL-BIRDS WAITING FOR BREAKFAST.  
An August Episode.

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