

GRASS GRUB.

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.

GERMAN OWLS.

(By L. W. McCASKILL.)

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.