

FOREST AND BIRD

ISSUED BY
NEW ZEALAND NATIVE BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC.)



FANTAIL

THE NEW ZEALAND NATIVE BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC.)

Invites all those who have respect for our wonderful and unique native birds, all those who realise the great economic and aesthetic value of birds, all those who wish to preserve our unrivalled scenic beauties, to band together with the Society in an earnest endeavour to fully awaken public interest and secure efficient preservation, conservation and intelligent utilisation of our great heritage.

With the co-operation, appreciation and assistance of the general public New Zealand can stand unrivalled. Without such our forests will be hopelessly marred and destroyed by fire, animals and wasteful exploitation.

The subscriptions are—Life members £5, Endowment members £1 per annum. The ordinary subscription, adults 5/-, children 1/-. Endowment members comprise those who desire to contribute in a more helpful manner towards the preservation of our birds and forests. Besides this, we ask for your co-operation in assisting to conserve your own heritage. Is it not worth while?

We aim at issuing only accurate information, all of which is checked by leading authorities. No remuneration is asked by any of our officers. Your contribution goes solely towards better informing others.

THE NEW ZEALAND NATIVE BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY (INC.).

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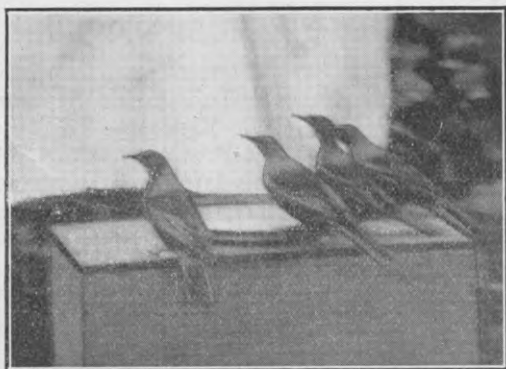
Otago Branch: Box 672, Dunedin.

Southland Branch: Box 154, Invercargill. - Hon. Sec.: J. B. Thomson, Esq.

OBJECTS—To advocate and obtain the efficient protection and preservation of our native birds, enlisting the natural sympathy of our young, 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.



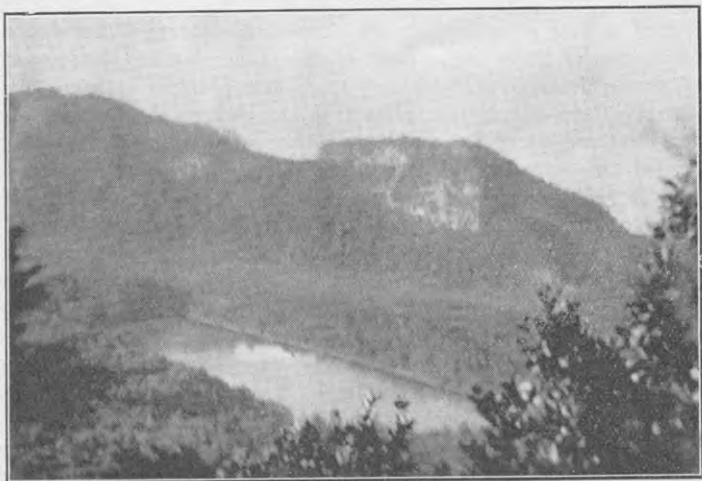
TUIS FED ARTIFICIALLY.

HERE in New Zealand we are faced with a forest problem unknown in any other country. For, during countless years, no plant-eating animals roamed in our forests. A forest therefore was evolved which cannot resist the attacks of deer and their like. Yet such animals have been purposely introduced into these time-honoured tree communities, and now as agents of destruction are present in their thousands. Our forests represent vast present and potential wealth. First of all they supply us with necessary timber. Then, they prevent that devastating rush of water which leads to floods, erosion and the burying of fertile fields with stony debris. They conserve moisture and regulate the water supply in our rivers. In short, their importance for both our great farming community and our city dwellers cannot be over estimated. But, if the ever increasing destruction by plant-eating animals goes unchecked, our priceless forests are doomed. Even were it possible to replace them by replanting, that would cost millions of pounds and be a very slow process. Apart from their inestimable commercial value, our forests are true New Zealanders and the proud heritage of every New Zealander, for out of their 283 kinds of trees and shrubs not more than 10 kinds are found wild in other lands. They possess the richness and beauty of the famed tropical forests. On them, too, depends the unique character of our world famous scenery. Destroy these forests, and the hope that New Zealand will become a great tourist resort is gone for ever. Gone, too, will be our delightful bird life.

ISLAND SANCTUARIES.

By CAPTAIN E. V. SANDERSON.

A visit was paid to Mayor Island during September by the writer accompanied by Mr. J. R. Kirk, one of our Executive, and Mr. Bernard Sladden, a Vice-President of the Society. Very great assistance was given by this latter gentleman at Tauranga where his launch and his guidance were given free on behalf of the objects which the Society has for its goal. Two days were spent on this sanctuary which is owned by the Maoris but not occupied by them. The island is about 27 miles distant from Tauranga, and about 3,150 acres in extent. It is an extinct volcano with two small lakes occupying the crater. The coast line is generally of a precipitous nature. Roughly speaking, the whole island is now covered with forest, mostly young, in which bird life, with the exception of bellbirds, is far from numerous probably because plant life, bearing winter food supplies, is not plentiful. The puriri is present but so far is not sufficient to supply the winter shortage. Many seedlings are, however, coming along. An exotic (*Pinus maritima*) was firmly established around the lakes and this should be removed—now an undertaking of some dimensions. The main anchorage consists of a nice little harbour badly exposed to easterly and south-easterly winds. This is a



LAKE ON MAYOR ISLAND.

rendezvous in the summer months for big game fishing and herein lies a stumbling block to complete control as we were informed from several quarters that any attempt to totally exclude the fishermen would be resented in Tauranga, as the island is the only base for the sportsmen. A compromise appeared possible by letting rights to camp on two adjacent beaches without necessarily permitting access to the inland. This would mean a caretaker during a few summer months at least.

Early reports and maps indicate that there were very few trees on the island 50 years back. This was corroborated by an older Maori, Kepa Ainslie, who informed us that in those times the island was mainly covered with fern and flax, which was destroyed by introduced pigs, and most of the forest now in evidence was germinated as a result of the uprootings of the fern by the pigs which thus made a seed bed for the forest tree seeds. Kakariki were present then but when the flax and other food supplies were destroyed, they deserted the island, probably for the Alderman Islands, about 10 miles to the North, where they still prosper.

After leaving Mayor Island the writer made his way up to Auckland where he was joined by Mr. Phillips Turner, late Director of Forestry, one of our Vice-Presidents. A visit was then made to Little Barrier where a new caretaker has been operating for the last 12 months. The residents on the Island consist of the caretaker, son and son's wife, all hard working, industrious people. Much work had been completed in repairing the once dilapidated house and in the erection of fences round about the house and garden. It was the opinion of the visitors, however, that this fencing was misplaced work so far as the preservation of the sanctuary is concerned, as the object appears to have been to fence the caretaker's cattle out of the garden, when by enclosing any stock necessary in a 10 or 20 acre paddock, for which there is ample space, the stock would have been excluded both from the garden, etc., and the bush, which is the essential part from which cattle should be excluded. This arrangement would also have enabled the caretaker to keep 10 or 12 sheep in the enclosed paddock along with the 3 or 4 cows and bull which is the maximum number of stock necessary. All birds peculiar to the island were present and were equally as tame as was their wont in former years. Pigeons, however, did not put in an appearance. Representations will be made to the controlling department in regard to having any necessary domestic stock enclosed in an efficient manner.

BUSH AND BIRD LIFE.

By JAMES COWAN.

Between the two destructive agents in the forests, the bush-feller and the introduced animals, New Zealand's bush regions are in the gravest danger and are gradually but surely being robbed of their original character of beauty and teeming bird life. This complaint has been made again and again by those who have regard for the preservation of the forest and its value as a protective covering for the land, but it is apparently almost hopeless to rouse the governing authorities of the country to a sense of the urgent need for control and preventive measures. The Urewera Country is only one of many places where immediate care for the standing forest is necessary, not merely in the interest of landscape beauty, but for the sake of the very life of the land. All over this island more and more bush is coming down; there is not only unnecessary timber felling for commercial purposes, but there is absolutely wasteful destruction. There are vast quantities of milled timber on hand; yet we continually hear of more areas being marked for milling, and there is always the excuse of settlement needs for the backblocks man who likes to see "a good burn."

When the vehicle road was put through the Urewera Country there were those of us who knew that district in its original condition who saw in that road the beginning of the ruin of the forests which should be regarded as a precious sanctuary. Now the fate of that glorious bush and mountain region hangs in the balance. The only method by which the bush which clothes those ranges can be saved is for the State to acquire the rights and compensate the Maori owners. Commercially, that forest is of comparatively small value. If it is felled it will only be burned, for the futile sake of grassing a place which Nature never intended to be stripped of its trees; and is New Zealand to suffer such criminal destruction without an effort to prevent it? The time has come when a forest, whether on Crown or privately-owned land, must be regarded as a national possession. Legislation to that end is an urgent need. Man is his brother's keeper here; and every owner of bush land has an obligation to the country. The State must step in, as it has in other countries, and prevent land owners from destroying forest which conserves water supply, prevents disastrous floods, serves as a shelter, holds the soil together, acts as a shield of beauty for the land. This applies not merely to the Urewera, but to the whole country.

In other directions affecting the immediate future of the forest and its life much has been said and written about the destruction caused by deer, but a greater curse to the bush, because more insidious, is the opossum. It is worse than the deer because it cannot be destroyed by attempting to shoot it out, and because its work is not obvious to casual travellers and sportsmen. Old bushmen and rangers know something of the havoc which the opossum makes among the native birds. It lives on exactly the berries and the young leaves that the birds eat, and it destroys nestlings and eggs and in one way and another fatally disturbs the ancient balance of Nature in the bush. But a strong effort is being put forth to make this pest a permanent feature of our forest life. The acclimatisation societies, which have been such a curse to the country, are backed by the Government and commercial interests in their efforts to protect the opossum for the sake of revenue. A miserable excuse for the ruin of the pristine forest life.

"Stock more forests" is the cry. If these societies have their way, every tract of bush in the two islands will literally be infested with these foreign animals, as great a pest to the bush as the rabbit has been to the pastoral country. Tens

of thousands of skins are taken every season, and the bush is polluted with the remains. In the Wellington district alone it is reported that fifty thousand opossums were trapped during the past winter. The opossum indeed seems to be regarded as a commercially sacred creature, only to be taken in one way. A Wellington magistrate fined a man £10 the other day for poisoning opossums. Those who realise what the opossum hordes mean to the indigenous bush life of the country would be glad to see the whole tribe poisoned and the forest cleansed of its foes. The only bright spot in this sorry condition is the fact that many rats are reported to have been caught in the opossum traps.



THE TREE LUCERNE IS A GREAT ATTRACTION FOR NECTAR-EATING BIRDS.

Probably free trapping, all the year round, with all protection removed, is the only possible way to clear the bush and save the birds. A very few more years and the mischief will be irreparable.

AS IN NEW ZEALAND.

From the following remarks by Dr. Wm. T. Hornaday of The Permanent Wild Life Protection Fund, it appears that game birds are in a similarly precarious condition in the United States of America to that in New Zealand, and owing to much the same causes—over-shooting, etc.

“Our studies have convinced us that state by state our upland game birds are reaching the vanishing point; that the often claimed ‘abundance’ of killable game is usually false; that all North American game birds are being killed much faster than they are breeding; that ‘the sportsmen’ are NOT ‘saving the game,’ and *never have done so*; that now nearly all state game commissions are afraid to further stop shooting; that the decent and game-saving sportsmen are only a powerless minority; that it is this year impossible for the conserving sportsmen to organize and function; that the non-migratory upland game birds will be the first to become extinct; and finally that nothing save bold and drastic work by the Federal Government, through the Department of Agriculture and strongly backed by the President, ever can or ever will SAVE the waterfowl and marsh birds on a basis of low-limit shooting confined to the annual increase.

“During the past thirty-three years, the greatest measures initiated for wild life salvage have been put over by Congress and the Federal Government. It would be a pleasure to enumerate the various Acts and Regulations—but it is unnecessary. It is enough to say that every one of those nation-wide and wholesale measures has been amply approved and sustained by the American people—even though certain drastic reforms were forced upon certain states that were too mean to make them by their own initiative.

“You have observed, in 1930 and in 1931, how two great and necessary measures were driven through desperate situations by the overwhelming force of the President, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and about 25 supporting states. In the matter of the 30-day waterfowl open season of 1931, while 27 states registered their support in advance, four states opposed that measure, and 17 maintained stony silence regarding it. Now, it seems that no one denies the fact that that emergency movement saved some millions of birds for breeding that otherwise would have been SHOT by sportsmen!

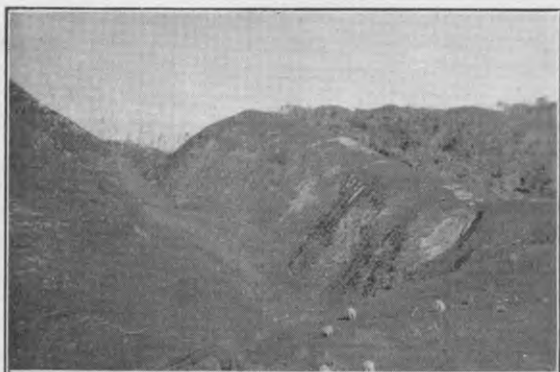
"I am now thoroughly convinced that in view of the many different forces now actively destroying American game; in view of the well-declared and unquestionable difficulties and failures in regulated farm breeding of game to shoot; and in view of a dozen other evils now bearing down upon our remnants of game, the day has come wherein it is the duty of the Federal Government to again intervene, firmly and boldly, and put more checks upon game shooting (1) by the total stoppage of baiting game to entice it up to the guns, and (2) by the total stoppage of the use of decoys, unfairly to lure geese and ducks down to the very muzzles of the hidden batteries of guns—'so close that it is impossible to miss.' But we will say little here about the bad sportsman ethics involved in those two killing methods, and will base our request for these two reforms upon their necessity for the preservation of adequate breeding stocks of waterfowl.

"Of course it is probable that the stoppage of those two too-deadly practices, whenever carried out, will give rise to protests from the gunners whose deadly methods are stopped. But does any criminal ever praise the law that stops his operations? Of course some of the 'shooting stands' of Massachusetts might go out of business. Of course some of the goose-selling 'clubs' of Illinois and California might be reduced. Every reform measure necessarily re-forms the objectionable practices that it seeks to abate.

"Beyond all question, less killing of waterfowl in the professional 'clubs' that now monopolise the wild flocks of certain states will have the effect of making fair shooting in thousands of other localities wherein there now is none. Shall a few persons always be permitted to monopolise the shooting privileges that belong to all the licensed sportsmen of the states concerned?

"The killing of game by the aid of baiting and the use of decoys never will be voluntarily discontinued by the states whose hunters most extensively practice those deadly and unfair methods. As usual, the Federal Government *must act—as it had to do to reduce those bag-limits and open seasons.*"

Dr. J. T. Auten, a silviculturist associated with the Branch of Research, United States Forest Service, found that the top inch of forest soil in a normal protected forest absorbs forty-seven times as much moisture as the top inch in a field. In New Zealand this top inch, owing to the greater water holding capacity of our forest floor, would in all probability hold much more moisture than in an American forest.



FOREST DESTRUCTION.

By CAPT. E. V. SANDERSON.

This picture depicts what is happening to all of the hilly and mountainous country in New Zealand which has been denuded of forest. Plant eating animals are now vigorously seconding the efforts of man to destroy the remaining insufficient areas covered by our indigenous protection forests. So called because they protect the lower lands from floods and their covering by debris. Everywhere one goes there is similar evidence of the loss of the valuable top soil on the high country and flood destruction on the lowlands. Many will think that it is the other fellow who is paying for all this—the man who owns the land—but this is not so. Somebody has to pay for bridges washed away, the control of rivers by groin and stop bank, etc. As 48 per cent. of all revenue comes from Customs, then it will be evident that when one buys a pound of tea or packet of cigarettes he is contributing towards the cost of re-adjusting flood and other damage caused by forest depleted uplands. Here in New Zealand we complacently read in the newspapers about the terrible floods caused in China by the over-flowing of such rivers as the Yellow River (China's Sorrow); about the £50,000,000 reforestation scheme set on foot by President Roosevelt; about great schemes started by Senor Mussolini, etc., etc., but how few of us realise that right here in New Zealand we are making similar serious initial mistakes to the ones which these great schemes are designed to remedy. Alas! New Zealand has blundered on a destructive course in a much more effective manner than America and Italy did. A favourite process in the contemplated destruction of the forest appears to be a shout raised 'for the formation of some route through a forest for tourist purposes.

This, it is feared, is often merely a pretext to make a road for the convenience of some politically favoured saw-miller. Next we hear the cry, timber shortage, or unemployed sawmillers, and by such means the sawmiller gets his way to be followed later by fire, scenery destruction, erosion and a £50,000,000 reforestation scheme. All this sort of thing is to-day being contemplated in the Urewera. When this forest is damaged the occupiers of the rich flats in the Bay of Plenty district pay the piper in having to replace bridges, control rivers, and put up with the scouring away of their lands. And well they deserve to suffer if at this juncture they look on idly by while the fell scheme is initiated.

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE BIRDS.

In a communication to *The London Times*, Dr. Axel Munthe writes:—

My attention has been drawn to a recently published letter from a passing visitor to Capri, stating that in spite of the island having been declared a bird sanctuary the bird-slaughter continues as before.

Since my letter to *The Times* under the heading "To Those Who Love Birds" I have received over 900 letters from unknown readers of your paper rejoicing with me in Mussolini's decree. I wish these bird-lovers to know that the above-mentioned statement from Capri is incorrect. Since November 9, when the decree proclaiming Capri a bird sanctuary became law, not a single shot has been fired on the island, not even at me.

It is true that a good many birds are still caught in snares and traps, but the local authorities are now fully aware of their responsibility and are trying their best to put a stop to this thousand years old practice, a far from easy task, not to be accomplished in one year.

When I left Capri some weeks ago the whole island was full of bird song. There was a farewell concert in the garden of Materita, in my honour, with a jubilant chorus of blackbirds, turtle-doves, chiff-chaffs, garden warblers, flycatchers, goldfinches, blackcaps, woodlarks, linnets, yellow-hammers, and whitebreasts. The programme also included a beautiful *adagio* for flute by a golden oriol, an old-fashioned, tender ballad for mezzo-soprano by a blue rock thrush, and a sad little folk-song by a willow-warbler from a bush of rosemary. From the top of an olive tree even a weather-bound cuckoo, still somewhat shaky in his vocal cords after his long sea journey and rather out of tune with his unfamiliar surroundings, insisted on having his say, amidst peals of laughter from dozens of merry chaffinches.

THE MIGRATION TO BRITAIN.

A couple of nightingales had hurried back from Africa, in honour of the occasion. From dawn the fierce competition for the best *Preislied* was in full swing under my bedroom window among the small Meistersinger. There was a soft murmur of bird voices and an incessant fluttering of wings in the thicket of laurel bushes; there seemed to be some talk between a pair of blackcaps of starting building their nest there. But I told them that until the miracle man Mussolini had seen his way to provide Capri's thirsty birds, flowers, and creeping things with more water in the summer they had better come on with me to England, and spend their honeymoon there.

But will they all be safe there, my beloved birds? Can it be possible that among your bird-loving people is still to be found a man, a woman, or a child who has the heart to capture and imprison any of these messengers of joy, who ask for nothing but to sing to you? What would your English summers be without them; how could you live on without them?

It was high time indeed that your House of Lords should have voted Lord Buckmaster's Bird Protection Bill as the first step to put an end to this degrading slave traffic in small wild birds. Let your House of Commons not be slow in giving their unanimous sanction to this act of mercy! Birdlovers all over the world expect that every man will do his duty.

THE BIRD CATCHING TREE.

The Parapara (*Pisonia*), or bird catching tree is found on the islands and coast of the Northern parts of New Zealand. It is particularly non-frost resisting. With its large elongated green leaves it makes a very beautiful tree. Each seed of this tree is contained in a pod about 2 inches long and the outside of this pod is covered with a sticky material of bird lime tenacity. Nature's idea is evidently seed distribution as a bird settling in this tree may get foul of one of these sticky pods which easily break off. Then the bird flies away, picks off the messy thing and thereby distributes the seed. Where this tree is growing naturally in a forest, as on Little Barrier, little or no hurt to bird life seems to accrue from its presence, but when the tree is growing singly in an exposed situation its top is easily cut off by winds as it is a plant of delicate nature. When this happens the seed pods form in a mass on the top of the tree. A parapara was recently cut down on Motiti Island, near Tauranga, because birds were continually getting captured by it. It was growing in an exposed position. At the time of its destruction 84 dead silver-eyes were counted in the tree.

BIRD FEEDING.

The feeding of birds during the last few months has been on an extensive scale throughout New Zealand, and those who have been active in the matter can congratulate themselves that they have done much good from an economic point of view. New Zealand can only winter a certain number of birds unless artificial means are adopted. In the late spring insects increase at such a prodigious rate that it sometimes happens there are not enough birds to overcome the



BELL BIRDS FEEDING.

enemy and the result is an insect scourge. It is necessary that a large number of birds should have been saved by this winter feeding ready to take up the fight in the spring against man's ever aggressive enemy—the insect.

CRUMBS.

*Amidst the freezing sleet and snow
The timid Robin comes;
In pity drive him not away,
But scatter out your crumbs.
Soon Winter comes upon your life,
The day of reckoning comes,
Against your sins by High decree
Are weighed those scattered crumbs.*

—(From "England That Was," by HORACE VACHELL.)

THE FANTAIL (Piwakawaka).

Common all over New Zealand, conspicuous in appearance, and fearless of man, there is probably no bird better known than the pied fantail. Similar species of the flycatcher family to which the fantail belongs are found in many parts of the world, some in Australia being closely related to the New Zealand bird. The special prey of these birds are small flying insects such as gnats, midges, and sandflies, and the long tail is primarily useful in enabling them to twist and turn quickly when in pursuit, for they almost invariably feed when on the wing. All the acrobatics of a modern human flyer and many more are second nature to a fantail; not even "looping the loop" is beyond it.

Changed conditions brought about by settlement have fortunately not disturbed this native bird very much. Always favouring open spaces at the edge of the bush and well-lighted clearings, it has taken kindly enough to shrubberies and shelter belts, finding indeed some addition to its food supply among introduced insects such as the turnip fly. Even human dwellings are not safe shelter for the housefly when fantails are about, for the bird will not only enter open doors and windows but, if unmolested, will return regularly and systematically hunt through every room in the house, chirping in friendly conversation with the owners as it does so.

Nesting begins about August, and is preceded by much demonstrative courtship in which the spreading and displaying of the tail is an important ceremony. The site selected may be near a creek or other natural clearing, and the nest itself be commenced in a medium-sized fork near the outer end of a branch, sometimes within ten feet of the ground. Both birds take part in building, until the compact, cup-shaped nest is finished, its upper rim bound down smoothly with cobwebs and its lower extremity tailed off with chips of wood and strands of web. Within three days three eggs are laid, pale cream in colour speckled lightly with greyish brown. Incubation also is a joint responsibility, and periods of from ten to fifteen minutes are spent by male and female bird in turn sitting on the eggs. These are rarely left unguarded, for the sitting bird does not leave the nest until the free partner returns. The chicks are hatched naked, but grow rapidly and are well feathered in a few days.

A new nest is built for a second brood, and this second family is on the wing as a rule not later than February.

Among fantails in the South Island, and to a lesser extent in the North Island, a fair percentage are entirely black. As these black birds often breed separately from the pied birds, and birds of intermediate colours are unknown, black fantails are regarded as belonging to a different species. That they are not entirely separate from the pied, however, is shown by the fact that a pied

and a black bird may pair and raise a mixed brood—some black and some pied—but never apparently of mixed colours. This tendency for a black form of a normally black and white species to occur is known as melanism.

No plant food of any kind is included in the diet of fantails, but they devour a wide range of insects in both grub and flying stages. In relation to human welfare, then, these birds may be regarded as beneficial in a material sense as well as being a constant inspiration to cheerfulness.

THE PROBLEM OF THE VAGRANT CAT.

By T. Gilbert Pearson, President of the National Association of Audubon Societies, U.S.A.

It is a widely recognised fact that domestic cats are great destroyers of wild bird-life. Particularly is this true during the spring months when the young birds are leaving the nest. Many people do not observe the destruction which these animals inflict upon the bird population about every town and in the countryside, because the killing is done largely during the hours of darkness and in the early morning. Drivers of motor cars at night frequently see the eyes of marauding cats by the roadside.

Control should be exercised over the cat population and arrangements made for destroying, humanely, vagrant and unwanted cats, the numbers of which are exceedingly great.

Cats are known to be carriers of disease, their cries at night disturb the slumbers of men and women everywhere, and thousands of sick people are rendered nervous and irritable by Grimalkin's nocturnal serenades.

SANCTUARIES.

The question is often asked, "What is the good of sanctuaries if people cannot go on them?" The answer is that such areas are set aside for the preservation of our priceless flora and fauna and not as playthings for the scientist or to satisfy the curious or as picnic grounds.

The idea behind the sanctuary scheme is that the birds thereon will increase and multiply to such an extent that they will overflow and thus re-populate other areas where they are not so numerous. To attain this object it is necessary, however, that equal sympathy and care should be observed towards bird life in the less bird populated areas as is aimed at on sanctuaries. Conservation is based mainly on conditions, and these can be always improved by the elimination of all exotic enemies to forest and bird life, such as deer, goats, thar chamois, and the like, together with cats, weasels, rats, etc. Given the right public mind, all New Zealand can be made one sanctuary. Fancy tuis, pigeons and bell-birds in one's back yard. Not an impossibility, because some people have them there now.

TRAFFIC IN WILD BIRDS.

The spring number of *Bird Notes and News*, the journal of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, tells of recent efforts in England to abate the extensive traffic in wild birds by the passage of a bill which was given consideration at the Society's annual meeting in March, 1932.

The bill in question was introduced in the House of Lords on February 7, 1933, by Lord Buckmaster, and a Second Reading was moved on February 14 by the introducer of the measure. The bill is not designed to cover birds already in captivity, or canaries and foreign birds in general. "Its aim is to put an end to the exploitation of the country's Wild Birds for profit and gain, by prohibiting the taking and possession of them for sale, exhibition, and barter."

It is stated that Lord Buckmaster ardently championed the measure, which he had introduced, in an eloquent and moving speech. In addition, the British press gave widespread support to the bill in many stirring editorial comments.

It is our earnest hope that our British bird-protectionist friends may soon have the satisfaction of seeing the measure they are sponsoring enacted into law.—*Bird Lore*.

HELP THE BIRDS TO BRAVE THE WINTERS.

People are beginning to realise that the wholesale poisoning of small birds is a mistake. The fact about bird population is that a country can only maintain what it can carry through the winter and early spring. Birds are very hard pressed in New Zealand in August and September, and there are times when birds concentrating on some odd food supplies, do some damage. The remedy is feeding the birds, not poisoning them, because with the latter remedy we lose the activities of the birds in our fight against insect pests. The wholesale poisoning of birds is invariably followed by great destruction through insect pests. Last year the farmers raised a cry about grubs and appealed to the Government for assistance. This year caterpillars in some districts are cleaning up the crops. All this sort of thing has happened before in New Zealand. It is evident that all warnings about what will happen if birds are killed in a wholesale manner are useless. The only convincing argument is the reality. The time when the caterpillars increase is exactly the time when the birds, their natural enemies, can increase and will increase if they are encouraged. If they are discouraged and poisoned, the way is cleared for the caterpillars and the crops suffer. Save the birds by winter feeding and the onslaught on the caterpillars is increased and the crops saved.

AUGUST . . . AND THE SILVEREYES.

By HUGH ROSS of Invercargill.—Junior Member.

Silvereyes! They are everywhere—hundreds of them. New Zealand farm houses are besieged by a multitude of winged beings.

Green birds cluster round the doorways, flock in scores to the turnip-fields in search of blight, swarm upon the fruit trees, long since stripped of their autumn harvest, cling to the rose bushes, stripping them of the green pests which prey upon the delicate shoots, gather in dismal groups upon the lawn—a mute appeal to the fact that August is here, that the forest is barren of food . . . that the birds need feeding.

Strangely enough there was not a silvereye near our place on the last day of July, yet the following morning they were fluttering everywhere waiting to be fed. I provided them with suet, apples, rendered fat, scraps from the table, shallow dishes of skim milk and a small dish of thin honey.

The result was amazing. A few of the less timid approached first, encouraging their companions, then more came, more, and still more, until upwards of five or six hundred fluttered round the boxes, upon which I had placed the food, struggling and fighting for positions, while one and all enjoyed the feast of a lifetime.

For perhaps ten minutes they fed more or less in peace, then free-for-all fights started. One vivacious, although somewhat emaciated bird, appeared to be the ringleader. The havoc which this little chap wrought was colossal. Boldly approaching a group of feasting birds he would immediately attack his nearest neighbour, the confusion which followed frightening all the others away. One by one they returned only to be repelled by the victorious warrior, who, using the box as a kind of fighting table, would carry on the battle with remorseless intensity. Soon, however, a newcomer would alight on the box, and, facing his opponent with quivering wings, wide-open beak and slightly raised top-not would invite the other to combat. For as long as three minutes they would face one another, then one would attack. While the battle waged the others would return to their interrupted meal, one timid, very fat fellow, feasting in great style in order to make amends for lost time.

For about ten days the Silvereyes honoured us with their presence, during which time they became very domesticated and friendly; it was no infrequent occurrence to have them perch

upon our heads and shoulders while we were replenishing their food supply. Then, one day heralding an epoch of beautifully fine weather, the green birds forsook the temporary sanctuary for their natural haunt—the bush. On the eve of inclement weather they returned, their peculiar plaintive cries announcing their arrival. From that time the Silvereyes have remained, habitating the feeding-grounds and turnip paddock by day, retiring to roost in a plantation of firs at night. For roosting purposes they also frequent a gully choked with black scrub and flax. Usually they perch in the extreme top of the trees. Many of them appear to recognise an ideal camping-ground in a dense escalonia hedge; this, however, is occupied by a colony of noisy, quarrelsome sparrows, and the little green chaps seem to think it wise to avoid the quarters of such omnipotent birds, for although many of them regard it wistfully yet none of them ever sleep there.

The presence of the green visitors seem to be greatly resented by a pair of native larks who have regarded the lawn and porch as their particular hunting-ground for the last four years. These latter are remarkably friendly, always appearing several times every day to be fed. Upon the arrival of the Silvereyes, however, they invariably disappear, only putting in an occasional appearance, usually on some bitterly cold day, where they stay long enough to eat a hasty meal, ere they depart. Often I come across this drab grey pair running about in some spot, never very sheltered, in the vicinity of the house, sadly preferring to eke out an existence, however meagre, rather than mingle with the Silvereyes. Just why this is, is beyond my comprehension, for of all New Zealand birds, none is more gentle, quiet, and friendly than this same native lark.

As I write, a Silvereye—vivacious little chap that he is—has hopped on to the window sill, and after regarding me with bright eye, has flown down to join his fellows at their feasting. Ah, well! little green birds, you are welcome here until the cold weather goes, when once more you can return to your beautiful forest home.

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