

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.