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FOREST AND BIRD

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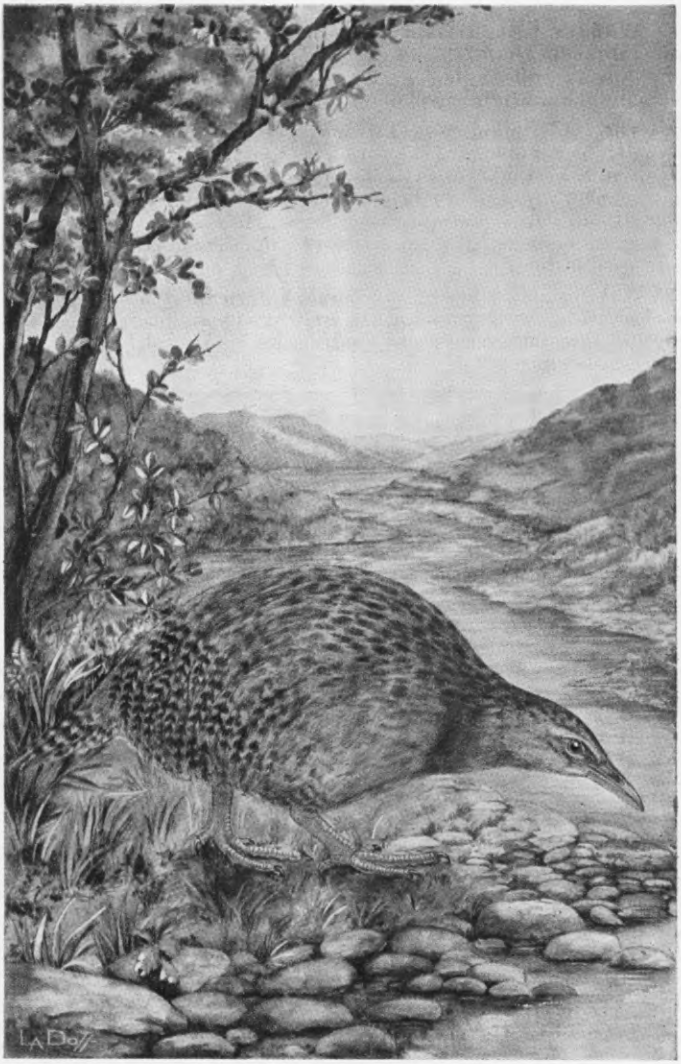
FOREST AND BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (INCORPORATED)



WEKA OR WOOD-HEN.

FOREST AND BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (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.

FOREST AND BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc.)

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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 Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the British Empire (of which the Prince of Wales is Patron) and with the International Committee for the Protection of Wild Birds.

A Lead for the Government.

ONE of the most encouraging and helpful addresses ever heard at meetings convened by the Forest and Bird Protection Society was given by the Hon. Sir Alexander Young, Minister of Internal Affairs, at the close of the Society's annual meeting on 30th April. The speaker expressed whole-hearted clear-minded approval of the Society's national ideals which he commended fervently to New Zealand's people for their own welfare. This declaration did not spring from sentimental impulse, although in that respect the Minister would have his fair share of sentiment. His attitude is based on intelligent study of cold hard facts. He has seen the terrible havoc wrought by deer in native forests on high country of the South Island, and he has satisfied himself on irrefutable evidence that these imported pests are a curse to the country. "Seeing is believing," is practically the answer of Sir Alexander to sport-loving pleaders for the conservation of a devastating nuisance, for he has invited doubters to go and behold the ravages which he has witnessed.

NATIVE PIGEON.
These beautiful birds are killed by many poachers.

In the definite knowledge that deer are deadly enemies of the country the Minister has repeated his declaration of a war of extermination against the farmers' worst foes. He has said cheerfully that his officers and himself are quite prepared to bear the brunt of criticism offered by stalkers and their supporters, who are a very small minority of the community. New Zealand's people, in the mass, will be found in favour of the common-sense policy announced by the Minister. The need demands a much bigger campaign against deer than any yet undertaken, for the present figures of slaughter are much below the natural increase of the animals.

Has the State Forest Service the same regard for the future as the Department of Internal Affairs is showing? There is a fear that the Forest Service has an over-eagerness to exploit the native forests from a timber-milling viewpoint. Some critics say that the administration is more interested in getting immediate profits than in a policy of proper management and conservation for posterity. An investigation of the complaints is being made by the Forest and Bird Protection Society.

SOUTH ISLAND WOODHEN. WEKA.

Gallirallus australis.

Although there are several kinds of weka in the South Island, all are similar in habits to the one usually called the South Island weka. It is the common form in the north and west of the island and the only one on Stewart Island. The weka early became one of the best companions of the bushman and explorer, because of its lack of fear and incurable inquisitiveness. It is another example of a New Zealand bird which, although furnished with wings, is unable to fly. It does, however, use the wings when running. The short tail bobs up and down spasmodically when the bird is walking with slow deliberate step and bold confident appearance. The eyes are wonderfully sharp, ever on the lookout for food. Crickets, worms, grubs, lizards, snails, berries, mice, nothing comes amiss. It will even catch small fish in shallow water and take young rabbits from a warren. Nor are rats despised; once captured they are quickly skinned with the aid of feet and powerful beak.

The nest is built on or near the ground in a variety of situations; the actual site is often decided by the nearness of suitable food supply. In some places the birds breed only in the spring; in others breeding seems to take place nearly all the year round. The parents are devoted to the young, assisting them to feed until they are nearly full grown. If nesting is to take place again, the young birds are then driven to new territory.

It is difficult to account satisfactorily for the rapid decrease in the numbers of the weka, but various causes have combined to decimate them. Weasels and stoats will not attack the adults, but frequently rob the nests. Because of their incurable inquisitiveness, wekas commonly fall victims to opossum traps. Rabbit poison and fires have also done their share, but near civilization dogs are inveterate enemies. It is only in gorse thickets that wekas seem to be safe from dogs—an example of an introduced weed protecting a native bird.

The weka is of great economic importance, not only as a destroyer of insect pests and other vermin but also as a protector of the nests of other birds. The worst enemies of nesting birds are the black and the brown rat, and the weka is the declared enemy of the rat. In this connection we should give heed to this note of Guthrie-Smith:—"It is to such species as the crows, the robins, the warblers, the thrushes, the saddleback, the bush creeper, the yellowhead, the whitehead, the wrens, the tui, the bellbird, the pigeon, and the parrakeets, that the presence of the weka is an unmixed boon. If they still continue to survive, it is to his ceaseless vigilance, his policing of the woods, his eternal

patrol of them by day and night, that they owe their lives; and these species, we may say, he watches without reward. From other kinds aided in the struggle of life, such as rails, ducks, pukeko, possibly, and from the fern bird and ground lark certainly, he does take toll. It is a tribute levied, fit and fair, and the merest fraction of what is robbed by rats; a merely nominal fee, in fact, charged for life insurance. . . . If then, in New Zealand, any serious interest ever comes to be taken in our native birds, the most efficient method of preserving the smaller tree-breeding species lies in the propagation of the weka. Of all the birds that deserve our care he comes foremost, and assistance withheld from him is help denied to half the indigenous birds of New Zealand."

BIRDS INSPIRE HUMANITY.

Birds have been the inspiration of much that is fine in art, poetry, and song. The world would be impoverished, indeed, if they were all destroyed. So, too, we should lose much if the chastening songs of birds were all hushed and their plumages turned to ashes. . . . More and more every year are the American people turning to the study of birds as part of their recreation. Amateurs may be seen everywhere with field-glasses, cameras, and note-books.—Junius Henderson in *"The Practical Value of Birds."*

[Photo by Stewart V. Robertson, Dunedin.]

NEST OF THE BANDED DOTTEREL.
This ground-nesting bird has been known to make its nursery on farms, sometimes near homesteads.

Land Management.

Ruinous Toll of Erosion.

(By Captain E. V. Sanderson.)

The Land, the Land, the Land! All are vitally concerned with the management of the land. The results of our methods in this direction must and do affect the well-being of every individual for better or worse. The efficient use and conservation of our national resources in forests, agriculture and pastoral pursuits, streams, rivers, minerals, etc., affect the destiny of all our people.

The Precious Top Layer.

The most important part of the land to us as a nation is merely the first few inches, otherwise the top soil. But where are we at the present moment? Fifty per cent. of the people operating as primary producers cannot make ends meet owing to the reduced prices of land products, while a considerable portion of consumers cannot purchase the products owing to the dear prices at which they reach them.

A large number of those handling the land are now being bolstered up by those who have handled their undertakings in a more profitable manner, with the final result that the whole nation is now being ground down by intolerable taxation and governmental interference. In the meanwhile most seek their food and clothing day by day buoyed up by that hope which springs eternal in the human breast that matters will readjust themselves and prosperity come like a brilliant light from nowhere, without any effort on our part to put our house in order.

Widespread Denudation.

Let us cast a glance around New Zealand and note what we see. Denudation of our essential protection forests everywhere, be it on land impossible for other uses than forest production, or on that which is merely of a temporary use for grazing purposes. Think, too, that the work of many stalwart pioneers—men of stout heart and brawny muscle—has been in vain and their hard misdirected efforts have been so entirely misplaced that their work has been lost to the nation. The land upon which they spent their energy is now, in many cases, in a far more unproductive condition than prior to that time when the first blow of an axe smote a tree. Thousands upon thousands of acres of land have gone to waste which—it should have been evident to the most inexperienced—could not remain in produc-

tion as farming land for long. Other thousands have been incessantly burned and over-grazed and thus lost to production.

Not only has this land gone out of production, but its denuded hillsides let loose debris which fills and chokes our rivers, causes excessive floods at one time, and dry watercourses at other times; in fact this slipping has become a menace of the first magnitude to the lower productive lands.

Haphazard Settlement.

This haphazard method of colonisation is perhaps usual to the Anglo-Saxon race, as much the same sort of thing has

A PENALTY FOR MAN'S FOLLY.

Destruction of forest on high country promotes flooding of lower farmlands. The middle of the picture shows a disastrous flood, as the result of forest destruction on the highlands.

happened in the United States of America and in other colonized lands. The final results of our present methods of mere exploitation for the moment must have much more disastrous effects in New Zealand, in proportion to its size, than in America, because the configuration of this Dominion unfortunately is peculiarly adapted to the forces of both sheet and gullying erosion.

Typical Cases of Muddle.

In a nutshell, the present methods of land management, or rather, mismanagement, can only end in grave national disaster. Instances could be quoted of ruinous land management from end to end of the Dominion, but let us be content with instancing merely one—the Wanganui River district. Here we see three variant efforts: One, to use the steep and at times precipitous country adjacent to the river for pastoral purposes; another section seeks to save the scenic value. Now we cannot have both the forest, which makes the scenic value, and the land for pastoral purposes. A third section seeks to have a harbour at the river mouth, and did excavate a large hole there for that purpose. The excavation was, of course, promptly filled up with silt and debris from the forest-denuded steep hillsides. The taxpayer pays for all three sections, each working against the others.

Surely it should have been obvious at the outset that if the forest were destroyed the making of a harbour at the river-mouth would not be possible. The first essential was to decide to what use the land adjoining the river should be put. For grazing the land was too steep generally and could not long remain productive in pasture, owing to the inevitable loss of the top soil, which could not be held *in situ* owing to the steep gradient. Therefore the scenic value, it appears, would have been the wisest selection instead of trying, as it were, to eat the cake and have it too.

Europe's Lead in Sanity.

In Europe how different is the question of land management handled! Protection forests have been established and are safeguarded, so much so, that in a mountainous country like Switzerland it is necessary for the landowner in some districts to get the permission of the authorities before he may fell a tree—and rightly so, because the public in general, besides the actual owner, have to suffer because of unnecessary wanton forest depletion. Forests in Europe are, however, looked upon as an ever-recurring productive crop, and not, as in New Zealand, merely handed over to some individual for destruction.

Wanted—A New Zealand Roosevelt.

Here in New Zealand there is a great opportunity for some far-seeing Roosevelt who can rise great enough to override the

petty individualist's interests and set about getting our land management on to sane lines ere erosion has assumed the upper hand. Our few remaining forests should, as a matter of course, be rid of all trespassing plant-eating animals at no matter what cost; protected from fire, and allowed to revert to their primitive conditions. All land, which has gone out of production on steep hillsides and on poor soil, should be abandoned for its hoped-for use and treated as part of the protection forests, beside much high country now used for merino production. The plant life on any area of a decided-upon general steepness, or above a certain stated elevation, should be conserved.

In this way, and in such a manner only, can the future prosperity of this Dominion be assured. No such measures as tampering with currency, bounties to farmers, false exchange rates, or other temporary expedients can have the slightest effect on erosion's terrible toll of our top soil.

YOUNG ENTHUSIASTS.

Further pleasant evidence of the progress made by the Forest and Bird Protection Society is seen in the ever-increasing enrolment of boys and girls—the future possessors of New Zealand. The young folk write some charming letters to the Society—and now and then one makes a delightful sally into verse. For example, here is a heart-touching letter to the secretary from Nion Shaw, who lives away up at Taupaki, North Auckland:—

"One day when my two sisters, a friend and I were tramping up to the bush, we had to cross the road. There, lying on the road, was a poor helpless yellow-hammer with one leg broken. When we had picked it up my sister cuddled it up in her warm hands while we three went out to gather straw. Soon we came to a bridge, and it was my turn to hold the bird. While I was holding it, it stood up in my hand and flew over into a totara tree on the other side of the stream. We were all very glad to know that it had recovered.

"I very much enjoy the little books I receive from you. It is my hope to be a life member some day."

A PREDICTION OF H. GUTHRIE-SMITH.

In his preface to *"Mutton-Birds and Other Birds,"* published in 1914, H. Guthrie-Smith wrote (in regard to the need of a strong organisation for the saving of native birds):—"In truth, the matter is not one to be dealt with by an individual. It is only the consensus of opinion of a Society, yet lacking in New Zealand—a Society for the Protection of Native Birds and Native Plants—that can carry weight."

To-day the Forest and Bird Protection Society has the weight which is winning on a wide front.

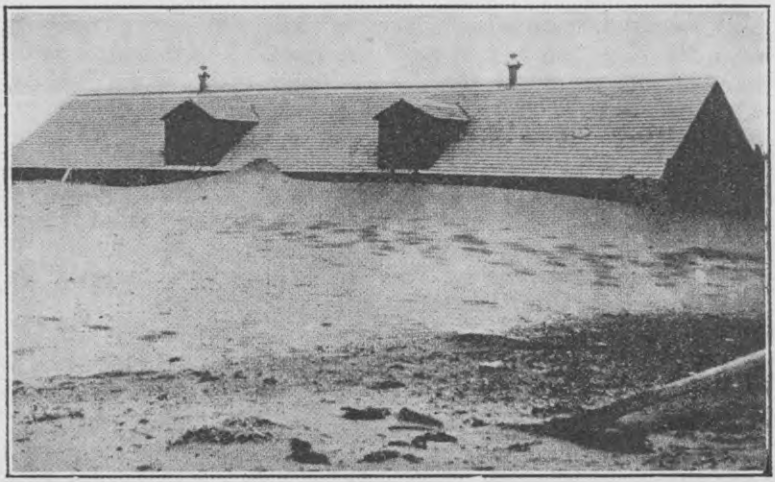
FARMS BLOWING AWAY.

Cable messages have told New Zealanders about the ruinous "dust storms" on some large tracts of country in the United States of America and in the wheat belt of Canada—the penalty of man's folly in fighting against Nature.

Similar loss of very valuable top soil has occurred in New Zealand. For example, a few years ago, in a district between Methven and the Rakaia River, Canterbury, a farmer carefully put several acres into fine tilth for a sowing of turnip seed. Drying weather ensued—and then up came a fierce nor'-wester which swept away the whole of that well-prepared surface, and left a saddening array of stones. In another field in that area a powerful wind lifted well-grown turnips from the ground. Years ago that locality was protected by strong stands of native forest, which were milled out of existence.

Parts of Hawke's Bay and a number of other districts are also suffering erosion from the onslaughts of savage winds, formerly tamed by forests. Thus, unchecked wind and water combine to produce deserts.

The article on "Land Management" (pages 4-7 in this issue) is an impressive reminder to New Zealanders that they must act effectively on the principle of self-preservation in persuading their representatives in Parliament to give heed to the Forest and Bird Protection Society's advice.



NOT SNOW—DUST.

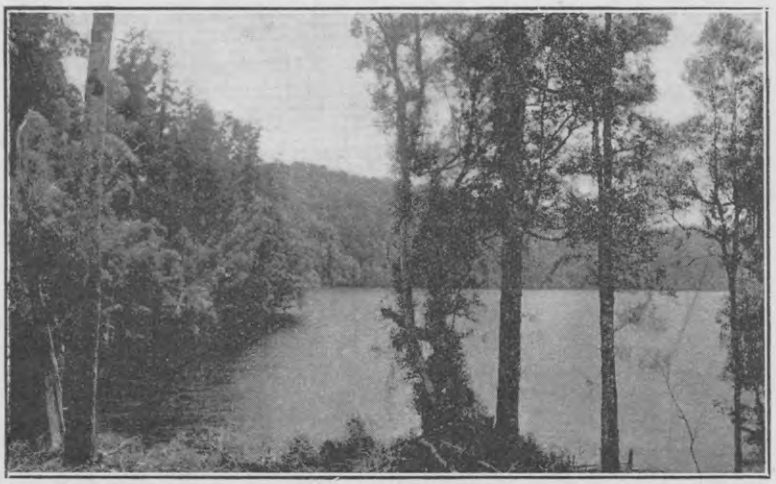
A penalty suffered by an American farmer a few months ago, because pioneers ignored the soil-conserving scheme of nature.

WAIKAREMOANA IN PERIL.

Native forest, trailing its evergreen skirt on the edge of star-shaped Lake Waikaremoana, is in peril. Here is a paradise for the botanist and the nature-lover, but it is threatened by destructive deer. Indeed the matter to-day is worse than a threat, for the alien animals are taking toll of young growth—doing much mischief to the forest floor. The Tourist Department, with the responsibility of conserving Waikaremoana as a priceless tourist resort, should be up in arms against the deer—but is it taking any action? Alas, the Department is suspected of having a wish to conserve the deer rather than the beautiful forest.

Opossums are another nuisance in that delightful woodland. They are blamed for some of the damage done to plant life and also for hindering the welfare of birds. Moreover, the traps set for the animals bring death to many kiwis. This mischief has been reported repeatedly by eye-witnesses, but it goes on, year after year.

Every year, too, many kiwis are killed or maimed in traps set for opossums in forests on the West Coast of the South Island. The sad figures are facts—not flights of fancy. The Forest and Bird Protection Society has long been pressing for a checking of this evil, and is now confident that an improved trap will be adopted.



PRICELESS ASSET MENACED BY DEER.
Will New Zealanders allow deer to destroy this tourist resort?

MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS AND SANCTUARIES.

Nature's Balance Must be Kept.

It is well known that some disastrous blunders have been made in the importation of certain creatures into New Zealand; but it is not so well known that mischief can be done by the transfer of native birds from one part of the Dominion to another.

This subject is treated very impressively by Mr. Joseph Grinnell, of Berkeley University, California, in an article, "Natural Balance for Wild Life in National Parks and Its Maintenance," in the January issue of the "Journal of the Society for the Preservation of Fauna of the Empire." A perusal of this article shows that the writer's reasoning supports the policy of the Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand with regard to the transferring of native birds to sanctuaries and other reservations where they have never been known to exist. It is perhaps, however, only natural that those with a limited knowledge of wild birds as wild birds should in their zeal to save some apparently threatened species or for other reasons seek to apply methods to wild birds which are more applicable to the domestic fowl.

Here are some very important passages of Dr. Grinnell's article:—

The functions of the National Park Service have been stated in ideally concise wording by Director Mather, quoted by Mr. Albright, as follows: "To preserve National Park areas in as nearly as possible their natural condition and at the same time to make them accessible to the people for study, for recreation, and for play."

It is implied clearly, I think, in this statement that *all* of the natural features included within said areas, animate as well as inanimate, animal as well as vegetable, are equally to be conserved. Granting therefore that animal life within the borders of National Parks is valuable in stimulating the human senses of far-seeing and far-hearing, in furnishing objectives requiring recreational exercise of both mind and body to bring them within ken, in furnishing an aesthetic appeal of a high type and an intellectual motif of infinite resource, then how can this asset best be treated from an administrative standpoint?

The present writer's experience, over a period of years, has brought some degree of familiarity with the animal life and the conditions bearing upon it in certain parts of the Pacific district. The accumulation of detailed facts and reflections making up

this knowledge has led to the formation of certain definite opinions as to the best way to conserve animal life in National Parks. These opinions have been arrived at gradually, and in some cases amount now to seemingly well-grounded convictions, the important ones of which I will proceed to discuss.

Since, by definition, National Parks are essentially preserves, for purposes of serious study as well as recreation, then the administrator's guard must continually be exercised against any pollution of the native fauna, any perversion of it from what it *was,* here in the West, up till somewhat less than a century ago. First and foremost, any and all *non*-native animals must rigidly be denied admission. Dogs and cats are now banned, and properly so, from, I think, all National Parks. Quite as proper is it to stand firmly against all suggestion that alien animals of any other sorts be introduced into National Parks. No non-native kinds of quail, or pheasants or wild turkeys, of beaver or deer belong in any park where such animals did not originally exist. For example, elk have no place in Yosemite.

This dictum I should apply quite as rigorously with respect to species and even sub-species which happen to be near-related to native ones. It would be a biological indiscretion to plant eastern squirrels, which are of other races, in Yosemite Park, simply for the reason that the native Grey Squirrel is, for the time being, at a low ebb of population numbers. According to well-known biological law, the introduction of any non-native species, if successful, is bound to be followed by disappearance of some native species with which, to be successful, the alien competes. No two kinds of animals of the same requirements for food and shelter can long occupy the same place; one of them will disappear. Not only one, but a series of native species may be affected by the establishment of just one alien species; the whole balanced inter-relation originally obtaining may be upset. A continental fauna is already *full,* in the sense that all the ecologic niches are occupied. To repeat, there is no possibility of adding a new animal without affecting the interests of one or more native ones.

The full native complement of animal life should be left absolutely undisturbed, save to the extent incidental to making the park accessible to the visiting public. I mean exactly this, that no so-called "vermin," such as wildcats, coyotes, weasels, hawks or owls should as a rule ever be killed inside of National Park boundaries. Within large parks such as Yosemite and Sequoia, not even the mountain lion should be disturbed. All these animals *belong* to the territory, have been there from time immemorial, as parts of the perfectly normal biotic complex,

to the presence of which the population of every other native animal is, by reason of its long-established and wholly adequate rate of reproduction, adjusted. Fluctuations in the numbers of each are to be expected. The numbers of one species may now be below normal, or above normal; but experience shows that, in the latter case *and* through natural causes, a downward swing will shortly occur, so that the population of carnivore and of herbivore tends to maintain a mean ratio from one period to another. In final analysis the total quantity of animal life in a locality is controlled by the total production of plant life there.

THE CURSE OF COLLECTING.

A contributor to the "Journal of the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire" condemns the pernicious practice of egg-robbers, who are hastening the extinction of some species of birds in various countries, including New Zealand. Here are some of the critic's comments:—

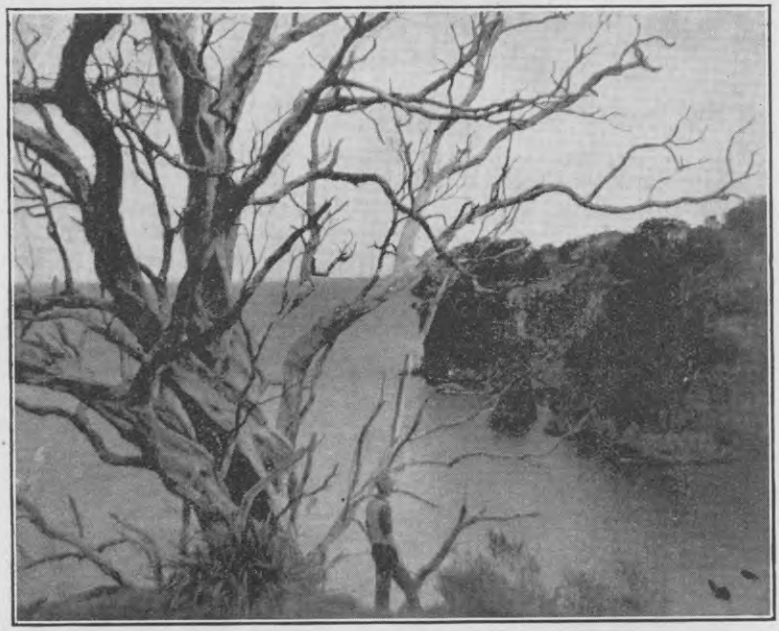
The disappearance of several of England's rare breeding species of birds is imminent. Unquestionably, the chief dangers come from the egg collector and specimen hunter and of these the egg collector is the more potent cause of extinction. It would be easy to multiply instances of his depredations, but, for reasons of space, I will only quote one. During last year alone one individual took sixteen clutches of the eggs of the hobby, and has in his collection over ninety clutches all robbed in England. Possibly his methods may not be typical, but he has imitators, and to a rich man, possessed of his particular form of mania, a small fine is no deterrent whatsoever.

Furthermore, a definite trade in the eggs of rare birds has sprung up, with prices varying according to the nearness of extinction of the species involved.

We have already lost beyond recall the osprey and the white-tailed eagle and the decrease in numbers of birds such as the dottrel and the Dartford warbler and others which are special sufferers at the hands of the egg collector is alarming. Were it not for rigid and extensive protection by private individuals and societies no reasonable person would deny that the kite, the bittern, and the Kentish plover would be extinct as breeding species in a year or two at most.

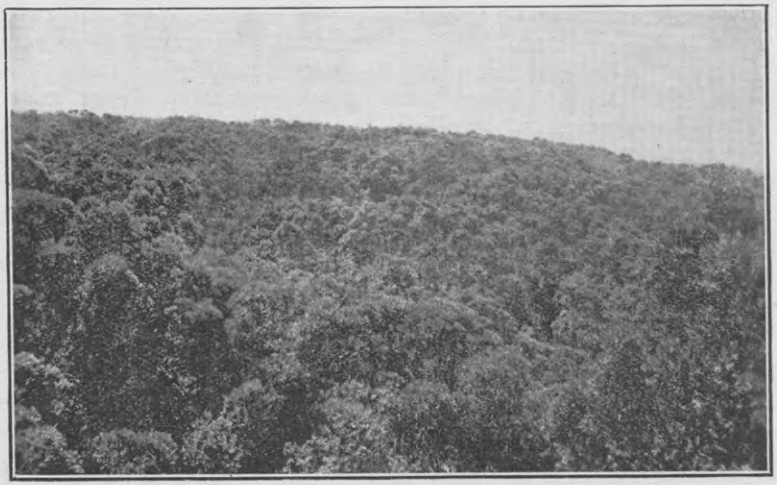
The remedy seems to be in legislation which must be drastic and strictly enforced.

Would it not be possible to pass an Act making it illegal for any individual or institution to have in possession the eggs or skins of certain scheduled birds?



TO BE SAVED OR LOST?

These two pictures (taken on Mayor Island), are typical of many parts of New Zealand. One shows native forest, as it should be conserved. The other presents the sad spectacle of a pohutukawa killed by careless fire. Similar skeletons in many areas are due to the ravages of deer.



BIRDS OF THE WAYSIDE.

Observations of Camping Trampers.

(By H. Ross, Invercargill—a junior member.)

One bird we nearly always heard, wherever we set up camp, was the melodious grey warbler. It seemed not to matter what was the nature of cover afforded—willow trees, black scrub, flax or fir plantations—the rirorirо was ever to be found. When we were fortunate enough to see the little chap he was usually fluttering high up among the tree tops, twirling or twisting among the branches in an ecstasy of never-ending delight. From time to time the sweet cadence of music was wafted down to us. Almost invariably the warblers were to be found in pairs.

In South Canterbury, miles and miles from any bush, we saw a pair of shy rock wrens, one of the smallest of New Zealand birds, inhabiting a pile of rocks under a railway bridge. The cheerful pair appeared to be very much at home there. Hopping from rock to rock they went briskly about their business, which appeared to be searching for minute particles of food adhering to the stones. In between times they peered at us with bright friendly eyes and uttered their low-voiced cries. It was only through hearing their notes that we were able to locate them.

In spite of close examination we found no trace of a nest, but somewhere in that pile of stones they would, no doubt, build a home. I think, too, that any spiders sharing the stones would have a very unhappy time.

At one place we camped near a clump of blue-gums. From somewhere among their tops, clear and sweet, came the notes of a bell-bird. Until far into the dusk he sang, and from time to time throughout the night he uttered a sleepy "ticka ticka tock," as though to let us know he was still there. Long before dawn he resumed his carolling.

For some time after this we saw no native birds. Raucous-voiced magpies were present in large numbers. Also we noticed several German owls which had been killed by motor-cars. Dozens of hedge-hogs had met a similar death.

While we were chatting at one stage, a vivacious thin-looking tom-tit fluttered down from the telephone wires to the top of a post. Here, after bobbing up and down and vigorously jerking his tail several times, he suddenly emitted several piercing trills of song, in order, no doubt, to let us know he didn't feel nearly as bad as he looked. We were delighted to see him; yet the person to whom we spoke remarked: "What a horrible squeak." Some people are not interested in birds.

The only silver-eyes we saw were clustered in willow-trees on the Ashburton River; we heard their peculiar plaintive cries and saw them clinging to the branches in every acrobatic attitude conceivable as they feasted on blight.

We believed that the presence of the silver-eyes meant a storm for a certainty. We therefore pitched our tent and fly with unusual care. During the night it rained, and the following morning one of the worst hailstorms in years swept over Ashburton. It was followed by several days of boisterous weather. Then it was that the green birds clustered around our doorway, eagerly accepting the bread and scraps with which we fed them. Hunger and cold made them indifferent to our presence, and we were provided with endless amusement by a score of them feasting and fighting at the tent door.

Much to my surprise I noticed several young ones among them. The sturdy youngsters appeared to have endless appetites, and eagerly ate everything their hard-working emaciated parents carried to them. The silver-eyes apparently nest in the willows on the Canterbury river banks.

To me quite the most wonderful sight was at Oamaru. We returned home in the train, and no sooner had it stopped at that station than a large number of sea-mews came flying across from the sea, only a few chains distant, and alighted beside the carriages. Eagerly expectant they ran up and down. Presently the passengers began to feed them with crusts and pieces of cake. How those birds did fight over the tit-bits! A few of the more agile ones deftly caught the morsels on the wing as they were thrown, and then flew swiftly away to enjoy their feast in peace, free from the onsets of less fortunate mates. I shall never forget those gulls which, tame as pigeons, apparently eagerly await the coming of the train and the feast that they know will be given to them.

A week later we were once more camped in the bush south of Balclutha. A flock of small birds surrounded us. We were happy, and more than ever it was impressed upon us that he who has birds for companions, especially where they are the glorious songsters of New Zealand, is indeed heaven-blessed.

BELLBIRDS AND A FLAUTIST.

Here is an interesting letter from Mr. D. Roberts, Gowan Bridge, Nelson, to the Forest and Bird Protection Society:—

"I live in a mountainous locality near Murchison, where there are, I am glad to say, large areas of beech forest remaining on the rough country.

"My two hobbies are scrambling about in the bush and playing the flute. On a recent week-end I was out tramping, and happened to have my flute in my swag, as I intended visiting some friends that evening. When I reached the summit of a mountain, I sat down on a tree trunk to rest, and brought out my flute and began to play. Almost immediately two or three bellbirds appeared in a beech close by and began to sing strongly. In a few minutes I had at least a dozen of these beautiful green birds about me, moving about restlessly and filling the air with their crisp silver notes.

"At first the humorous side of the thing struck me most forcibly, so that I could not play for laughing; but then I entered into the spirit of it, and went on playing for about a quarter of an hour, while my bird friends continued to flutter and whistle.

"This mountain is more than 3,000 feet high. Of course, I will not venture to answer for the birds' attitude. Whether they came to listen to me, or were trying to drown my music with their own, or were merely expressing a melodious variety of indignation at my intrusion, it is not for me to say. If it was the first, I bow to them for the compliment; if it was the second, I won; and if it was the third, I think it is a pity that other people cannot learn to be angry so charmingly. In any case, those few minutes on that forested mountain-top will always be a pleasant memory to me.

"I frequently see these birds, and others, round about—tuis, bellbirds, warblers, riflemen, robins, tomtits, keas, grey ducks and paradise ducks, parrakeets, pigeons and kakas, and very rarely a weka, and cuckoos in season."

In reply to Mr. Roberts, Captain E. V. Sanderson, President of the Society, remarks:—

"Bellbirds and others are prone to show their apparent resentment at any bird-like call. I have always looked upon this trait as a fear on their part that some competitor might be trespassing on their particular feeding area. They act just in the way you describe when many other noises both musical and unmusical are made, and yet perhaps have no idea of music as we know it."

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