

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?