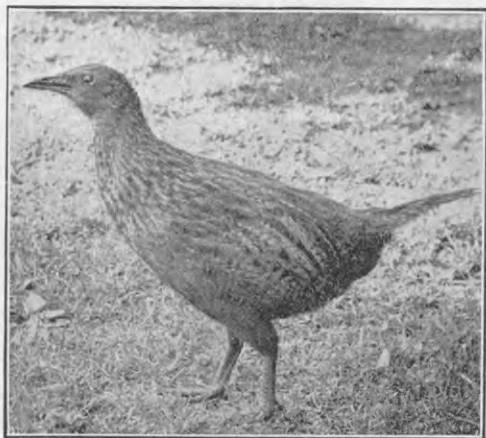


## The Friendly Weka

**"Policeman of the Bush."**



H. Guthrie-Smith, a distinguished writer on New Zealand birds, has given warm praise to the weka, which he has termed "the policeman of the bush." After mentioning the feats of wekas in their killing of rats (which, he says, "do more damage to our local avifauna than shooting, fires, dogs, cats, weasels and birds of prey combined") he remarks:—

"The most efficient method of preserving the smaller tree-breeding species of birds lies in the propagation of the weka. Of all the birds that deserve our care he comes foremost. Assistance withheld from him is denied to half the indigenous birds of New Zealand."

In a letter to the Forest and Bird Protection Society, a wellwisher of Greymouth tells a very interesting story of a weka which had the greater part of its beak torn off by an opossum trap.

Two years ago (he writes) we began milling operations in the Ihamatua district. One day this bird made its appearance while the bushmen were having lunch at the bush winch. One of the men threw it a piece of bread and then noticed it was unable to pick it up, as it had lost the top part of the beak, leaving the tongue bare in the lower portion. After some coaxing the bird came and took food out of their hands.

In a week or two it became so tame that it followed the men coming home down the tram of an evening to the sus-

pension bridge over the river, and would meet them again in the morning, at daylight, and go to the bush with them about a mile distant.

Some twelve months ago the lower portion of the beak fell off, evidently having been injured also, although to outward appearances there is no sign of damage to the mouth.

The bird, which is known as "Joey" by the men, has become so docile that he appears to have left the bush and made his abode at the mill, going in and out of the men's huts, and feeding with the cats and dogs, of which he appears to take no notice. He is rather wary of strangers, and usually makes for the fern when they are about, but will come out when the residents call him. He is regarded as a pet amongst the workmen, and although several have wished to take him away the men are most emphatic that he shall remain. His favourite diet seems to be boiled rice. He is an expert at catching field mice with his feet, but owing to his lack of beak he has a big struggle to pick up the mouse to eat it.



**Pity the Parrakeet!**

Native parrakeets of several species were formerly very plentiful in many districts. Their numbers have been grievously reduced by man and his pests.