

# The Pukeko, Acquitted in 1930, Should be Protected

## RESULTS OF FORMER RESEARCH REPEATED

*Peace,—or Gun Fire?*



Photo courtesy Edgar F. Stead.  
The First Out. Pukeko Nest, Young and Eggs.

**FAIR PLAY** is bonny play, and the pukeko is entitled to his full measure as a true New Zealander.

He does a great deal of good, and is so trusting, so innocent and so ungainly in movement that nobody but a gun owner with a poor idea of sport would desire to shoot such a bird.

The past practice was for the Minister to issue a special permit to any farmer who complained of damage being done by the pukeko. A full investigation of the food habits of the pukeko was made seven years ago. Yet, Acclimatisation

Societies have persuaded the Minister to declare a short season for pukeko! Hunters have suddenly professed a desire to aid farmers—a trick practised in other countries with the same object. It is not denied that the bird may at times do some little harm, but the damage is frequently grossly exaggerated.

Many farmers will resent the shooting of pukeko and order shootists off their properties. On a former occasion, one farmer was so incensed that he chased away shooters with an axe. In another district, Paraparaumu, an Acclimatisation Society member incurred much illwill by shooting pukeko which had been hand fed and cared for by some of the residents. School boys and others had become much attached to these birds.

It is conceded that the man on the land has to put up with much as the result of damage done by creatures imported to provide shooting, but the pukeko is indigenous and is accepted with the land, not thrust upon the farmer, who is usually well able to look after his interests. Most sportsmen would not cross the road to kill pukeko because they are after sport, not merely killing.

A stomach content survey was conducted by the Department in 1930, to ascertain whether the pukeko really did all the harm attributed to it by Acclimatisation Societies. Specimens were collected by Acclimatisation Societies from various districts and the examination was official.

**No real sportsman would call pukeko-shooting sport. What then, is the object? Upland game birds, such as pheasant and quail, are becoming a thing of the past, while waterfowl are also rapidly decreasing, so the shootist has to fall back on the humble pukeko! Alas! What degradation!**

It will be noticed that three birds consumed some wheat in the autumn after all crops had been gathered. They must therefore, either have taken the grain from the stacks, or gleaned it. Otherwise the bill of fare was mostly macerated vegetation. It may be asked, "What is the use of spending money on research work if the results are ignored?"

### THE ACQUITTAL!

Birds Taken and Date	Locality	Stomach Contents
<b>MANAWATU</b>		
2 .....	Swamp .....	Macerated green material, mostly grass.
2 6/1/29	" .....	Macerated green vegetation, and seeds of <i>Lolium perenne</i> and buttercup.
4 19/2/29	From swamp with crop of partridge peas in near vicinity .....	Macerated vegetation, and seeds of <i>Lolium perenne</i> , <i>Poa annua</i> , <i>Eleocharis ovata</i> , <i>Carex</i> sp., and <i>Glyceria fluitans</i> .