

New Zealand Has Two Crows.

**This Ventriloquist May be Singing
Within a Few Yards but is Even
Then Difficult to Locate.**

(By E. T. Frost)

NEW ZEALAND has some beautiful birds, and the North Island Crow, or Kokako, is a delightful but elusive and little known New Zealander, charming to see and lovely to listen to. He is a ventriloquist and occasionally is seen and heard on the fringes of bush close to settlements. His scientific nomenclature is *Glaucopis Wilsoni* (North Island); or *Glaucopis Cinerea* (South Island). The Waikato Maoris call it the "Hoongi."

One usually associates the name "Crow" with the bird so well known in Great Britain, but our crow is quite a different bird in many ways.

In the first place its voice is totally different from the raucous one of its European relative. Its voice is clear and resonant and may be heard early in the morning in the forest gullies and ravines where it goes to nest. The notes sound like "Whio-Ku-Ku-Ku." Although, one is standing within a few yards of the songster, it is a difficult matter to locate it, as there seems to be a ventriloquial effect with the sound. If one keeps quiet it is quite probable that the inquisitive bird—which has no doubt been eying the stranger in its domain—will hop out into sight. Crows are very tame in their native haunts where they have not been disturbed with the sound of firearms, but, alas, such areas are only too few now.

Being a poor flier it does not frequent the tree tops as do the pigeon and kaka, but it lives in the lower forest scrub. It is very fond of the poroporo berries, and in the early days of European settlement, before all the bush was destroyed, in many of the now close-settled districts it would generally be found on the edge of any piece of bush around which the poroporo shrub grew, especially after a bush fire had cleaned up the felled portion, as this plant came up profusely at such time. These beautiful birds could be seen hopping and feeding in the shrubs, and at times they would hold a berry in the claw and eat it

like their forest mates the Kakas. Their flight was very poor, and they relied on the speed and dexterity with which they could hop through the scrub, to escape an enemy. They were adept at concealing themselves also.

The main distinction between the North and South Island species is in the colour of their wattles. That of the North is blue, and its Southern relative's is orange. In colour both species are alike, dark bluish grey, but there is a slight difference in the colouring of the tail; that of the North Island being black, while the South Island bird's is bluish grey with the exception of the tip.

It is pleasing to note that these interesting birds have been seen in some unexpected places lately, quite close to settlements where only small areas of bush have been left. They have been definitely seen and their beautiful notes heard in the early morning.

It is hoped that they will be preserved in these sanctuaries to pour forth their song, so that some of the younger generation may gain some idea of what the morning chorus of the birds was like, before the destroying hand of man descended on their habitations.

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