

POACHING

A REAL EVIL.

FROM North Auckland down to Stewart Island reports of poaching reach the Society in an almost continuous stream—tuis and pigeons shot in a wholesale manner in the centre of the North Island—pigeon on the menu of some of the hotels on the West Coast, except on the day the visiting magistrate is a guest—South Island robins shot for their skins—live parakeets and other protected birds purchasable in Australia and even in London—Pied stilts and tern shot by godwit hunters both in the North and South Islands—shooting such birds as godwits from motor cars contrary to the regulations under the Animal Protection and Game Act 1921-22—the interference under scientific pretext with the nests and eggs of birds on sanctuaries—the carrying of firearms without permission on sanctuaries, etc. Such is the continuous stream of information reaching the Society week after week. Whenever there is a reasonable possibility of securing a conviction, those whose duty it is to administer laws in the field are advised, but the difficulty in finding an available ranger and the reluctance of our informant to sanction his name being used make quick action extremely difficult.

Rangers in New Zealand are few and far between and the dozen or so paid rangers devote their energies mostly to the interests of fishing and opossums.

The quickly rising tide of public desire to save our forests and bird life is undoubtedly the main factor in saving many native birds and game birds, but there is a section of every community on whom any moral appeal is wasted. The seizing of firearms and any chattels used to facilitate illegal acts together with severe fines are the only means to check the destruction done by this section.

Efforts, however, to raise game birds successfully must, of necessity, be accompanied by drastic endeavours to enforce some of the provisions of the conservation laws as it would be useless breeding such birds as pheasants at a cost of from fifteen shillings to twenty shillings a piece mainly for acquisition by poachers. Added to this the pronounced public opinion which is now in evidence, will insist that our native birds shall be rigorously saved from destruction by poachers, collectors, and such like destroying agents. The time is long overdue for the introduction of an up-to-date field administration system lest the transgressor completes his fell work to the detriment of all desirable wild life.

At the moment, the controlling Department shows a keen desire to remedy the weak spots in field administration, but any effort to do a public good must necessarily involve treading on somebody's toes, and it is the self-interested minority which usually complains to such an extent that it is mistaken for the majority, who are only too often silent and inert.