

PROTECTING THE WILD FOWL

PUKEKO AND DUCK.

NATIVE species of bird life are now often exposed to attack by the ignorant or the unscrupulous. Farmers are especially shortsighted in such matters. An example of popular ignorance of biological facts is the periodical call for the destruction of the pukeko. If farmers only knew it, the harmless and beautiful pukeko is one of their best friends, by eating grubs and other pests that attack crops. It is a friend of the flax-owner also, through its habit of feeding on the grubs in flax roots. Strict wild life control will ensure the protection of the pukeko, whose ancient feeding grounds are dwindling with the draining of the swamps.

More lakes and lagoon sanctuaries are needed for the saving of the native duck and teal, as well as the pukeko. Sportsmen's activities could be directed more to the imported swan, which is injurious to the indigenous waterfowl by taking their food. A close season of three or four years is urgently necessary for native duck.

The Department of Internal Affairs keeps a vigilant eye on the helpless native birds. It has done most excellent service to the cause of protection. The proposed Wild Life Division of the Conservation authority will find its path made clear for it by the Department's policy of care of the bird life of the wood, the water, and the waste.

Pukeko Eggs and Chicks.

Photo courtesy Ellis Dudgeon

