

## NESTING HABITS OF NORTH ISLAND KIWI

### SOME INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS

THE Department of Internal Affairs, knowing that members of the Forest and Bird Protection Society would be interested in the matter, has courteously sent a copy of a letter received from an accurate observer in Hawkes Bay, whose name we have not permission to mention, on the nesting habits of the North Island Kiwi.

It will be noticed that only crushed particles of the egg were found after the chick had been hatched. Another observer, however, informs the Society that he saw much the same happening as that related, but in his case the two halves of the shell were in the nest after the chick was hatched.

Here is the text of the observations (dated 19th November, 1938):—

The small patch of native bush, which I have on my property I keep strictly as a sanctuary for native birds. There are many of the native birds including the fast-vanishing native pigeon and kiwis in the bush.

I have found several kiwi nests near this bush. All nests are in short burrows, built on dry spurs at the edge of the bush, not in the bush, as one would imagine would be the most suitable for this shy bird to select for a nesting place.

The nests have all been built on short steep banks. The steepness of the approach to the nest must prove quite a scramble for the parent bird. I do not know if the selection of such a site is for a further protection against dampness or to assist the kiwi in protection from its natural enemies.

The line of clay is the line of approach to the nest. I may mention now that the parent bird left the nest every night, presumably to feed. I made distinct marks across this clay track and the following morning they were obliterated.

The bird was found by my little son (age 11 years) on 31st August, and the chick was hatched on either the late afternoon of 18th October or during that night.

I do not know how long the parent bird had been sitting before 31st August. During this long period the bird was sitting very closely, always in the same position, head away from

the entrance to the burrow, the body turned slightly to the left.

The bird's position was always so exactly the same that a person could readily believe that it never moved at all. It was to discover if it did come off the nest that I made the marks with a stick across the clay of the runway to the nest.

The parent bird was clearly visible from some distance from the burrow. I was therefore able to keep it under observation without disturbing it.

On the morning of 19th October it was not visible, and on looking into the burrow I was able to see the young kiwi standing sideways across the nest watching me with its left eye. It was clearly on the defensive against intruders. The menacing clear, crisp, clicking noise made by this young chick with its bill would surely deter some of its enemies in any intended attack.

The chick when newly hatched was a replica of an adult bird in miniature. It was fledged with the real kiwi feathers, almost black, much darker than those of the adult bird. The legs were paler and the beak was of a creamy whiteness.

It was very sturdy. Although the kiwi egg weighs a pound, the chick itself would give one the impression that it had been hatched from a much larger egg.

From the time the chick was hatched I have not seen any sign of the adult bird. The chick only stayed in the nest until the following day, 20th October, and since that day the nest has been deserted by both parent and chick.

From the appearance of the chick, it would be quite obvious that it would be able to care for itself and not have to be cared for by the parent bird. This bears out a statement made by a very old Maori, since deceased, when he told me years ago that the parent kiwi deserted its chick soon after the chick was hatched.

In all the old nests that I have found I have never seen any trace of the egg shell. I therefore was keen to discover what happened to the shell of this egg. It was not left in two pieces, as in the case of other eggs; it was probably