

These figures are eloquent proof of the rapid growth of native trees under dry conditions with light winter frosts. The main factors necessary appear to be thorough preparation of the soil, use of hardy nursery-raised stock, and planting in close association.

Mr. Baxter's garden is an excellent example of the results of planting "bird food" and sup-

plying fresh drinking water. Birds are with him all the year round feeding on nectar of kowhai, flax, and fuchsia, and the berries of poroporo, fuchsia, wineberry, cabbage tree, fivefinger, broadleaf, ngaio, and the pittosporums. Dozens of birds nest undisturbed every year.

NATURE OBSERVATION

(By R. H. D. Stidolph.)

THE NEED FOR ACCURACY IN FIELD WORK

A BIRD-LOVER enjoys every minute of a day spent among the birds in the open, and if the art of observing wild life is tackled in an intelligent way many observations of value may be recorded. In New Zealand, where almost all native birds are protected, it is the most logical pursuit for those whose enthusiasms for our birds finds expression in a desire to become better acquainted with the ways of their feathered friends. A careful observer never causes any distress to, nor unduly disturbs, any bird but is content to watch them and record their habits, working so quietly that on many occasions the birds may be quite unaware of his presence. It is under such conditions that true insight into a bird's habits is to be gained. Moreover, even dwellers in cities and towns, if they keep their eyes open and their ears tuned into bird calls, may often see something of more than usual interest. It must not be assumed that a city dweller is ill-placed for making observations of that kind. As a case in point, how many of the hundreds of thousands of people who visited the Centennial Exhibition during the birds' breeding season noticed that both the starling and the sparrow had been quick to seize the opportunity of finding suitable places for nests inside the Exhibition buildings?

Every care must be taken when making a record that it is correct in every particular. To ensure this it is necessary to be positive of the identity of the bird and to record only exactly what takes place. The value of a record is at once destroyed if mere assumption is allowed to appear as an event of fact. It is far better to refrain from putting forth any observation if there is any doubt as to its correctness. It is essential always to place

first and foremost the safety of the bird. Never do anything that imperils the safety of a bird or its nest. Do not under any circumstances touch a nest or the eggs, as some birds will readily desert them if they are handled, and in any case it is quite unnecessary to interfere with them. In making an examination of a nest, a mirror fixed on to the end of a stick is of great assistance and enables the contents of a nest to be seen without jeopardising the safety of the structure by climbing to it, especially when the nest is placed on a thin branch. If you are watching a nest, do so from a convenient distance, so that your presence does not disturb the adult birds; and if you find the birds will not return, even when you are a safe distance away, retire altogether rather than endanger the young or eggs. Remember that as a bird lover and a bird observer your job is to check vandalism and to save the birds from any injury.

KUKU — NEW ZEALAND PIGEON

[Photo: Rona E. Robinson, Dunedin]

