

birds are typical of the colder subantarctic.

The New Zealand king shag well merits its title by reason of its size and the rich hues of its plumage. It also shares the unenviable distinction of now being one of the rarest shags in the world, for as a species it only just survived to enjoy the protection afforded by an Order in Council in 1927.

Apparently never a numerous species, the king shag is now safe to expand its numbers, but so far it seems to have shown little inclination, much preferring its sedentary life with its close-knit community.

The bird is not a strong flyer

and when it leaves a rocky perch it nearly always strikes the water, with much kicking and splashing in gaining flight speed. But it dives and swims well, which is just as well, for it is a sea-bottom feeder, liking small blue and red cod and crustaceans. On land it shuffles along clumsily in the same way as a penguin.

The king shag is about 76 cm high, with its head, cheeks, neck sides, back, and outer thigh feathers an iridescent metallic bluish green. Because of its white underparts and its trade-marks — the white spot and set of white feathers running down its wing coverts — it looks for all the

world like an aristocratic gentleman in full dress of white stiff shirt and black tails. It has pink feet and a brilliant cobalt eye with a bright blue eyelid. It has no crest, but has an orange wattle and red brown facial skin.

Solid nests

The king shags nest on large built-up nests of marine growth and coastal plants cemented together by guano. These solid nests are built up year by year and are spaced regularly about the rocks. For preference they nest close to the coastal vegetation edge on a bare rock shelf a metre or so above the high-tide mark.

The breeding season spreads over several months from June to early summer. So it is a winter breeder. If they are not disturbed by gulls, a pair can successfully raise two or three chicks, but there is unfortunately heavy mortality by marauding birds.

For all its small numbers the king shag's present status is quite healthy and with the protection now available, this proud and most beautiful of sea birds will continue to grace the outer Marlborough Sounds. ■

South Island summer camp

Interim information on the South Island summer camp at Lake Rotoiti is available from:

Mr and Mrs I. McFarlane, 21 Dorset Street, Richmond, Nelson.

An addressed and stamped envelope should be sent for return mailing.

Supplements to issue

Accompanying this issue are two supplements, "Forest and Bird Mail Order Catalogue" and Bush Telegraph.

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS

We welcome new members. Why not give a subscription as a gift? Just complete this coupon and mail it with your cheque to:

The National Secretary,
Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of N.Z. Inc,
P.O. Box 631,
WELLINGTON

Please enrol
Mr
Mrs
Master (Please print name in full)
Miss

.....
(Address)

Enclose card — Gift membership from

Name:

.....
(Please print)
Address:

Cheque for \$enclosed.

Subscription rates:

Junior \$10 p.a. (under 17 or at school). Age	Family \$15 p.a. (husband and wife, with or without children). No. of children under 17 years
Ordinary \$15 p.a.	
Senior citizen (over 60), including spouse, \$10 p.a.	
Schools or classes \$10 p.a.	Life \$250 per person.