



THE NOTORNIS HAS CHICKS

THE re-discovery of the notornis created a stir and fired the imaginations of many who were hitherto not in the least interested in ornithology. Now that the "tumult and shouting" have died away it may be appropriate to say a little more about the kind of country the bird occupies, some of its habits, and the chances of its existing in areas other than the one found.

I was one of the privileged few who, through the courtesy of the Department of Internal Affairs and generosity of the original finder, Dr. Orbell, were allowed to make a trip into the mountains of west Te Anau and study at close range the takahe and its environment. I had just missed the original trip on which the birds were discovered, so the chance of going in search of the mystery bird at a pleasant time of the year and in congenial company seemed almost too good to be true. And then came all the questions one asks oneself before undertaking a trip of this kind. The right clothing; what sleeping bag; what

THE photographs which appear on this page and on the cover of this issue of "The Listener" are the first ever taken of a baby notornis, and the first ever published. The photographer was J. H. SORENSEN, of Wellington, who will be remembered by many readers for his natural history studies, "Wild Life in the Sub-Antarctic," published serially in "The Listener" in 1946. Mr. Sorensen, who recently accompanied Dr. R. A. Falla and Dr. G. B. Orbell to the notornis country, brought back not only a unique series of photographs but a vivid account of the country in which they were taken. Part of his story appears below. The rest, along with more photographs, will be published in our next issue.

cameras; what equipment for collecting plants and insects should I take? The trip was reputed to be a hard one and here was I, all too soft, after a year's city life. However, things are seldom as bad as they seem at first glance and a dull cool morning in mid-January last saw me boarding the launch at Te Anau for the trip along the lake to the point where we would enter the bush on the western side. We were a cheerful and slightly excited company and there was much good-natured chaff concerning size of packs and individual tastes in clothing and equipment. Even the late arrival

of the member who was "not called early" could not dampen our spirits.

An "Extra"

Dr. Orbell and officers of Internal Affairs Department were already in the Takahe Valley, having made the trip earlier to establish the camp and transport some stores. I felt secretly glad that some, at least, of the stores were already carried in, for I had, as an extra, 14 pounds of wheat and maize in the bottom of my pack. This extra had been advised by an ornithological friend on the grounds that if the birds could be

induced to take such food it might help in keeping them out in the open for photography and general observations.

The journey up the lake was made in good time and soon we were ashore and adjusting our packs in preparation for the climb which was reputed to take about four hours. The balance of the stores was distributed and, owing to the attacks of myriads of sandflies and mosquitoes, no time was lost in getting away. Our guide took the lead and off we went in high spirits. But alas for our four-hour trip! The stream which leaves the Takahe Valley disappears into limestone caverns at the bottom of a huge gorge and only reappears near Lake Te Anau. Somewhere in the beech forest we crossed the hidden stream and, as we anticipated hearing it on our left after some hours of travelling, we kept bearing that way. Realisation that it must be far to our right only came when the day was far spent. Finally after many good-natured arguments and discussions we reached a huge limestone bluff and there lay the valley and camp some hundreds of feet below. A way was found down by retracing our steps