

# VOICE OF THE TUATARA

ENLARGED a hundred times he (she?) would make a suitable purveyor of thrills and chills to the space-fiction set. As it is, the only fear the tuatara succeeds in arousing is in the scaly breast of another tuatara, for as naturalist Reg. Williams noted in a



N.P.S. photograph  
REG. WILLIAMS

recent trip to the Aldermen Islands "a bit of quarrelling goes on among these chaps."

The Aldermen are a tiny group of rough, craggy islets off the east coast of Coromandel Peninsula, lying south-eastwards from Mercury Bay and midway between that inlet and Mayor Island. On the launch Swansea Bay Mr. Williams and party set out for the lonely islands, carrying with them their tape-recording gear. The treacherous rocks and dangerous waters caused the launch to stand off shore, while Mr. Williams at the head of a smaller party went ashore in a dinghy. They landed on the lowest corner of bush-covered Flat Island. It was the only possible anchorage, for everywhere else the cliffs plunged straight into the sea. The attraction of Flat Island was its population of tuataras—that strange, three-eyed remnant of ages long since fallen into fossilism. Reg. Williams even captured on his tape-recorder the voice of the tuatara—which, if not heard throughout the land, is at least surprisingly loud.

The party spent some nights on Sanctuary Island, which carries a prolific and interesting wild life. All of



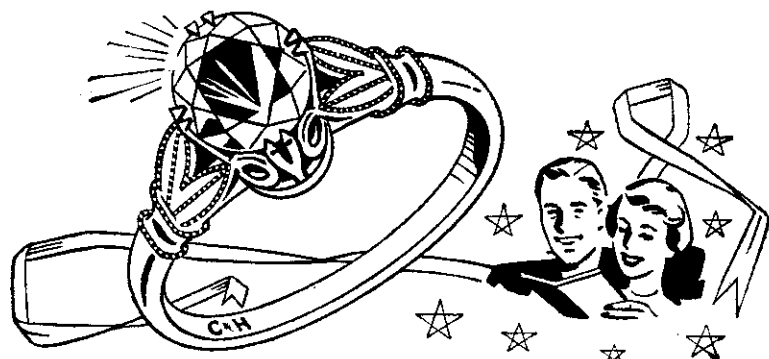
HEAD OF TUATARA—its voice is surprisingly loud

this rugged region is riddled with caves, tunnels and blow-holes.

Mr. Williams is well-known to YA and YZ listeners for his *World of Nature* talks. "Before I could walk I chased bugs," he says, but later on he tasted a bit of high life with his own aerial

trapeze troupe. An accident ended that and he settled down as a naturalist once more.

A Trip to the Aldermen Islands will be heard in 1YA's *Feminine Viewpoint* at 10.30 a.m. on December 3, and later from other YA and YZ stations.



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