nesting territories are being selected. These are long processes, involving quite a little flirtation with several different birds before the final mate is chosen. Nevertheless, it often happens that the final choice is the mate of the last season, and nests are sometimes placed within a few feet of the previous year's site. While the female bird builds the fragile, cup-shaped nest, the male sings loudly his monotonous, though cheerful, song from a neighbouring vantage point. Both birds assist in the incubation of the two or three sky-blue eggs, from which, in ten days, almost naked nestlings emerge. After the eggs hatch, the male no longer has time to sing, for he has to join his mate in searching for food for the ravenous young, which consume over two hundred beakfuls of insects a day during the nine days they spend in the nest. During the stages of nest-building, incubation, and feeding of the young, White-eyes defend the area around the nest or "territory" by attacking others of their kind, and when the young leave the nest, and the family party wanders farther afield, the birds are frequently attacked by aggressive parents at other nests. There are many casualties to eggs, nests, and young at early stages, and only about half the eggs laid eventually become fully fledged birds. Still fewer of such young birds survive a year; perhaps 10 per cent., but the White-eye is to be considered a very energetic breeder, producing perhaps three, and certainly two, broods a year during the months from October to March. So successful has the White-eye been, that in the ninety years since it first appeared in New Zealand it has risen to the position of the commonest New Zealand land bird. In some favoured gardens there are more than three pairs per acre in the breeding season, and in winter several hundred birds may be present.

In late summer the hard-worked parent birds moult their feathers and gain fresh plumage for the winter. With the moult, the flocks form up again, territory, nest, and mate are forgotten, and dozens of birds feed together, substituting a close-knit social existence for their individualistic lives during the breeding season, and wandering far afield. Yet some subconscious urge, lying dormant all winter, draws them back, in many cases to the same nest, tree, and same mate, when spring comes again. It is apparently in winter that occasional flocks, wandering over the countryside in search of food, have been carried out to sea in high winds and gone on flying till they "discovered" and colonized new islands. Perhaps the birds fly to sea of their own volition, but, however it happens, many must be lost at sea for every flock that finds land. Following upon the "conquest of New Zealand" by the White-eye in 1856, the bird has successfully colonized most of the outlying islands—the Chathams, some 400 miles away to the east, the Auckland Islands, 190 miles to the south, and Campbell Island, over 300 miles to the south east. At both Macquarie Island, 570 miles south, and the Kermadecs, 590 miles north of New Zealand, White-eyes have been reported, but apparently have not become permanently established.

The history of New Zealand birds during the past century has been a dismal story of extinctions, increasing rarity, and of diminishing numbers of native species in which the success of the diminutive White-eye stands out in pleasing contrast.