

"Whero, Island of Sea Birds," by L. E. Richdale; 16 pages, 7 photos. (Issued by the author, 23 Skibo Street, Dunedin. Price, 2/-.) Two pamphlets by Mr. Richdale have already been reviewed in these pages, and with the third the author states that they are to form the first parts of a volume on wild life in New Zealand to be completed by subsequent publications. Such popularly written but accurate accounts of different birds will form a valuable addition to our bird books, and as they are illustrated with such excellent photographs the full set when bound should form a handsome volume. The present booklet gives a short account of the island, which is 50 yards across and has 17 species of plants and 23 of birds, and of the life on it of the observer. Brief accounts of the life histories of four of the petrels are also given.

B. J. M.

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### PROGRESS REPORT ON THE MAGPIE INVESTIGATION.

In reply to the questionnaire in N.Z. Bird Notes, 15 replies have been received from members. Some exceedingly valuable information has thus been obtained, but the coverage is not sufficiently great to enable a satisfactory report to be produced. Please send in your notes even though it is just a statement that the birds occur or do not occur in your district.

In an attempt to map distribution more definitely than can be done from present information, 1600 students in the various teachers' training colleges have been approached and asked to answer any or all of the questions in the questionnaire.

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### WINTER FEEDING OF BIRDS.

This subject, I venture to suggest, may reveal certain interesting facts worth while recording if what I recorded this last winter is any guide and can be confirmed by other observers.

Not having the Little Blue Penguin as usual to devote attention to, I diverted attention to observing what foods the birds visiting my garden would take during the winter months, and obtained what appear to me to be surprising results.

Below is a table of the food distributed and of the birds that took it:—

Food.	Taken by.
1. Ordinary mixed bird seed	Hedge Sparrow, House Sparrow, Blackbird, Greenfinch, Yellow Hammer.
2. Whole barley - - -	House Sparrow for certain, but not certain which others.
3. Polished rice - - -	House Sparrow, Blackbird. Probably others. Surely something unusual for the Blackbird.
4. Unpolished rice - - -	Same as above.
5. Crushed polished rice	House Sparrow, Hedge Sparrow, Finches. Did not notice if Blackbirds took it.

6. Sago -     "     "     "     "     House Sparrow, Hedge Sparrow, Finches.
7. White sugar -     "     "     "     House Sparrow, Silvereyes.
8. Brown sugar -     "     "     "     Same as above.
9. Bread crumbs -     "     "     "     All birds, including Hedge Sparrow, though this latter bird did not take very much.
10. Small white millet seed - Readily taken by Blackbirds.

The matter of greatest interest, I venture to think, centres around the Hedge Sparrow, which, according to Oliver, is entirely an insect eater. The records confirm the opinion I have had for some time that the Hedge Sparrows main food is seeds, though it possibly feeds on insects during the breeding season, and though I watched carefully this breeding season I was unable to verify this. May be that it feeds on insects during the summer because of the absence of quantities of seed, in a like manner that the Tui feeds on insects during the winter. You will notice that this bird will eat a variety of food during the winter.

It was amusing to watch the Silvereyes settle among the other birds when only grain was put out, then to examine what the other birds were feeding on, look puzzled, and fly away. When sugar and bread crumbs were on the board they soon found out and made a good meal.

The first birds to leave were the House Sparrow and Blackbird, then the Finches, and lastly the Hedge Sparrow.

All these observations were taken from indoors, and when I was having a cup of tea about 4 p.m., thus the birds could be watched without being disturbed by me..

I am not at all certain if this subject is of any special interest from an ornithological point of view, yet as a study of the winter feeding habits of birds it may be a pleasant diversion from the more serious aspects of ornithology, and I should be interested to know if this has been previously attempted.

—E. W. Hursthouse.

## THE ROYAL ALBATROSS.

*Diomedea Epomophora Sandfordi.*

By L. E. RICHDALE.

Since November, 1936, my study of the sub-species of the Royal Albatross, breeding at Taiaroa Head, has proceeded steadily. The other sub-species, as far as is known, breeds only on the Campbell and Auckland Islands. Both forms, which are readily distinguishable from each other on the wing, may be seen off Taiaroa Head, although I have never known the latter to settle on shore. As far as I can ascertain, from 1919 to 1935 a pair of the smaller sub-species nested each year at Taiaroa Head, but on each occasion some mishap overtook the egg. It was not till definite action was taken at the end of 1937 that the birds received some protection and quickly increased in numbers to the extent of six breeding pairs.

Vandalism and misfortune still continued to take their toll till the 1941-42 season, when it was possible to give the birds absolute protection. That season five pairs each laid an egg, each egg duly hatched,