

BITTERN CATCHING EEL.—It was on February 16th that I was shown some of the skill used by the bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) in obtaining food. I had been watching one from no great distance as it slowly made its way through the water not very far from the bank. Suddenly the bird's long bill plunged into the water, which immediately became churned as an eel some two feet in length was brought into view. Without any delay the bird made for the bank and there proceeded to batter and shake the eel into submission. The captive, however, proved very difficult to subdue, and time and again wound its sinuous coils in a snake-like manner around the bird's neck, a proceeding to which the bittern took strong exception, as on each occasion the elongated neck feathers were ruffed out and a long leg was immediately raised to brush off the slippery coils. Eventually, continued rough treatment overcame the eel's resistance and before long its struggles had weakened sufficiently to allow the victor to swallow it head first.—S. D. Potter, Auckland.

BIRD LIFE IN THE UPPER SHOTOVER, Lake Lochnagar Region. More bird life than one would expect to see in the barren Central Otago back country was noted when Miss A. F. Edmond, a member of the Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club, and myself went for a tramp from Skippers to Lake Lochnagar, a distance of about 30 miles. We left Skippers on January 15, 1949, and arrived back there on January 19. The route was mainly over open grassy river flats with an occasional patch of scrub. The following bird life was recorded:—Black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), 4; paradise duck (*Tadorna variegata*), 18 adult, 4 young; harrier (*Circus approximans*), 6; S.I. oystercatcher (*Haematopus finschi*), 2 pairs; banded dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*), 6; pied stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), 3 dozen; black-fronted tern (*Chlidonias albigularis*), 30; small gulls, probably the black-billed (*Larus bulleri*), 18; kea (*Nestor notabilis*), 1 heard; rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*), 2; yellow-breasted tit (*Petroica m. macrocephala*), 3; pied fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*), 2; yellowhead (*Mohoua o. ochrocephala*), 7; brown creeper (*Finschia novaeseelandiae*), 10; goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), 4. The song thrush (*Turdus ericetorum*) and the blackbird (*T. merula*) were very common, and flocks of starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) were seen. A wild cat was noted on the track, and a musteler told us that cats and stoats take a big toll of the birds in this locality.—Mrs. E. M. Moore, D.N.F. Club.

NATIVE BIRD LIFE, POPOTUNOA, CLINTON.—On Popotunoa, a domed hill that overlooks Clinton, there is still a remnant of bush which was visited on August 28, 1948. Native birds recorded there were:—Two rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*) and about a dozen pied fantails (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*) were seen. Bellbirds (*Anthornis melanura*) and grey warblers (*Pseudogerygone igata*) were heard. An occasional pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) is recorded in this area.—Miss E. Sutherland, D.N.F. Club.