

LITERATURE CITED

- BUCKLEY, F. G. 1968. Behaviour of the Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot, *Loriculus galgulus*, with comparative notes on the Vernal Hanging Parrot *L. vernalis*. Ibis 110: 145-164.
- CHANCE, M. R. A. 1962. An interpretation of some agonistic postures; the role of "cut-off" acts and postures. Symp. Zool. Soc. Lond. 8: 71-89.
- CULLEN, J. M. 1958. Allo-, auto-, and heteropreening. Ibis 95: 121.
- DILGER, W. C. 1960. The comparative ethology of the African Parrot genus *Agapornis*. Tier-psychol. 17: 649-685.
- GOODWIN, D. 1956. The significance of some behaviour patterns of pigeons. Bird Study 3: 25-36.
- 1959. Observations on Blue-breasted Waxbills. Avicultural Magazine 65: 149-169.
- 1960. Observations on Avadavats and Golden-breasted Waxbills. Avicultural Magazine 66: 175-199.
- HARRISON, C. J. O. 1965. Allopreening as agonistic behaviour. Behaviour 25: 161-209.
- JACKSON, J. R. 1963. The nesting of Keas. Notornis 10: 319-326.
- POTTS, K. J. 1969. Ethological studies of the Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) in captivity: non-reproductive behaviour. Unpubl. B.Sc. (Hons.) project submitted to Victoria University of Wellington, N.Z.
- 1976. Comfort movements of the Kea, *Nestor notabilis* (Nestoridae). Notornis 23 (4): 302-309.
- K. J. POTTS, N.Z. Wildlife Service, Department of Internal Affairs, Private Bag, Wellington



SHORT NOTE

DIET OF NESTING LITTLE OWLS

On 18 December 1976 I found the nest of a pair of Little Owls (*Athene noctua*) containing two owlets, near Loburn, North Canterbury. The nest was 1 m above the ground in the hollow trunk of an old Willow (*Salix* sp.) which had a spreading canopy 20 m across. The owlets had pale yellow eyes and were covered in about 70% down and about 30% feathers; they flew 18 days later.

White owl droppings marked perches in *Macrocarpa* trees (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) in a radius of about 50 m around the nest. Perches were mainly about 1.5 m above the ground and several had prey remains below them.

In a small hole alongside the nest was a food cache containing 1 Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), 7 fledgling Starlings (*Sturnus vulgaris*), and 1 half-grown Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*); all had had their heads eaten off. Below perches near the nest were found remains of 1 Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), 1 adult Starling, 2 juvenile Starlings, 2 adult male Blackbirds (*Turdus merula*), 2 Song Thrushes, 1 adult Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*) and 1 young feral Pigeon (*Columba livia*). Surprisingly, no pellets could be found so I was unable to tell if the owls were also catching mice and insects.

Although the Little Owl looks smaller than the Morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*), 5 specimens had a mean weight of 182 g compared to 5 Moreporks which had a mean weight of 176 g (N. C. Fox pers. comm.). This may explain why the Little Owl appears to take heavier prey than the Morepork. Also many raptors, such as the Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), switch to larger prey during the nesting period.

I would like to thank other Raptor Association members for their help in identifying the 19 prey items.

MICHAEL RULE, 2 Watkins Place, Rangiora