

NOTORNIS

VOLUME SIX, NUMBER SIX : OCTOBER NINETEEN FIFTY-FIVE

MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY

An extract from the address of the President, H. R. McKenzie, at Dunedin

The rights and duties of the member are clearly and simply set out in the *Constitution of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand*. It is therefore proposed to deal no further with these, but to consider how each and every member can help the Society, help fellow members, enjoy the fun and interest in bird-watching, and create respect for this pursuit in public opinion.

Each member can help the Society. In his presidential address last year Mr R. B. Sibson stressed the importance of the part played in bird-watching by the amateur. Nearly all of our members are amateurs. Happily relations with the professionals, as Mr Sibson observes, are mutually cordial. A common loyalty to the Society is one of the greatest factors in ensuring success. Like the shareholders in a company each member puts in some capital. It may be in the form of scientific knowledge, the exploitation of some special opportunity, talent in art, photography or writing, the ability to note humble and common birds, the patience to secure by tireless vigil results valuable to all, the giving of services in organization and administration — all for the Society.

Help for our fellow members can take many forms. Some provide transport, some hospitality, some are free with their books, with help for the beginner, training for a group of watchers, or of individuals placed in specially favoured areas and anxious to learn. Travellers can make special efforts to meet members wherever they go, to their mutual benefit and pleasure. Many members have dropped out because of lack of contact with others, but where friendly help has been at hand this has not only been averted but prominent workers have been secured.

Membership is not of much use to anyone unless pleasure and interest are found in this hobby. People are not expected to support the finances of the Society as a kind of duty. Those who can go out into the field alone, or in parties, can study a wide range of birds, while those who are less able to get about can often take up special work on the common birds of the garden.

Respect for this pursuit is certainly growing. When members are seen travelling long distances regularly to study certain areas the general public is at first perhaps a little amused and scornful, then mildly curious, and, after hearing the aims and objects explained, quite approving and helpful. Many people who are not members go to much trouble to report matters of interest to their local bird students. Social and other bodies are now asking for bird pictures and talks. Vandalism is on the wane. Wanton destruction does not readily occur where watchers are working. In certain Government Departments there are keen and able members whose influence is helping to bring the Society into prominence. So is the pursuit of ornithology receiving a higher and higher measure of respect from the public.

It is therefore evident that there is no more important person than the working member, the 'Tommy Atkins', who is loyal to the Society, helpful to his fellows, enjoying the fun and interest of the game and putting this science on a high plane in public opinion.