

possibility of error for the photographer in a hide. These events were duly recorded on 35 m.m. Kodachrome. Questions which remain are:—

(a) How long do young Riflemen retain immature plumage? Could, for example, a late nestling of last season still be in juvenile plumage in November? (b) Is it possible for a Rifleman in what appears to be obviously immature plumage to be sexually mature?

M. F. SOPER

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FAIRY PRION CHICK ATTACKED BY TUATARA

On the night of 25/12/60, as I was walking down the footpath below the lighthouse on The Brothers, I heard a petrel chick crying. I had a torch with me and I soon noticed the tail of a Tuatara protruding from the burrow from which the sound was coming. The tail disappeared and shortly the Tuatara came out of the burrow with the small chick of a Fairy Prion (*P. turtur*) in its mouth. The chick was held by the tail and was crying loudly. The Tuatara stopped and watched me for a short while before making a dash for the taupata scrub about a yard away. As it reached the scrub I seized the Tuatara by the tail and pulled it out. It still held on to the chick until I squeezed it by the neck.

On examining the Prion nestling, I found its rear quarter was badly torn with most of the down missing. I called Mr. Staley and Mr. Clearly and explained what had happened. Then as we knew the burrow from which the chick had come we returned it, though its chances of survival were small.

At various times I have found around this lighthouse station a number of dead chicks with heads missing and parts of the body eaten.

A. WRIGHT

(It has often been suspected that Tuataras may maim and partly devour small petrel chicks (cf. Notornis VIII, 135). This seems to be the first eye-witness account of an actual assault.—Ed.)

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MOREPORKS IN A NESTING BOX

Moreporks (*Ninox novae-seelandiae*) were known as regular nocturnal visitors to the grounds of King's College, Middlemore; and on one occasion one was seen roosting by day in the gloomy heart of a large holm-oak. As there were no hollow trees in the vicinity where a Morepork might nest, a nesting box, measuring 15in. x 10in. x 9in., with hole of 3in. diameter, was hopefully put up in this tree in 1958. Starlings, Mynas, Opossums showed some interest, but it appears that the box was finally occupied by rats.

In 1959 the holm-oak had to be felled, so the nesting box was transferred to one of a row of *Cupressus macrocarpa*, some 300 yards away and re-erected at about 40ft. The same year the box was used by a pair of Starlings; and Starlings again appeared to have reclaimed it late in September, 1960. But on 2/10/60 both Starlings were high in the tree screaming abuse in the direction of the box, in the entrance of which a Morepork was visible. During the ensuing weeks a Morepork was usually in or near the box.

The first egg was laid on 20/10/60 and a second probably on the