

next day. The eggs measured 38.25 x 33 and 40 x 33.5 m.m. After 30 days the first egg hatched early in the morning of 19/11/60 and the second early the next morning. This rather long incubation period is corroborated by Moon (*Focus on N.Z. Birds*, p. 45) who gives 30-31 days. For the first few days the chicks were fed largely on insects, among which were tree-weta identified by their mouth parts, and huhu beetle. Gradually mice, young rats and birds were added to their diet. The remains of Housesparrow, Goldfinch, Chaffinch and Waxeye were identified from the box. At one examination, for instance, it contained four Housesparrows and a mouse; at another a Waxeye, a Goldfinch, two mice and bits of weta.

During the incubation period only one bird at a time occupied the box. Two days before the eggs hatched, the mate of the sitting bird began to roost in the dark recesses of a nearby tree during the daylight hours; and for a week after the chicks had hatched it continued to roost close at hand.

After a week the fluffy white down of the owlets gave way to a coarser grey down. Three weeks after hatching they were almost fully feathered on head, breast and back. They were still in the nest when term ended on 12/12/60.

Despite the noise of heavy roadmaking machinery and of rifle shots from the school range not twenty yards distant, the clutch was successfully reared. Our visits to the nest seemed to be taken as a matter of course. It seems that by thinning out the Housesparrow population and by taking rats and mice, Moreporks can serve a very useful purpose in a built-up area. Other naturalists may be interested to try a similar experiment for themselves in areas where there is a lack of natural nesting sites.

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COMMUNAL DISPLAY IN THE SHINING CUCKOO

Perusal of a recent note on this subject by M. Fitzgerald (*Notornis* IX, 9) prompts me to record a personal observation made at Bethells in January, 1951. Between 15th and 18th January Shining Cuckoos (*C. lucidus*) were observed daily in ones and twos, in trees around the homestead and feeding on caterpillars among the lupins on the sand-hills. About midday on the 16th and again on the afternoon of 17th January, parties, each of four cuckoos, were seen in a grove of pohutukawa trees. On both occasions the birds were very active, moving by short flights from branch to branch and from one tree to the next, usually keeping to the top layer of foliage. During the periods of five to ten minutes for which this activity continued the birds kept up a constant trilling chatter; at the end of each period they dispersed. On the first occasion the cuckoos were the only birds on the tree, but on the second occasion White-eyes, Housesparrows and a Chaffinch were also present. I noted at the time that two of the cuckoos were heavily barred on the whole of the undersurface, but the barring of the other two appeared browner and more mottled, except on the sides of the body where the bars were darker and more regular.

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