

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

An important analysis of the taxonomic status of introduced passerine birds in New Zealand has recently been published by Professor Gunther Niethammer of Bonn. "Differences in size or colouration between European and New Zealand birds could not be found, on the contrary, still to-day the latter agree exactly with the European populations of their respective species. Possible exceptions may be a House Sparrow population at Maraekakaho (North Island) and one of the Redpoll in the southern part of the South Island near Invercargill. For 7 species it could be proved that the New Zealand birds stem from British stock, as they agree subspecifically with the populations found in Great Britain."

Reference: NIETHAMMER, G. 1971. Zur Taxonomie europaischer, in Neuseeland eingeburgerter Vogel. *Journal fur Ornithologie* 112 (2): 202-226, tables 1-18.

Another paper of importance has come from our President, Mr F. C. Kinsky. In it he demonstrates the consistent presence of paired ovaries in the Kiwi and details the occurrence of this condition in 86 other species of birds belonging to 16 different orders, despite the text-book statement that "Normally in birds, as opposed to other vertebrates, only the left ovary and oviduct reach functional development." In kiwis, it is shown, the right ovary (as well as the left) is functional and successful ovulation from it is a normal occurrence. However, only the left oviduct is functional in kiwis and vestigial right oviducts occur only rarely. From the evidence obtained during his study, Mr Kinsky believes that the reduction of the right oviduct in birds might well have preceded the reduction of the right ovary during their evolutionary history. Mr Kinsky concludes with a useful suggestion: "If normal sexing routine in birds included the examination of the right side of the body cavity in addition to the usual examination of the left side, additional species (and additional orders) with paired ovaries might well be found."

Reference: KINSKY, F. C. 1971. The consistent presence of paired ovaries in the Kiwi (*Apteryx*) with some discussion of this condition in other birds. *Journal fur Ornithologie* 112 (3): 344-357, figs 1-5, tables 1-4.

Due to appear in *Notornis* during 1972 are important papers on field identification and distribution of the two prions *Pachyptila belcheri* and *P. desolata*, on the breeding biology of the Rook, on Fijian birds including the little-known Fiji Peregrine, and two notable contributions on the breeding, establishment, dispersal and distribution of the Spur-winged Plover in New Zealand.

As this issue of *Notornis* goes to press Archie Blackburn, Assistant Editor of *Notornis* and former President of the OSNZ, has gone into hospital in Gisborne for observation. All members and his many friends will want to wish him a speedy and lasting recovery.