

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

ON READING AND WRITING IN THE JOURNAL

From time to time, in the pages of this journal, we shall offer reviews of books in fields of natural history other than ornithology which is, supposedly, the principal interest of readers of *Notornis*. Few of us are so specific in our appreciation of Nature that we fail to be moved by or impressed with the sights, sounds and sensations afforded by the marvellous diversity and activity of other forms of animal and plant life about us. Often, however, we need an authoritative guide to help us to explore more fully something which has attracted our interest. As I have said often, we, in New Zealand, suffer in many instances from having inadequate works of reference for the identification and further study of many of the obvious forms of animal life, in particular, and of those that do exist there are some notable examples of how the publisher has done a disservice to his public in allowing books of subsequently recognised dubious merit to come into unsuspecting hands. We need better books on identification, life histories and general biology of such groups as shellfish and insects, to think of two obvious ones, but we also need to be awakened to the potential of interest in other neglected or apparently less attractive creatures such as spiders, crabs or ants. One such book, very welcome in this way and written by those who know their subject, is reviewed in this issue of *Notornis* and we trust that bird watchers will welcome it and broaden their horizons during their field activities, perhaps even adding to our still expanding knowledge of these fascinating and not so abhorrent animals.

Naturally, a departure from strictly words about birds, although quite in line with what one may read in *The Ibis* or any journal which wishes to keep its readers broadly informed, leads me to make another point with some feeling.

In the year and a bit during which your Editor has held office he has received both brickbats and bouquets, sometimes together and sometimes separately, and, let me say, both have been and will continue to be welcome. However, for those who say, let's have less science and more popular articles in *Notornis* or more Short Notes and less long papers, let me say just this. The editor does not *write* the journal. He can only take what is offered to him (although he does, more often than he wishes, solicit material from those close to him). Whatever is sent in for publication *will* be considered, whether it is popular, scientific, long-winded or (editor's delight) short and pithy. But it must be sent in! There is room for a wide range of interests in the pages of *Notornis* and no one need feel that an offering from his (or her) own hand would be turned away without proper consideration.

Understandably, many possessors of worthwhile observations from field work or of ideas stimulated by previously-published articles may be reticent about trying to get into print. Writing is not easy.

As an editor, I beg you not to be afraid. We, Regional Representatives, Editors, fellow members of the OSNZ, are all here to help and very willing to do so. We want to see you getting things on paper so, please, do not feel that because *Notornis* does sometimes seem heavy with the names and doings of professional ornithologists that you, the amateur ornithologist, bird-watcher, call yourself what you will, need be hesitant.

As an editor my hours are fuller than most people might believe so how about following this line towards getting yourself into *Notornis*? Have a chat with your Regional Representative as to how you might write up your work (he should know the local scene well enough) and, then, heed his comments on your first draft (which you should show to him and one or two others as well); now tidy it up following, please, the "Instructions to Authors" printed in the back of *Notornis* and send it in. There is no favouritism for the big names or the ponderous title. The Editor is a reader of *Notornis* too and pays his subscription to the OSNZ like any one else. He wants to have something to enjoy in each issue for his money just as you do.

REVIEWS

New Zealand Spiders. An Introduction, by R. R. & L. M. Forster. Pp. 1-254, 164 drawings and black-and-white photographs, 132 coloured plates. Auckland and London: Collins, 1973, \$10.60.

At last we have a natural history book written by someone indubitably qualified to do so. Dr R. R. Forster, Director of the Otago Museum, is not only one of the foremost authorities on several groups of the Arachnida but with his considerable background of museum experience, is particularly well suited to know how best to present what the public needs in the realms of natural history writing. Following the success of their book *Small Land Animals of New Zealand* in 1970, Dr Forster and his wife have again teamed up to produce a fine addition to New Zealand literature and something that will be appreciated far beyond New Zealand itself.

Spiders may not be regarded by the majority of people as beautiful creatures. W. S. Bristowe, in his New Naturalist volume *The World of Spiders* (1958), has given a most enlightening account of spiders in superstition and imagination and his delightful, scholarly approach would, I am sure, convert many who have hitherto regarded these animals as loathsome, frightening, or merely unpleasant. The Forsters' book will do more than this. It is a beautiful book, copiously illustrated by colour and black-and-white photographs and with line-drawings of unusual style and exceptional quality, done by Mr Barry Weston, which will convince many a reader that spiders are, like this book which depicts them, not only beautiful in themselves but have a peculiar fascination all their own which is not based on dread or superstition but on the revelation of their structure and habits so well given by the authors of this fine work. Bristowe's book should, none the less, be read in conjunction with the New Zealand book since the subject matter of each is complementary to a useful extent. We are blessed, in fact, with quite an array of spider books — Gertsch's *American Spiders* (1949), Comstock's *The Spider Book* (1967), Savory's *The Biology of Spiders* (1928), *The Arachnida* (1935), *Spiders and other Arachnids* (1964), and McKeown's *Australian Spiders* (1951), to name but a few which can be recommended for further reading. The Forsters' book is superior to most of these, certainly in its wealth of illustration and local relevance.

The first part of *New Zealand Spiders* discusses the structure, behaviour and life history of spiders with special reference to local examples and also introduces the reader to some close relatives of spiders, the mites, false-scorpions, and harvestmen, the latter group having been particularly well monographed for New Zealand by Dr Forster himself. The second part of the book considers the details of various natural groups or families of spiders found in this country through the range of trapdoor spiders, wolf, lynx, jumping, crab, orbweb, cobweb, and a host of others, to the "midget" spiders on which Dr Forster has done notable taxonomic research. Especially welcome is a section on poisonous spiders, dealing particularly with the Katipo spider and dispelling some of the myths that surround this quiet and retiring denizen of our shores.

The historical introduction reveals something of importance also to us, the significant role that amateur workers have played in helping to unravel the threads of the natural history of New Zealand spiders. Beginning with Llewellyn Powell, originally a Christchurch medical practitioner, in 1871, we find ourselves indebted to, amongst others, R. Gillies, farmer and businessman of Oamaru and Dunedin, P. Goyen, inspector of schools in Otago, George Chamberlain, industrial chemist of Wellington, C. L. Wilton, sheepfarmer of the Wairarapa, as well as to the Comte Raymond de Dalmas, a wealthy Parisian naturalist who visited New Zealand in 1912 for salmon fishing and also to Professor B. J. Marples, a founder-member of the Ornithological Society of N.Z., who became intrigued with spiders during his student days in England, later making notable studies here. It is of interest also to recall that T. H. Savory, that distinguished chronicler of the Arachnida, stated in his history of arachnology, *Spiders, Men, and Scorpions* (1961) — "The true founder of Arachnology in New Zealand was A. T. Urquhart" who published 19 papers on spiders between 1882 and 1897 while farming near Auckland. Both his stamping ground and his descendants at Karaka are well known to many New Zealand ornithologists.

Although this is not the place for a detailed criticism of the Forsters' contribution, it is tempting to make a comparison with the most recent similar book produced in the Australasian region, that by Densey Clyne (1969), *A Guide to Australian Spiders. Their Collection and Identification*, which is also notable for its wealth of colour illustrations (236), less detailed, however, and not so gloriously presented as in the Forsters' book. One serious deficiency in *New Zealand Spiders* is at once revealed, highlighted by a study of Miss Clyne's book. Despite the fact that it is still too early to list the spider fauna of New Zealand at the species level, "barely one quarter of the two thousand or more species" having been described so far, there is still too little help for those who wish to identify the spiders they find. For these the reader must work from the keys to families given on pages 46 to 51 of the first part of Dr Forster's technical work *The Spiders of New Zealand*, of which three volumes have so far appeared as Bulletins of the Otago Museum (I, 1967; II, 1968; III, 1970), each priced at about half the cost of the popular account. One must otherwise rely heavily on the illustrations for identification, and it will be found, in fact, that many genera, families or groups of spiders do have a natural posture or overall stance which helps to place them taxonomically.

The Forsters share their expertise in photography with their readers and those who wish to emulate their success in this field will find some sound advice, of application to other groups of small land animals, in the section on photography in the concluding chapter "How to find and study spiders." Following the instructions in this chapter, readers will quickly begin to wonder if spider-watching (to use Bristowe's expression) is not as enjoyable a pastime as bird-watching. It may be a long time before we have an Arachnological Society of N.Z. or even a Royal N.Z. Forest and Spider Protection Society but I prophesy that New Zealand spiders will have their champions and they will have the Forsters to thank for it!

E. W. D.

we take our leave; indeed it is with very mixed feelings that we do so and join the ranks of overseas members of the Society.

My forwarding address will be 211, Lexden Road, Colchester, England, and I will naturally be delighted to hear from any member.

J. A. FOWLER

"Manu Korero,"
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5 March 1974



ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA

The review printed on pp. 284-285 of *Notornis* 20 (3), September 1973, was inadvertently separated from its introductory paragraph in "From the Editor's Desk" in *Notornis* 20 (2): 187, June 1973.

Classified Summarised Notes in *Notornis* 20 (4), December 1973:

- p. 362, Wrybill line 5. For say read saw;
- p. 368, Grey Ternlet, line 1, for Breet read Brett;
N.I. Kaka, line 1, for Parau read Parua;
- p. 369, S.I. Kaka, line 7, for Patison read Paterson;
- p. 372, Silvereye, line 4, for Nov 772 read Nov 72.

In A. J. Baker's "Genetics of plumage variability in the Variable Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*)" *Notornis* 20 (4): 330-345, December 1973, there has been an inversion of Figure 3. The corrections are — 1 and 2 should be reversed; 3 and 4 should be reversed; 5, 6 & 7 should be 7, 6 & 5; 8, 9 & 10 should be 10, 9 & 8.

We regret the omission of a line from the letter from Mr Nigel Penniket, "Birds in Exotic Forests" *Notornis* 20 (3): 283, September 1973. At the end of line 9 of paragraph 2, the words "of State forests and the ecological boundaries" [of exotic plantations] should be inserted. The alteration of the writer's sense was unintentional. We apologise.



NEW AND FORTHCOMING

Mike Imber has recently published "The food of Grey-faced Petrels (*Pterodroma macroptera gouldi* (Hutton)), with special reference to diurnal vertical migration of the prey." *Journal of Animal Ecology* 42 (3): 645-662, October 1973.



Allan Baker has more oystercatcher papers coming up — "Criteria for ageing and sexing New Zealand oystercatchers" in the *N.Z. Journal of Marine and Freshwater Research*, and "Melanin pigmentation in the dorsal plumage in New Zealand oystercatchers" in the *N.Z. Journal of Zoology*, Prey-specific feeding methods of New Zealand oystercatchers in *Notornis* as well as a contribution in the American journal *Evolution* and Ecological and behavioural evidence for the systematic status of New Zealand oystercatchers recently published in *Royal Ontario Museum Life Sciences Contributions*, No. 96.



F. C. Kinsky and P. C. Harper have produced an illustrated guide to the seabirds of the New Zealand Region due to appear as the next special issue of *Tuatara*, the journal of the Biological Society of the Victoria University of Wellington.