

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.