

THE KERMADECS EXPEDITION 1966/67

Members of the Kermadecs Expedition returned to Auckland by HMNZS 'Kaiaia' on 29th January, 1967, all in good health and full of enthusiasm for the work they had been engaged upon, and well satisfied that they had made the most of their opportunities. Unstinted praise was expressed for the qualities of leadership and organising ability displayed by the leader of the Expedition, D. V. Merton, Senior Field Officer of Wildlife Division, and for his capable lieutenant, C. R. Veitch, also a Field Officer of Wildlife Division. We look forward keenly to the published results of their work, which consisted largely of breeding studies of many species of tropical seabirds which occur nowhere else in the New Zealand Subregion. Nothing is so far known of the breeding biologies of some of the birds which members of the party had under close observation for eleven weeks.

Since publication of the list of sponsoring members and donors published in 'Notornis' XI, pp. 192-3, the following amounts have come to hand and are gratefully acknowledged:

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— A.B.



LETTERS

FOODS OF THE PUKEKO

The article by A. L. K. Carroll (*Notornis* 13, 133) is interesting and informative in that it gives an account of foods taken over such a wide range of the habitats of the present day. It is to me rather remarkable that other foods, which could perhaps be classed as "fringe" foods, were not found. It appears that there have been some changes in diet since the time of Buller and the earlier years of this century. This could be due partly to changes of tastes in the birds and partly to modification of the habitat of earlier days. From 1909 to 1915 I lived at Wayby, North Auckland, where there were many large and small raupo (*Typha angustifolia*) swamps. Here the raupo was the main diet in the whole district. In the more shallow swamps the upper parts of the plant would litter the water, the lower part having been eaten as described by Buller. At that time there was little pasture available at Wayby and that very rough. The swamps were later drained and good pastures established. The Pukeko, whether because of this or some other reason then staged a population explosion and took to the foods of the open land. However, it is still surprising to me that in the Wildlife surveys no raupo was found in stomach contents. Some may have been present in macerated form, as provided for at the bottom of page 140, but it appears that it can be no longer a staple item even where it is still present.