

REVIEW

Dusky Bay, by A. C. Begg and N. C. Begg. Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd., 55/-.

Even in a land as 'young' as New Zealand, local history has many facets. The authors of '*Dusky Bay*' are brothers who have made the study of a remote corner of the South Island their hobby and recreation. Although they do not claim to be professional historians, their researches have extended far to museums and collections in Europe and America. The result is an elegant compilation which puts students and naturalists deeply in their debt.

'*Dusky Bay*' is generously illustrated; and its value is enhanced by reproductions of sketches by Cook and Henry; and of paintings by Hodges and George Forster. Ornithological historians will particularly welcome the reproduction in colour of a selection of Forster's paintings of birds. Two which notably catch the eye are those of Piopio and Broad-billed Prion. But the critical scrutineer will have his queries. Surely Latham was right in identifying *Parus urostigma* as Brown Creeper; for to a European this species is obviously titlike; and some taxonomists have placed Brown Creeper together with Yellowhead and Whitehead in the Paridae. Surely, too, it was a Brown Creeper that George Forster painted. The dates are significant. On 14/3/1770 the Endeavour only glimpsed Dusky Bay without entering. Three years later the Resolution's visit was from March 25 to April 29, by which season most Long-tailed Cuckoos have left New Zealand and only a few elusive laggards remain. Thus the Forsters' chance of obtaining a Long-tailed Cuckoo at Dusky Bay would have been of the slightest.

The authors provide a commentary on the birds which they themselves have found in Dusky Bay. If their Little Black Shag was correctly identified, it must be a unique record for Fiordland, as the bird was far from its normal haunts in so far as they are known. But the species appears to be extending its range.

Why is the Tui now so scarce in Fiordland? Admittedly it was tasty in a pie to sailors and sealers hungry for fresh protein; but their hunting would have touched only the fringe of a vast habitat and their bag would have been only a fraction of the numbers which early explorers reported. Moreover, it was still plentiful in Henry's time. In view of what has recently happened on Big South Cape Island, Reischek's account of a visitation of Black Rats on p. 171 may offer the key to the puzzle.

All lovers of the New Zealand scene and all dedicated collectors of local histories should rejoice in this book.

— R.B.S.