

Birds and Aircraft: A Problem at Auckland's New International Airport, by E. K. Saul. Jnl. Roy. Aeronautical Soc. v. 71, No. 677: May 1967. Reviewed from Wildlife Pub. 91, Dept. Internal Affairs, Wellington, N.Z.

This paper highlights the problems caused by building an airport right in the middle of the rich feeding areas of anything up to 30,000 godwits, knots, oystercatchers, stilts, dotterels, swans, ducks and gulls. Into the bargain it was near a rubbish dump frequented by thousands of gulls. Control methods aimed at preventing aircraft striking flying birds are discussed: ways of scaring birds away, attempts made to stop people disturbing wader flocks, so that they will not fly over the runway, and the nearest dump has been closed. To prevent birds roosting on the runways at high tide, H. R. McKenzie and R. B. Sibson suggested alternative roosts being provided, and two artificial roosts were built nearby. One is an island of 6 acres, composed of sand, shell, black rock and crushed concrete and was proving highly effective.

Of scaring methods, daily sweeps of the airport by vehicles are made, some shooting having a marked preventive effect. Long grass is recommended to make roosts unattractive, and a model aeroplane designed to look like a hawk has been tested. In this paper (or for that matter any other on the subject I have read) no mention is made of the old-fashioned way of driving birds away with a man and a dog. Perhaps it would not work for long, but one would at least like to know that such an elementary (and cheap) idea has been thought of and tried.

— J.M.C.



Ecological Adaptations for Breeding in Birds, by David Lack, Methuen & Co. Ltd. N.Z. Price \$11.55.

There are few authors expert or lucky enough to write three important books in a row. Dr. Lack has achieved this hat-trick without depending on luck. The main hypothesis supporting this book is, in his own words:—

“I consider that all the breeding habits and other features discussed . . . have been evolved through natural selection so that, in the natural habitats where they were evolved the birds concerned produce, on average, the greatest possible number of surviving young.”

It is, in every sense of the old phrase, an encyclopaedic work, and for that reason alone is worth possessing. It is also an impressive synthesis, but the extent to which this synthesis carries conviction depends more upon the number of cases about which Dr. Lack argues so plausibly than the extent to which individual ones are convincing in themselves. Thus your acceptance of the main theme tends to increase as the book progresses, though even at the end you are left with the impression of a large number of exceptions to the general theory, a feeling that alternative explanations are frequently possible (as in clutch size in waterfowl and hole-nesting species) and, as a corollary, a suspicion that natural selection operates in a more complicated way than Dr. Lack gives the impression it does. But it is this very combination of conforming and non-conforming cases that makes the book so stimulating and a spur to research.