

kowhai in full bloom; occasionally seen and heard other times of year; 16/1/50, only one heard at McKennas Creek, 2m. Bellbird: Common in surrounding districts. Greenfinch: 17/7/49, several at McKennas Creek; 21/6/50, 1, and 25/6/50, several seen in town, also at Coal Creek, 5m. Chaffinch: Common. Goldfinch: 15/7/49, common near Orowaiti R.; 5/6/50, one in Buller Gorge. Yellowhammer: 15/7/49, fairly common near Orowaiti R. Song Thrush and Blackbird: Fairly common. Hedge Sparrow: Occasionally seen about the house. Skylark: 15/7/49, heard singing at Orowaiti R., where frequently to be seen and heard. Starling: Common at Orowaiti River; May, 1949, many large flocks seen coming upstream each evening before dusk. Amongst others the following birds have also been reported: Weka, blue duck, grey duck, rifleman, kaka, and possibly kiwi, also red-fronted parakeet. These have yet to be confirmed at first hand.—V. M. Readman, Westport.

WOOD PIGEONS EATING SHOOTS AND LEAVES.—At Te Araroa I was in the garden, about December 23, 1949, when a wood pigeon fluttered across and settled on the top of a slender Lawsoniana. In a few seconds it was joined by another, then another until there were five. They picked the little green shoots for a while, then one by one they came to an apple tree not more than six yards from where I sat on the grass. They made a real meal of apple leaves and didn't seem to bother about me at all, though they must have seen me. Their close proximity gave me an excellent opportunity of seeing their beautiful plumage. On another evening they came back and all five sat on the Lawsoniana bending down its slender top and swaying up and down, picking at the shoots.—M. M. Taylor, Gisborne.

IRRUPTION OF BLACK SWANS.—For the last two weeks (first two weeks in June) hundreds of black swans have frequented the Manukau Harbour, near the mouth of the Big Muddy Creek. The first day I saw six, second day 38, the third day 536 and since then the numbers have increased so much I find it impossible to count them through the telescope. During the years I have lived here I have never seen swans in this locality before.—Mrs. J. Howes, Laingholm, via New Lynn.

CORRESPONDENCE.

SHINING CUCKOO.

(To the Editor.)

Sir,—It was not my intention to reply to J. S. Watson and P. C. Bull's summing up of my observations (*Forest and Bird*, 55, 5, 1940) in your issue of April, 1950, but so many friends have written to me suggesting a reply I do so to please them.

From 1909 to 1924 my life was spent breaking in a block of native bush about 16 miles back from Opotiki, Bay of Plenty. Access to my section was by bridle track, six miles of which was through virgin bush, another two miles through newly felled and grassed bush land, with odd pieces of native bush, ideal breeding places for many birds, including the grey warbler and the shining cuckoo. My children and I knew our native birds intimately, including the blue wattled crow (and knew where to find its habitat) as well as seeing flocks of kakas and many a kaka's nest while I was felling bush, not to mention kererua, tuis and bellbirds in abundance. I had a piece of native bush reserved within fifty yards of my homestead with native trees and exotic hedges, together with one hundred fruit trees between this and my house, the whole making a splendid field for observation.

All those years I kept a yearly record of when the first shining cuckoo was seen (not heard)—the usual date was September (often heard earlier), occasionally early October, sufficient time for the cuckoo to lay her eggs and for the young to be hatched by late November. My wife and family all learned to recognise our native birds—the children used the term "pip pip" for the shining cuckoo, which, together with the long-tailed cuckoo, was a regular visitor. On at least one occasion a