

In Rotorua, 16/1/50, one.—(C.J.L.) 22/5/50 plentiful in and around Tauranga (M.H.); Mt. Maunganui, first pair noticed on 30/9/48, seen at intervals, and on 12/8/49 were nest hunting, lately seen several together, 18/1/50.—(A.H.W.) Palmerston North railway yards, 11/8/50, two; Feilding, 12/6/50, two.—(E.D.)

WHITE-BACKED MAGPIE (*Gymnorhina hypoleuca*).—Numerous near Chateau Tongariro, 23/3/50.—(L.W.McC.) Whakahoro, Wanganui River, according to reports, first appeared in 1948, present 9/5/50 in fair numbers.—(J.M.M., W.P.M.) Present in Te Pohue district.—(D.H.B.). Waihi River, Temuka, 7/10/50, two half-grown young, one in nest and one in nearby poplar.—(C.S.P.) Just north of Oamaru, 26/9/49, furthest south seen recently.—(K.J.W-M.) Kartigi, 28/8/49, one seen; Merton, Otago, 28/8/49, one seen; Nelson trip, 3-19/1/50, 178 birds noted, 17 of these seen between Christchurch and Kaikoura, 21 between Lewis Pass and Christchurch, and the remainder between Christchurch and Dunedin.—(L.E.W.)

BLACK-BACKED MAGPIE (*Gymnorhina tibicen*).—Near Clive, 28/4/50, one.—(D.H.B.) Three more Wairarapa records.—(J.M.C.)

ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*).—Waiorongomai, Western Lake, 26/2/50, flock c. 54, feeding in paddeck.—(R.H.D.S.)

CORRESPONDENCE.

EUROPEAN STARLING.

(To the Editor.)

Sir,—For some years I have been making a special study of the starling, and I would like to have comparative information from those parts of the Southern Hemisphere into which man has introduced it, i.e., South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. In Britain the first clutches are laid during April 15-30, which would be October 15-30 in the Southern Hemisphere. If any readers can give information from particular nests on the following points, I shall be most grateful.

When is the nesting time, as indicated by laying of eggs, hatching, feeding of young, and date when young fly? What is the size of the completed clutch, and of the brood of nestlings? This is the most important point. How common are second broods, i.e., being fed in the nest at Christmas or later? Where is the starling absent, uncommon, or abundant, both as a nesting bird in spring and as a winter visitor? I particularly wish to know how far it has spread as a nesting and wintering species, and whether the advance now seems to be halted.

I shall be very glad indeed to correspond direct with any readers who are interested enough to make these observations, or indeed any others on the starling. Readers will appreciate that their own observations, however small, will all help to piece together the more complete picture of the starling's nesting habits and present distribution.—(DR.) ROBERT CARRICK, Natural History Department, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.

REVIEWS.

“Introduced Mammals of New Zealand: An Ecological and Economic Survey,” by Dr. K. A. Wodzicki. Royal 8vo., full cloth, 250 pages, 4 appendixes. Line and half-tone illustrations. 12/6.

This excellent volume gives an authoritative review of the 29 species of animals that have become established in New Zealand, with particular reference to their ecological and economic position, which, in some instances has a bearing, indirectly or directly, on the numbers of

introduced birds. It is of interest to note in returns supplied by opossum trappers that considerable numbers of blackbirds are caught in traps set for these marsupials and other birds mentioned include the song thrush, quail, magpie, morepork, kiwi, hawks and to a much lesser degree, pigeon, weka, robin, and tomtit, but the author comments: "The fact that only a few native birds are mentioned as caught in traps may be obscured by a reluctance on the part of trappers to mention such an occurrence." On the other hand, *animals caught, other than opossums*, may constitute as much as 24 per cent. of the total number of opossums caught, rats being the most numerous but with stoats, ferrets and cats, all predators of birds, well represented.

A passage in the introductory chapter, under the sub-heading of birds, states: "With regard to birds, three main problems seem at present to be of interest to the practical ecologist: (1) The present status of native birds; (2) questions concerning native and imported game birds; (3) the present status of introduced birds. In addition, some native birds such as the kea, the black shag or the harrier, present special problems and require special studies because their present ecological niches interfere with man's various economic interests. The native birds have an amenity value which is of first importance to many to whom the problem of conservation of national resources is of interest. The present and future status of feathered game has an economic importance because it involves the interests of thousands of sportsmen. Finally, the remaining introduced birds, although they seem to have lost the status of pests which some had attained in the last century, present several items of interest to ecologists. It is obvious that most of the problems are interdependent and no study embracing the whole problem has yet been attempted. The time allotted to this survey did not permit any attention being directed to these problems, but the hope is expressed that further work on some of them will be undertaken in the future."

The need for a scientific approach to control problems in relation to introduced animals and for further research work in that connection is emphasised. All interested in the wild life of New Zealand will find this volume a most readable and informative one.—(R.H.D.S.)

Birds, by R. A. Falla; illus. by F. Mervyn Taylor. A Primary School Bulletin.

The Education Department is to be congratulated on publishing such a booklet in furtherance of their policy of making the best available to school children. Forty birds are described, 20 in some detail, and information is accurate and precisely presented, yet in a very readable style. It has been carefully chosen and describes the salient features of each bird for the school child. It is pleasing to see that some common imported birds are included, as children do not readily distinguish these from native birds (though the distinction could well have been mentioned in more cases). The drawings are charming, well drawn and are a fine example of scraper-board technique. Some more indication of relative size might have been given and though the rifleman, for example, is poor, the majority are excellent. In particular, the nesting tui and fantail, the pukeko, banded dotterel and crested grebe are especially pleasing. Booklets of this type will help to stimulate an interest in birds and should augur well for the future of ornithology.—J.M.C.

The scientific names of birds mentioned in the text in this issue (apart from those in the summarised classified notes) will be found listed in the latter compilation.

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