

This contribution comes at a time when a renewed interest is being taken in the evolutionary and zoogeographical relationships of New Zealand birds. It will stimulate this interest and will in itself become a classical study.—E.G.T.

How to Choose and Use Field Glasses, by E. M. Nicholson, British Trust for Ornithology Field Guide, Number Two, 1950. Price, 9d.

A good pair of binoculars is an indispensable accessory to the bird-watcher, as it facilitates identification of more distant subjects and brings out details of habits that otherwise are missed except to those fortunate individuals who possess the eyes of a hawk. To the average person, however, bird-watching without the aid of a good pair of field-glasses is like looking at birds in semi-darkness, so much is not seen that a new world is opened up when binoculars are used.

The title of this field guide indicates its scope and anyone contemplating the purchase of field glasses should first of all read this little pamphlet, which sets out the essential qualities of a satisfactory pair. The information contained therein may save a purchaser from obtaining glasses that may be of little use for the purpose in view. Copies can be obtained from the British Trust for Ornithology, 91 Banbury Road, Oxford.

Incidentally, further field guides to be published this year by the trust includes one on nest boxes and one on recording observations.—R.H.D.S.

Some Thoughts on The Growth of Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) Populations. (David E. Davis, *Auk* 67: 4.)

This paper deals briefly with the theoretical rate of growth of populations in what might be termed "ecological vacuums," i.e., where there is no reduction factor. Such growths portrayed graphically, typically show the well-known "logistic curve" characterised by slow initial growth, increasing to rapid growth at a nearly uniform rate which then lessens as the population becomes stable. The paper endeavours to show that growth of starling populations in the U.S.A., where the bird is rapidly increasing its range, fits in with this typical curve.

There is a very large literature on rate of growth of populations of many types, notably protozoa and bacteria, and for birds for which however, it is usually difficult to obtain sufficient information. However, there is in New Zealand a species which would lend itself readily to an investigation of this kind. The myna is rapidly expanding its northern range and is beginning to penetrate Northland, which may well prove an "ecological vacuum" to it. Study of population growths is often complicated by the presence of predators, which increase with the prey and eventually reduce it, to its own detriment, and by the influx into the study area of populations from other areas. For the myna in Northland (when it reaches there), the former is probably negligible, and the latter is more or less controlled, i.e., an influx can come from one direction only. It is suggested that an annual population study of a small area, including a township would be of extreme value, and of course the rate of progress northward of the bird is another matter that could well be documented by northern members. Expansion in the Waikato suggests that progress of established colonies may be of the order of some 10 miles annually.—J.M.C.

PIGEON EATING WILLOW LEAVES.—On September 24, 1950, at Reikorangi, on the bank of the Waikanae River, I saw four native pigeons make their afternoon meal off the new leaves of the willow. Knowing that there were no berries in the locality, my curiosity was well rewarded on seeing one of the birds settle and get busy on the leaves of the willow. Each bird had a tree to itself.—W. Knight, Parapaumu Beach.