

FOCUS ON NEW ZEALAND BIRDS

By G. J. H. MOON, A.R.P.S. — *Cameo Press, 1957*

This is a book which all N.Z. bird-lovers will wish to have on their shelves beside the volumes of Guthrie-Smith, Stead, Buddle and Turbott. The author is an expert naturalist in the good old-fashioned sense. He watches and photographs birds for the fun of the thing — or the love of the game — and because they are a challenge to his skill.

By profession a vet., he has a wide clientele of farmer-friends, who quickly tell him of strange birds appear on their land and often find the nests which later he is able to photograph. Though most of the birds whose portraits appear in this book occur in the vicinity of Warkworth, the author has visited Little Barrier to obtain pictures of Red-fronted Parakeet and Whitehead; and the Firth of Thames and Manukau Harbour in search of waders.

The book contains many remarkable pictures. Especially noteworthy are series on Kingfisher, Morepork and Reef Heron which illustrate how superbly by using modern apparatus, the master craftsman may "stop" a Kingfisher's wings or overcome the darkness of the night and the gloom of a sea-cave. It goes without saying that when a vagrant Royal Spoonbill wintered near the author's home, it soon fell a victim to his hunting with the camera.

This book is much more, however, than a portrait gallery. The author has an eye for the significance of behaviour and feeding, and his notes contain many original observations. Pictures of the Silvereye show the young being fed on caterpillars, spiders and berries. Moreporks are shown bringing a variety of insects to the nest. The notes on the feeding of young Reef Herons are most informative. It is much to be hoped that the author will soon give us a second volume containing portraits of more birds, together with the intimate notes such as can be obtained only from a hide.

Geoff Moon, as Edgar Stead before him, has been unlucky in his publisher, whose workmanship, both in the reproduction of the plates and in the binding, falls far behind the technical excellence of the author.

— R.B.S.



SHORT NOTES

SHOVELERS DIVING FOR FOOD

The Shovelers of New Zealand (*A. rhynhotis variegata*) belong naturally to the group of dabbling ducks, which seek their food from the surface or from the bottom in shallow water, without completely submerging; and to witness some of these diving for food in from four to six feet of water was a new experience. Most ducks can dive; but the dabblers do so usually, either in play during courtship, or to escape from danger. At best these dives are shallow and of brief duration. But off Hamurana on the north shore of Lake Rotorua I have with others watched Shovelers behaving like Scaup (*Aythya novaeseelandiae*).