

## REVIEWS.

"Reactions of Some Passerine Birds to a Stuffed Cuckoo."—George Edwards, Eric Hosking and Stuart Smith. *British Birds*, XLII, p 13-19.

Wider interest in studies in bird behaviour is just awakening in New Zealand, and reactions of various species to other birds of the same species and also other species including predators and cuckoos can be readily watched and analysed under the controlled conditions of using stuffed birds placed in various positions, usually near a nest. A considerable number of papers on such experiments has appeared in overseas literature, and this, one of a well-illustrated series by these authors, will be read with interest by members contemplating similar studies in New Zealand, and also by those Australian members who are at present using stuffed birds to produce reaction displays.

Most birds were found to attack the stuffed cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) or to give distractive or lure displays, and it is interesting to note that at least two species did not use their usual alarm notes but uttered another sound apparently reserved for cuckoos. Attacks by different birds of the same species followed similar lines, and evidence that lure display results from nervous upset rather than a planned action is given by the fact that in his excitement the cock would often attack its mate or any unusual object with equal vigour. Reactions by both yellow-hammers (*Emberiza citrinella*) and chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) are described but no reaction at all was given by a blackbird (*Turdus merula*) though it attacked a stuffed jay (*Garrulus glandarius*) violently. Hedge-sparrows (*Prunella modularis*) avoided the nest altogether while the cuckoo was in position.

Behaviour and reaction patterns are largely inherited, and of English birds introduced into New Zealand, isolation of less than 100 years should not produce any genetical change in psychological any more than in physical characteristics. Nevertheless, it will be of value to make similar experiments using *C. canorus* at the nest of English birds introduced here. It would be necessary, however, to have a "control" experiment to make sure that any reaction was against the cuckoo as a cuckoo and not against the presence of any bird. In addition, the native long-tailed cuckoo (*Eudynamis taitensis*) could be produced at the same birds' nests to test whether this cuckoo is yet recognised as such (this cuckoo has been recorded in some localities of parasitising song thrush, greenfinch, etc.), and little is yet known of native birds' reactions to the native cuckoos.—J.M.C.

**Snares Expeditions.**—Literature on recent expeditions to the Snares Islands continues to swell, and of popular accounts that of Grace E. Barstow Murphy in "Natural History" (A Naturalist's wife in the Sub-Antarctic, Vol 57, Nos. 8, 9, 10, Oct., Nov., Dec., 1948, published by Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.) gives an interesting sidelight into the human aspects of the December, 1947, camp. The story is charmingly written of the setting up of the camp in the rigorous conditions, and a happy atmosphere of the camp life is conveyed by many anecdotes. There are interesting notes of the scenery, plants, seals and birds in this well-illustrated article. In "Science" (Vol. 108, No. 2809, Oct. 29, 1948, published by Amer. Assoc. for Advancement of Science), Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy gives a concise account of the arrangements and scope of the expedition, and also explains the activities of the American Museum of Natural History in other parts of New Zealand. Another booklet of Mr. L. E. Richdale ("Wild Life on an Island Outpost," No. 8 of his "Wild Life" series) has appeared, and gives an account of his seven weeks in the Snares early in 1948. Vegetation and sea mammals are treated as well as the birds. The illustrations are of Mr. Richdale's usual high standard and include an excellent picture of the bush snipe, but they are all marred by the extremely bad reproduction.—J.M.C.