

"None of the vines had much fruit to show. Perhaps the kohia was the best of the three, but neither the kareao nor tataramoa had any to speak of.

"For some reason—but probably on account of so much rain, for we have noticed that the rata family does better in a dry season—the myrtles flowered very poorly. In some years the manuka, when in bloom, makes a lovely picture. Nor did the ratas help to brighten up the sombrely-clad hills; none of them bloomed, not even *Metrosideros florida*, which seldom lets us down. We consider this species to be the best of the ratas, because it seems to flower for such a long time. Three months or more after it has bloomed near sea-level its beautiful flowers can be found near the top of the island. The only *Metrosideros* that flowered well was the pohutukawa, and this made some very brilliant splashes of colour on the cliffs. The honey-eaters simply mobbed the flowers of the pohutukawa, as there were very few other plants out at this time.

"As if to make up for the shortage of nectar-supplying flowers, the flax (*Phormium*) outdid itself. These plants had more flowers this time than for many a year. At the same time, there appeared to be an erratic flow of honey, because the birds visited the flowers spasmodically and in fewer numbers than is generally the case. Never at any time were there more than fifty tui feeding at once, whereas in some years two hundred or more can be counted from our verandah.

"With one or two exceptions the birds have had a wonderful season. Young of both land and sea species were in evidence. The weather during the breeding season was warm and moist, and there were no strong winds to interfere with their domestic affairs. It is the only season in which we have no records of nests being damaged or destroyed by wind or seas. Our note-books contain far too many references of this kind, so that we derive great satisfaction in being able to present a clean slate for 1940-41. The sea-birds were able to go about their breeding without interruption. Gulls and terns made full use of their opportunity. Nests were everywhere. Besides isolated nests in all available places around the island, several large colonies were seen. The largest was on the boulder-bank at the north end. Here there were hundreds of both black-backed and red-billed gulls, as well as a large flock of white-fronted terns, all busy with their breeding operations. Many of the nests were only a few feet above high-water mark. A southerly gale would have wrecked most of them. Blue herons nested as usual in their old breeding cave at Paripatea and reared two young. As we have mentioned in previous reports, these birds never seem to increase in spite of the fact that they generally succeed in rearing at least a few young ones. This increase is apparently chased away to seek partners along the shores of the mainland coast. After all, Kapiti is not an ideal place for this species, as there are not a great number of reefs; in most places the cliffs go down sheer under the water. It is on exposed reefs that the heron gathers much of its food. Another thing that may have something to do with the scarcity of the blue heron is the pugnacity of the black-backed gull, who never seems to lose a chance of chasing these birds.

"There are still about the same number of shags. At least, these numbers never seem to vary.

"The little blue penguins, which met with such disaster some years ago, have just about made up for their loss. Crowds of them come ashore every few months, when their weird cries can be heard every night and often in the daytime as well.

"Mutton-birds bred all along the tops of cliffs of the western side and on certain ridges in the bush on the eastern side. Several dozen pied stilts were seen about the lake on the Native land. There seemed to be a fair number of young birds with them. Banded dotterell were there, too, in their usual numbers. At least half a dozen paradise ducks reared young. Flocks of twenty or so often fly along the coast over Rangatira. The greys about the island also did well; those that nest near our swamp especially. One pair reared two broods. At present there are several dozen of them here, where we hope they will stay until the shooting season is over. Wheat is fed to them every day, so they have no need to go away after food. Kiwi have increased during the last few years and are now well distributed over the sanctuary. Their feathers, caught up by the hooked grass, *Uncinaria*, have been seen in most parts of the island. The most pleasing example of this was the discovery of kiwi feathers on the flat at Wharekohu, which was all grass when we came here. Here a considerable amount of planting has been done, and this, together with the natural spread of the forest trees, has provided these bush dwellers with sufficient cover.

"The insect-eating birds have had a splendid season. One pair of robins which live quite close to our house reared two broods, a thing that we have never known them to do. For years now this pair has struggled along building nest after nest without rearing a single youngster. Time after time the nest would be robbed by a brute of a rat or a long-tailed cuckoo.

"Tomtits are coming round again after being somewhat scarce for the last few years. These charming little birds were plentiful when we came to Kapiti; one could find them in any part of the bush, and often in the open amongst tauhinu. Then for no apparent reason they became hard to find; so hard that it was quite an event to come across one.

"It was the same with the fantails: they became scarce. But this is often the case with these little fly-catchers in every part of the country; their numbers are liable to fluctuate. Even if they are only tiny birds, they are powerful flyers and could easily get to the mainland. Anyhow, these little chaps are plentiful enough now. At least a dozen pair are around Rangatira. Two pair bred within easy reach of our home.

"Both tui and korimako did well. One pair of tui reared a family in a manuka which grows within half a chain of our front door. Another was in a tree just behind the house, and another was in a mahoe not far away. Two pair of korimako, or bell-birds, reared families also quite close.