

the diminution of the number of rabbits. The weasel is the easy-going farmer's unreal friend, causing him vainly to hope that he will, without expense, be able to satisfy the requirements of the rabbit inspector. Any farmer who knows the harm rabbits do to pasture will not be satisfied by merely holding the pest in check with poison, but will follow the usual spasmodic effort up with patch poisoning and other means of extermination. The last few rabbits will be costly per head certainly, but their death will eventually prove a great saving.

The rat has now, with the great decrease in wekas, abnormally increased, and the damage done by this rodent probably outweighs any damage done by the rabbit. The rat's life is one of destruction from the time production of food is commenced to the last moment before it is consumed; and he adds to this a well-merited reputation as a disease carrier.

Undoubtedly the farmer who encourages weasels is merely making a rod for his own back; and if he were as well informed as to the value of most birds in eliminating insect pests as his American cousins are, he would be encouraging most birds to come around instead of fostering their enemies. He sees some birds eat his grain, but rarely realises most birds do infinitely less damage than the insects which they have killed would have done. He might just as wisely kill his human employee for requiring food, even though no wages are asked. Surely a good worker is worthy of his hire.

Much careful observation is carried out in these matters by the Agricultural Departments in other countries, but here our own Department appears to lag, and even encourages the protection of weasels. Maybe this is done more under the political whip than from desire.

The New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society will welcome all observations on the destruction by vermin in relation to our native birds, but let it be remembered cats kill rats, weasels kill rats, hawks kill rats and weasels, but that ground vermin invariably prefer birds.

STEWART ISLAND.

If matters are allowed to take their course on Stewart Island, the deer which have been liberated will eventually destroy the wonderful scenic beau-

ties of the island, the birds will also be vastly decreased, and some species be altogether eliminated, leaving an eyesore in place of what is now a joy and pleasure to all who behold it. With reference to the suitability of the island as a sanctuary, that accurate observer and ornithologist, H. Guthrie Smith, writes: It is sufficient to say that, with the exception of a small portion about Half Moon Bay, this beautiful island is worthless for material purposes. Its rainfall is great, and its peats and sands are impossible to till or grass. As to the islets and island groups, most of them still remain the property of the nation, but it is property terribly neglected and grossly mismanaged.

HEREKOPERE.

Referring to an evening spent on Herekoperi, a nesting island (for sea birds) off Stewart Island, the same writer remarks: "About seven, the earliest of the kuaka began to arrive, at first here a bird and there a bird, then almost at once it began to hail kuaka, then to sleet kuaka, and lastly to snow kuaka. They reached the island in dozens, scores, hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands, and I verily believe perhaps in millions. At first they hurtled themselves in like hailstones, then later fell with some degree of regard to their safety, and lastly lit softly as snow, and with hardly a rustle. Although standing in a conspicuous spot on a rise in open ground, and guarding my head and face, I was struck by kuaka eight times in a few minutes.

"Each morning we might have gathered them as the Israelites gathered from the wilderness their quail. Every empty box flat on its base contained birds. They fell down the chimney, they floated in our water cask."

Such is a description of one small adjoining island. On the main island pigeons, tuis, bell birds, kakas, kiwi, robins, tomtits, wekas, cuckoos, fern-birds, parakeets, etc., are plentiful, and the surrounding islets have been the nesting places for ages past of mutton birds, petrel, parara, Skua gulls, penguins, shags, etc.

Stewart Island is well known for its picturesqueness and the charm of its coast line, and is almost useless for purposes other than an avifauna and flora sanctuary.