

this the loss due to rats eating eggs and nestlings, also add the work of weasels, stoats, etc., and the wonder is there are any game or other birds left.

Cats are easily trapped with the usual figure four trap baited with meat, and their skins are worth a fair amount.

#### RABBITS, SPARROWS, AND DEER.

The following extract from the minutes of the Wellington Provincial Council, dated 14th March, 1866, is a copy of a letter addressed to C. R. Carter, Esq., London, after whom the town of Carterton is named:—

Sir,—

Should a favourable opportunity occur of sending them out, I hereby authorise you to expend a sum not exceeding £150 on the purchase of such birds and animals as you may think it most desirable to introduce into the colony. I would, however, recommend that you should send out a certain number of red or fallow deer, hares, rabbits, partridges, grouse, sparrows, and singing birds.

I. E. FEATHERSTON,

Superintendent.

The results of the successful introduction of some of the birds and animals mentioned might well demonstrate the inadvisability of allowing such matters to be dealt with by the inconsequent and unscientific who, though undoubtedly meaning well, often make irreparable errors for which posterity pays dearly; but much the same thing is in evidence at the present time.

#### NATIVE PIGEONS IN CITIES.

Some twelve months back the secretary of the New Zealand Native Bird Protection Society stated that when a native pigeon was reported as sitting on the General Post Office, Wellington, the work of the society could be considered to be in a very forward condition. There is no valid reason why this bird should not be at least a frequent visitor even to our larger towns, except that it is harassed and driven back. Most people would love to see pigeons and other native birds amongst us, and, with the increased regard evidenced by the public for our native bird life, the time may not be so far distant as some people think, especially with more native tree plantations than at present. It is only the work of a few vandals which prevents our pigeons coming closer to habitations; and every right thinking person's hand should be against these few. Most birds have an extraordinary instinct to return to the nesting places of

even their distant forebears, and a native pigeon has already been in evidence right in Wellington city. Public interest and action are all that is required to obtain good conservation laws and compel efficient administration of such laws.

#### A QUAIN T BIRD OF NEW ZEALAND—THE KAKAPO.

By Alec. F. O'Donoghue, R.A.O.U.,  
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Of the many quaint and wonderful birds inhabiting the dense sub-alpine forests and marshy lowlands of the West Coast of the South Island of New Zealand, the Kakapo (*Stringops haproptilus*) stands out pre-eminently as a striking example of the probability of extraordinary changes having been wrought in the history of bird life.

The kakapo is attached to the order Psittaciformes, which claims our various parrots, and is the sole member of the family Stringopidae. It is a bird of rather bulky proportions, considerably larger than the white cockatoo of Australia, and resembling in form the heavy erect set of an owl, with short powerful legs and heavy clawed feet. Such structural lines would not, as a rule, inspire one with the hope that beauty could lend itself lavishly in the ultimate adornment, but, strange to say, the kakapo is arrayed in a most wonderful and beautiful plumage, a fact all the more bewildering when one realises that the bird is nocturnal in its habits. The predominant shade in this extravagant plumage forms a rich background of pale moss green, flecked and spangled with gold, relieved on the back and wings with sections of warm brown markings. The wings are heavy and in proportion to the size of the body, and a casual observer would undoubtedly conclude that the bird was possessed of reasonable powers of flight, yet it ranks among our many flightless birds; the muscles of the wings being apparently too weak to render them of any use. Even when attacked or hurrying off from some enemy, only the slightest effort is made to bring the large useless wings into action, and consequently it falls an easy prey to the hunter's dog. Like others of our nocturnal birds, the kakapo makes its hiding place and nesting place in the ground among the roots of trees, or in the cavities of rocks, where it conceals itself practically the whole day long. Occasionally, however, it ventures out in the day time, and may sometimes be discovered in the open basking in the sunshine; when ap-