

shrubs and trees) torn, grey, stripped and dying. In many areas, 80 to 90 per cent. of the forage was gone."

Of course, this was in an area where deer were totally protected, nevertheless it shows what deer are capable of doing, even

in their own country, to vegetation evolved to stand their browsing.

The other quotations show what can happen where "controlled populations" of deer are maintained for sporting or sentimental reasons.

## A Story of the Kaka

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Manu—Friend of the Birds)

**A**BOUT this time last year, some bushmen friends of mine kept me informed of the nesting arrangements of a pair of kakas in their district. The birds had established themselves in a hole in the trunk of a tree.

Here are some details of our kaka family. The nest is in a rata tree about twelve feet from the ground. At this point the tree is hollow and the entrance to the nest is a narrow slotted hole. There are no limbs or projections of any kind at the entrance cavern. This seems to me to indicate that in their wisdom and in their experience of marauders the kakas have deliberately chosen their nesting site in order to defeat such predators as stoats, hawks, or rats—you see, there is no stance at the entrance for such vermin. The kakas themselves have to make their own entrance without the aid of a perch. This is, you will agree, rather a difficult operation for the birds have to fly direct to the bole of the tree and enter without pausing to deploy as it were. Safety and security for the family is their aim, and we all hope sincerely they will be successful. As a preliminary to entering the hole the kaka has to make a skilful and well timed landing on a vertical hard rata tree surface—so says Mr. Eric Logie who is deeply interested in the whole affair. The bark of the tree is worn off so there is little left to grip. The kaka executes his landing by approaching in level flight, and then coming to rest like a fly on the wall; at the same time he secures a hold with his beak on the edge of the slotted hole. The operation, however, is not yet complete. These

kakas are big bulky parrots, and the slot is far too narrow for him to enter with his body in a forward normal position; he therefore takes a purchase with his powerful bill on the edge of the slotted hole, swings for a moment and then squeezes through sideways. This clever move can be, I suppose, called instinct, but to me it looks like straight out intelligence. If the kaka himself has to make such skilful and elaborate preparations to reach his home and family then piratical enemies of his brood will have small chance. The whole idea, of course, is to make the entry of intruders difficult, if not impossible. I should think the enemies dreaded most are stoats and rats which are thus circumvented to a great measure. The kaka comes along gravely and with skill and precision performs his gymnastic evolutions reminiscent of that daring young man on the flying trapeze.

The nest itself is about four feet down from the mouth of the slot—of course the descent down would present no difficulties to the agile kaka. Those facts were revealed when the nest was inspected last year; this season no such inspection has been made for fear of disturbing the inmates, but the nest and its occupants are under sympathetic observation.

It was noted last year that the young remain in the nest for about three months altogether; when they do emerge they are well able to fend for themselves. It is at this stage that perhaps the greatest danger to them is the sparrow hawk.