

Duck Shooting in New Zealand.

By SPORTSMAN.

DUCK SHOOTING in New Zealand is one of the most popular sports in the country. There is no other wild fowl so numerous or so widely distributed, and there is certainly none other that gives such large bags, or such joy to the hunter. On lake and lagoon, on river or tidal estuary, there is excitement in bringing down in its rapid flight the whirring duck. The cautious shootist paddling slowly along the raupo thickets, the well-planted party hidden in scrub cover, or cylinder, the watcher by the mud flats, over which the tide is creeping slowly, all know the joy of the whistling wings and the skill that sends them fluttering helplessly on to land or water. New Zealand was never a good game country, or rather it is a good game country never properly stocked by Nature; but there are places where the wild duck has always been plentiful, and where they are plentiful even to this day.

Lake Ellesmere in Canterbury, and Lake Waikare in the Waikato are the great centres of duck shooting, but there are scores of other places where sport can be had, Lake Waiholo in Otago, the lakes in the Southern Alps, the estuaries and reaches of most of the great rivers and many of the harbours.

The commonest kinds of ducks are the grey duck, the black and brown teal, the spoon bill, the blue mountain duck and the paradise duck. The grey duck is by far the most numerous, and it is to be found in every part of New Zealand from Te Waewae Bay or the inlets of Stewart's Island to Parengarenga in the far North. The black teal is found generally in the South Island,

the brown teal in the North Island. The Paradise duck and the Blue Mountain duck are rarely found in the North, their *habitat* being almost exclusively confined to the hilly country of the South. The Blue Mountain duck is scarcely worth mentioning to sportsmen. A boy with a handful of river bed stones might easily kill a flock of these handsome foolish creatures, besides they are comparatively rare, and seek the seclusion of mountain gorges where sportsmen do not go. The Paradise Duck is quite a different bird. He is the largest of the duck tribe, and is frequently named the New Zealand wild goose. Wild he certainly is, but by no means a goose, for he is as cunning and wary a creature as flies, and a small flock will give amateurs sport for a season. They are found generally in the broad shingle beds of the great snow rivers, and delight in wandering aimlessly on the edge of the largest stream always on the opposite side to the sportsman. He may crawl on his belly over the bumpy boulders, and wade through icy cold water, keeping his weather eye on the plump brown and white birds, but the Paradise ducks can gauge the range of a gun to a nicety, and they shew fine judgment in rising before a shot is fired. They do not fly far; they enjoy tantalising the hunter, and generally settle in what seems a suitable place for stalking, and the amateur stalks, but the New Zealand wild goose winks the other eye, and moves on at exactly the right moment for his safety. But they can be had by men who know the game, who plant themselves in cover whilst somebody else drives them up the river bed; and they can be had when they come down