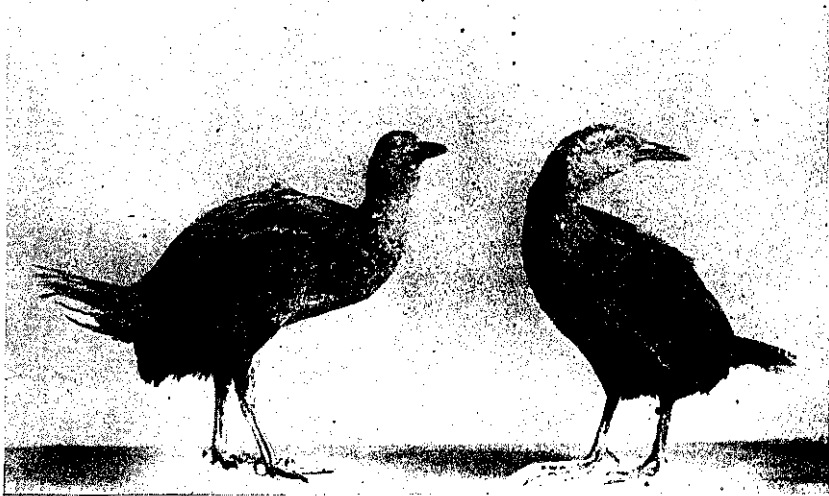


familias, Mrs. *W.* sometimes finds the cares of her family too much for her, especially if the family be a numerous one. For instance, when they have to be sheltered she is considerably upset by the persistent attempts of four or five large youngsters to get under her little wings at the same time, and she at once takes steps to reduce her responsibilities by driving away the male chicks, and only undertaking the care of the females. At first this causes trouble because the banished ones will not go without considerable protest, which takes the form of attacking their more favoured sisters whenever opportunity offers and the mother is not on the lookout. It is very amusing

his side gives power to his beak. Curiously enough, I have never seen a rat killed by one of these birds, but have often seen them chased savagely round and round the tent.

On one occasion I shot a rat with my pea-rifle as he was trying to make a forcible entry into our flour bag, and, thinking it would be a good test of our *weka's* mode of attacking a rat, we put the carcase in a prominent position, tied to a long piece of cotton. When the bird came into the small clearing in front of the tent, we manipulated the cotton in such a manner that the rat appeared to be nibbling, as his head moved spasmodically from side to side in response to our jerks.



(SOUTH ISLAND).

WEKAS.

(NORTH ISLAND).

to watch the little mother running about, first trying to feed her daughters, and then chivving one of her sons who has ungallantly made an attack on his more favoured sister.

The jealousy and antagonism shown to any bird or rat which trespasses on a *weka's* preserves is one of the bird's most useful attributes from a camper's point of view, as one's food is rarely attacked by rats when such a good guardian is at hand. It is a curious fact that once a *weka* has taken up his quarters near a camp, he manages to hold his own against all comers, and in many cases I have seen quite a small bird drive a much larger one away after a short fight. I suppose the feeling that he has right on

Mr. *Weka* suddenly "spotted" his prey, and at once began to stalk it—head forward, body down—taking advantage of every bit of cover, in a way that would have put even the Boers to shame. After creeping and dodging to within a yard or two of the rat's body, he made a swift dart out and "dabbed" it furiously in the back, just one vicious peck, and then looked round proudly with a "got-him-that-time" expression. We didn't wish him to have too good an idea of his strength, so we gave the string another jerk, and at once our friend was on the alert; he reared his head back and "dabbed" and pecked with his strong beak, drawing back each time, and putting