

by the stouter bills of these larger birds. The white-eye acts, as it were, as a jackal to the myna, blackbird, and starling, picking clean the cores left by them hanging or shaken to the ground. At such times, when engaged near the ground or on a scrap-heap or in a fowlyard pecking at a bone, the white-eye falls a frequent and easy victim to the household cat. An apple which has been "finished" by a white-eye is always to be recognized by the frequent survival of large portions, or even almost all of the skin, surrounding the clean-picked core, but between them an empty space.

When the white-eye turns its attention to stone-fruits it commits other damage than the destruction of fruit alone. Mr. G. H. Cunningham in a recent bulletin (No. 101, "Brown-rot") of this Department states, "Mr. J. C. Neill informs me that at Weraroa a small bird, locally known as 'silver-eye' (*Zosterops lateralis* Latham), is the cause of widespread brown-rot infection. With their beaks the birds commonly pierce infected fruits, and turn from these to healthy fruits, especially those showing colour, such as nectarines, which in turn they puncture, probably with a view of ascertaining whether they are edible."

In discussing the work of the white-eye in destroying those multifarious insect species which are summed up in the words "insect blights" it is difficult to overestimate its value to all who cultivate the land. Buller wrote, "I have opened many specimens, at all seasons, and I have invariably found their stomachs crammed with minute insects and their larvæ." The cabbage or turnip aphid, which sometimes infests crops of swedes, turnips, or allied plants to an incredible extent, is frequently cleared by this winged insecticide. In accordance with the principle that birds concentrate on the most abundantly available food, the presence of such a severe infestation as just described, when almost every leaf over acres is blue with aphides, is the stimulus which brings hundreds of white-eyes to the district where previously they perhaps have been but little in evidence. Here they remain until, from their viewpoint, the unexpected food-supply is exhausted, and, from our standpoint, until the pest is eradicated.

Whenever a set of advantageous conditions has so far favoured an insect pest that at last it breaks all bounds, as in the case of the cabbage-aphid referred to, or whenever a pest is introduced by natural or artificial means into a district where large quantities of its food plant have been hitherto uninfested, as in the case of the blue-gum scale (*Eriococcus coriaceus*), there the birds will be concentrated, as vultures follow the battle. In a large number of these cases the birds which concentrate on the pest are the white-eyes. With regard to the last case mentioned, that of the gum-tree scale, it must be admitted that the infestation in a new plantation is usually so overwhelming that the white-eyes are far too few to be of much service in clearing the trees. They are, however, one of the factors tending to right the balance of nature.

Another eucalypt insect eaten with avidity by the white-eye is the blue-gum psyllid (*Rhinocola eucalypti*) which infests the growing tips of young gums throughout the country.