

Small birds: I have seen kingfishers once or twice battering white-eyes' bodies, which presumably they swallowed later.

Fish: On the only occasion on which I saw a kingfisher actually engaged in fishing the bird made an awkward dive into a pool (flopped in) and fluttered out without anything visible in its beak. It may even have been after fresh-water insects or tadpoles.

The habit of throwing up pellets containing all the indigestible portions of the prey—shells, fur, feathers—is shared also by the owls. It obviously offers a striking opportunity to gain an accurate knowledge of the birds' diet, and renders possible the comprehensive survey which Mr. Falla has supplied. It should be remembered that this account claims to deal with the kingfisher's habits in one district only. Probably in certain other districts fish form a larger proportion of the diet than in the vicinity of Auckland; but this is unquestionably not the case in the North Auckland Peninsula as a whole. There the chief food consists of crabs, crickets (*Gryllus servillei* Sauss.), long-horned grasshoppers (*Xiphidium semivittatum* Walk.), and probably locusts (*Locusta migratoria* Linn.). The luxuriant summer growth of paspalum harbours immense numbers of crickets and grasshoppers. Crickets constitute a veritable pest, particularly abundant on recent bush-burns, where much of the young grass is destroyed by them and establishment frequently delayed. This large black cricket is believed to have been introduced from Australia. In the North Auckland district it has increased to a phenomenal extent, so that it is no uncommon occurrence to surprise as many as thirty or forty beneath every dry cake of cow-dung turned over in a pasture. Cases are known of large holes being eaten by these voracious insects into coats laid temporarily on the grass. The writers believe that the unusually large numbers of kingfishers in the peninsula are due to the tremendous access of food supplied by the crickets. It is an incontrovertible maxim of economic ornithology that, within wide limits, birds eat the food which is most easily obtained and most abundant. Unquestionably the most plentiful kingfisher-food in the north of New Zealand is formed by the seething grasshopper and cricket population of the northern grasslands.

In Australia, where an almost identical form of our species is known as the "forest kingfisher"—a name in itself significant—the stomachs of those examined by Cleland and his associates contained fresh-water crayfish, weevils and other beetles, and locusts and grasshoppers. In the summing-up it is described as a useful insectivorous bird.

The English kingfisher, which gave its name to the whole family, is, as Mr. Falla points out, structurally fitted to live almost exclusively on fish, yet it is rigorously protected in England. When the early naturalists found in other lands birds of the same family living entirely on land-animals, dwelling in the forest miles from water, they realized the inappropriate nature of the name "kingfisher," and suggested instead that of "kinghunter." The latter title should rightly be applied to the New Zealand species; but so firmly fixed in the language is the former name that change is almost impossible. In the attempted persecution of this bird as an allegedly serious enemy of trout the writers are unable to see any other justification than that afforded by the proverb "Give a dog a bad name and hang him."