

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### NESTING OF THE YELLOW-BREASTED TIT.

MR. EDGAR F. [STEAD, of "Ilam," Riccarton, Christchurch, writes to the Editor:—

"I have read with interest the articles on 'The Relation of Birds to Agriculture in New Zealand' which have appeared in your *Journal* recently. Dealing with the yellow-breasted tit (*Myiomoira macrocephala*) the writers say that they know of no recent cases of this bird's nest having been built in orchards or gardens. With no desire to criticize the articles in question I would yet like to give my experience in so far as Canterbury is concerned.

"The 'tomtit' is one of the native birds that has undoubtedly increased here in the last ten years. As there is very little bush left in Canterbury, excepting on the hills, the tomtits, during the winter, frequent the large plantations and areas of scrub (mostly gorse, broom, lupin, &c.) on river-beds, and remain to breed. For the last four years they have come to my garden in the autumn, and on three occasions have bred here. Two years ago I decided to tame a pair which were here, and by collecting all the grass-grubs which the gardeners dug up, and feeding the tomtits with them, I at last got the birds to come freely to my hand for their food. They nested in the ivy which covers a eucalyptus in front of my house, but when the young were half-fledged a cat got the hen bird. (This, I may say, was the only cat I had ever willingly allowed to live here, and it is gone now.) The cock bird, however, aided by myself, reared the two young, and, after feeding them for three days in the top of a cedar, took them away with him early in November. In April of the following year he returned, and fed from my hand as before. He got a mate, and the pair were extraordinarily tame, taking grubs from the hands of complete strangers. They left, however, in September, and I never saw them again.

"Last winter a pair came, and, aided by previous experience, I quickly had them tamed. I then got a piece of firewood and nailed it up in the corner of my veranda, making what I considered to be an ideal nesting-site for a tomtit. On 29th August the birds decided that it was an ideal site, and commenced to build there. The first egg was laid on 10th September, and at date of writing the hen is sitting. She takes no notice of people moving about, or of any noises, or of the hall light, which at night shines through a fanlight on to the wall close by her nest. The cock bird collects all the food, and feeds her off the nest, though she occasionally still comes to me for food. As the cock bird frequently comes to my hand for a grub when he already has got food in his bill, I have been able to get a good idea of their food. I have seen him with caterpillars (all sizes from small ones up to fat greenish ones  $1\frac{1}{2}$  in. long), flies (including house-flies), millipedes, cockroaches, and spiders. As the nesting-site is quite safe from rats, cats, or stoats, I have every hope that the birds will safely rear their brood.

"As I have said, I do not write this to criticize the articles, but rather to amplify them on this particular point, and in the hope that perhaps some others may take to taming tomtits in their gardens, or, at any rate, giving them all the protection that such a wholly delightful and useful little bird deserves."

*Orchard Registration.*—The number of orchards registered during the financial year 1922-23 was 7,044, representing a total of some 30,000 acres. The amount of £1,982 was collected in orchard-tax.

*British Market for Peas and Beans.*—The following information was cabled by the High Commissioner on 6th October: Peas—Partridge, quiet; Tasmanian ex store, 90s. to 100s. per quarter; New Zealand, 70s. to 82s. 6d. according to sample; English obtainable at from 55s. to 60s. New crop of New Zealand March/April shipment offered at 77s. 6d., but no business reported. Blue in poor demand; New Zealand afloat sold for £18 5s. per ton; forward shipments, £17 10s.; Tasmanian quoted at £20 to £21 ex store. Beans—English good quality selling at 43s. to 50s. per quarter ex store, but no inquiry for imported.