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The Adaptation and Increase in the Paradise Shelduck
(*Tadorna variegata*) Within a Man-modified Environment

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Abstract

THE colonisation of the study area by the Paradise Shelduck is related to the reduction of forest, an increase in pastureland and in the number of stock ponds.

Critical factors for breeding, feeding and moulting sites are suggested and discussed in relation to the North Island distribution.

INTRODUCTION

INVESTIGATIONS were carried out from November 1960 to May 1962 to examine the habitat requirements of the Paradise Shelduck with a view to explaining the extension in range over the last 80 years from 39° S. to 37½° S. latitude.

The Paradise was unknown west of the Ruahine and Kaimanawa Ranges prior to 1908, but in that year a pair of birds brought from the South Island was liberated about three miles from National Park by Mr J. Cullen. Subsequent liberations occurred intermittently up to 1919. Eventually the birds became established in the Kaimanawa Range in the east of the study area. After about 1937 a large increase in the population became evident, the birds spreading from the Kaimanawas to the west to the developing pastoral land, denuded of forest.

ENVIRONMENT

Study Area. Because of the increase in the Paradise population at the southern end of the central upland plateau it was selected as the study area (Fig. 1). The approximate boundaries were, in the west, the Wanganui River; in the south, a line running from Wanganui through Hunterville to the Ruahine Range; in the east, the Kaweka and Ruahine Ranges; in the north, a line running east-west through Mt Ruapehu.

A large proportion of the time was spent in the area between Turakina Valley and the Kaweka Range.

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