

RESOLUTION ISLAND.

The following notes and memoranda were received from Mr. Richard Henry, caretaker at Resolution Island:—

April, 1901.—We went a special trip to the head of Dusky Sound to try and get a pair of saddle-backs, but saw none; though when we first went up there we often saw them on the banks of the Seaforth River. However, that was in December, and they may be there again in the summer-time; but I think they are rapidly dying out everywhere, because they make their nests in hollow trees, where they are easily got at by rats.

When we were up at the head of Broughton Arm, in Breaksea Sound, that place appeared to be alive with grey kiwi on a quiet night, also kakapos; so that the weasels and ferrets have not reached that place as yet. It was also the best place for native thrushes; but they were all moulting, or, at least, I shot three and did not get one good one, so I have to get them yet.

I had repairs to do to boats and sails, and was provisioned all ready for a cruise early in May, but the weather has been very bad even for this place. In all May we only had one day fine, enough to dry our sail, and, if anything, it has got worse in the first few days of June. Lately we have had day after day with driving rain and a haze that we could not see a hundred yards in, with all northerly winds and a high temperature, from 50° to 58° at 9.30 in the morning. However, we always have some frosty weather in June, and then we will get away.

June turned out fairly dry for this place, with only 10.66 in. of rain, and we spent a fortnight in Wet Jacket Arm. Thrushes there used to be more numerous than they are now, for we had many a high climb in the scrub before we got a suitable pair; but they choose the driest and warmest places, away up in dense scrubs under cliffs facing the sun, and only a few such places could we reach. In our rambles we visited the old copper-mines opposite Oke Island. It is in a very steep place, about 1,500 ft. high. The same formation runs for miles on nearly the same level westward, but I think it is no good, for there is very little green on the stones, but plenty of iron-rust and iron-pyrites.

July was also very dry with us, for we only had a little over 6 in. of rain, but plenty of cold sou'-westers. We went and stayed a week at Cascade Sound, for we wanted a few little birds—a hen tit, a paroquet, and sparrow-hawk—but found them very hard to get, especially the tit. The males are so plentiful that we could get a dozen in a day, but not one female have we seen in a month. This I never noticed before. I have noticed a similar thing with robins, though it is not easy to distinguish the sexes of the latter. Either the hens are very scarce or very shy in both cases.

The penguins come here in squads or hapus, and at different dates. The first arrivals come to what we call South Cove, on Pigeon Island, about twelve days before any others that I know of. They go in and keep quite silent, so that you would not know there was a penguin in the Sound until about a fortnight after they come. It is the same with all of them. Though there may be a hapu of some hundreds in every half-mile of coast, you may not hear or see one unless you go into the bush, until they begin to lay, and then they get noisy—I allude to the yellow-crested penguin. The only other sort here is the little blue penguin, which is a great howler or singer at almost every time, for they stay here all the year, or a few of them do. The big ones came to South Cove on the 28th June, and on the 22nd July we only got eight eggs, though there were about fifty pairs of penguins about that place. We can get all the eggs we can use off Penguin and Parrot Islands alone, but the penguins are in numbers on all the islands and coasts in the Sounds wherever they can get fresh water and any rude shelter for their nests. I think it is darkness they mostly seek, so that the young ones may escape the sandflies, for they are content with very sloppy nests in the caves. About 1 per cent. of them have dry comfortable nests, 50 per cent. have a few sprigs and damp rubbish, while the others have only hollows in the hard mud. It is only cliffs that stop their landing. They do not mind waves, let them be ever so fierce.

22nd January, 1902.—I got home this morning after an outing of ten days in Cascade Harbour. Woodhens are very plentiful, and when they had their evening concerts the place would be ringing with them all round the harbour, and all with half-grown chickens. No doubt the absence of rats is the cause of this, as it leaves them plenty of food. Roas were also plentiful low down near the sea, though in all other years they have kept high up in summer. Those that I caught were moulting and nearly naked, but in fairly good condition. Of course, I only caught a few, but I could hear them at night and all low down. I had two fine old ones for the "Waikare" and two for the Gardens, but she did not call at Cascade, so I put them out at Anchor Island. I did not see a sign of a rat, though there are a few at my house at Pigeon Island, but the smell of fish and food will attract all that there are within miles. The kakapos were drumming away, for this is their breeding season. No drumming last year.

There is a great scarcity of little living things in the sea-water this year, though last year it was swarming with such as whale-food, and all that lot that the scientists call pelagic fauna. I have been looking out for some of them, but the place is deserted; even the fish and the seagulls that were here last year in hundreds are scarce. My experience since I came here is that no two seasons are exactly alike in the coming and going of things, and there is no use trying to keep a naturalist's calendar, for I get nothing regular to put in it. The mutton-birds and penguins keep fairly good time, but everything else appears to be indifferent to a month or two.

The ratas are very late in blossoming, and I thought there were going to be no tuis nor kakas, but they have just come, also the swarm of sparrows. Last year was a great season for berries, but there will scarcely be any this year except mapous, which did not bear at all last year.