

pigeon may not start till he is so close that she has not time to get speed on before he strikes her, or in her fright may hurt herself against a branch and then fall an easy victim. But it is seldom this happens, and only when there are no little birds about, as they always give notice of his coming.

Here in Dusky Sound I have seen a hawk hunting a pigeon for a long time in and out of the bush, until they were both flying slowly as if tired. The hawk seemed to have all the best of the speed, and often swooped at the pigeon, but she easily avoided him by a quick turn, like a hare with a greyhound, which gave the hawk a lot of lost ground to make up. I do not know how it finished; but if the pigeon had nerve enough to continue those tactics until the hawk was exhausted it might have meant the death of the latter, as without food he would have been less able to succeed in his next hunt, and it would have been a severe lesson, and would have taught him that he must not try to catch good pigeons, but should attend to his business by looking out for the weak or sickly ones.

The same pigeons come here to Pigeon Island and feed on the same trees year after year, for the dog often goes within 6 ft. of them and barks at them, but they know him and take not a bit of notice. Other pigeons will have their regular beats also, and if a dozen or two were shot they would soon appear to be scarce in that locality. They only stay from about March till August, and after that they are very scarce in Dusky Sound, though there are always a few of them about.

GREBES (*PODICEPS*).

In reading a very interesting old volume of the "Transactions of the New Zealand Institute" (vol. x.), I notice that it is assumed as a matter of fact that the dabchicks walk overland from one pond to the other, which implies that they cannot fly. This I know to be an error, because I have seen them flying like quails. I have also seen one trying to walk, and I may fairly say that it could not walk at all, but just pushed itself along the ground with its legs. I had just caught it in a net, but it was not in the slightest degree injured, because I took it out carefully at once. In its condition at that time it appeared to be also quite unable to fly, of which it was very well aware, for it would not make the attempt, though it never had such urgent reason for doing so. I put it in a partly dried-up lagoon where there was no cover, but plenty of young fish and other food. The strip of water was about 50 yards long with level ground for as many more, and the lake only 100 yards away over an easy ridge not 10 ft. high, so that it had a splendid opportunity to get up and fly into the lake if it had the least idea that it was able to do so.

When I frightened it and tried to make it fly it just dived and stayed down such long intervals that I had to sit down and wait for it, and once it stayed under about half an hour until I thought it was drowned, though the deepest part of the water was only up to my knees. I intended to leave it there to see if it would walk away in the night or disappear, but a harrier hawk had already marked it, so I put a great bundle of scrub in the water, and my net on it. Next morning when I came the hawk was on the scrub, by which I knew my captive was still there, but I could not see it though I tried hard to do so. I set the net round it, took away the scrub, caught the dabchick and let it go into the lake. If the water is clear and shallow enough for the hawk to see a diving young duck all the time under water he generally gets it the first time it comes up.

I caught that dabchick specially to prove that it could fly, but it only made a fair attempt to show that it could neither fly nor walk; and I seriously began to doubt my own eyesight and memory until some years later I fortunately saw them flying again. I was stalking ducks one day when I saw two dabchicks get up and fly round like teal; they did this several times within half an hour, went up a good height and had a skite round like the best of fliers, which made me think that they were just practising for a migration. When I showed myself, however, they made no further attempt to fly, but resorted to their diving tactics. Probably that is the reason that so few people have seen them flying. Another reason may be that they may only fly for a short season in the year, or in a period of years, or even at irregular periods. They may be so constituted that a scarcity of food may be their forcible inducement to prepare for a flight to better quarters. Something like this happens with all migratory birds, but especially with those that appear to be poor fliers, and yet when food fails are able to fly hundreds of miles without a rest.

There may be a non-flying family of dabchicks, as there are of rails and teal, but I saw them flying at Te Anau Lake, and also their big cousins the crested grebe, but only when they were playing, practising, or fighting, and never when they were alarmed. The fact that they fly so seldom and will not fly when chased in a boat convinces every one that they cannot fly at all; and when they see the small wings they are doubly sure of it; but if they would inquire a little further they would find ample muscles for working those little wings, which would not be the case with non-fliers.

I lived ten years at Te Anau and two years at Manapouri, during which time I was very often out on those lakes where the crested grebe were formerly numerous, yet I only saw them flying on three occasions—twice when a pair were practising in the harbour at Te Anau Downs Station; and elsewhere I saw one hunting away an intruder, and they both got up and flew away along the surface of the water for several hundreds of yards, so that they could fly well at that season, but I do not remember the date.

Just where the Waiau enters Manapouri from Te Anau nearly all the grebes on the lakes would sometimes congregate—perhaps once a year—but for what purpose I did not understand, because out on the lakes they were always in pairs and appeared to be mated for life. They lived wholly on minnows, for I never found any other food in their curious gizzards, which were always crammed tight with their own feathers as if it was unnatural, but I never found the feathers absent though I examined many of them at intervals of years.