

They made rude nests of sprigs in the scrub close to the water, and generally high up on something so as to be out of the floods; and they laid three or four white eggs, which were rather long and narrow.

In the downy stage the young ones had light-coloured longitudinal stripes and were very pretty.

I have just seen one in the salt water of Dusky Sound. It was in the end of Cascade Cove. I had a good glass and distinctly saw its ruff and crest, but after breakfast it had disappeared.

#### PARADISE DUCKS (*CASARCA*).

To a stranger the name of "paradise duck" seems too grand for the bird, for at a distance the drake appears to be black with white on the wings, and the duck's head and neck are white as snow, with many shades of buff and brown on the breast and hips. It is only when seen at a short distance, sitting at ease in the sun to show their glossy plumage, that their great beauty appears and justifies their common name. The native name is "putangitangi," which means the water-fowl which makes a great funeral crying—and this she does to perfection with her loud clarionet voice. She calls and calls for her lost mate for days, until her voice is broken and only part of her note is heard. She calls in her highest key as she comes into the bay, flies round, eagerly questioning if he is there, and as she wheels out at the point beyond there is a forlorn sound in her voice that may have prompted the old Maoris to call her the bird that mourns. The drake has quite a different voice, a sort of nasal trumpeting that he uses rather sparingly for a few days until he consoles himself with another mate—a widow, I hope.

They are the most trusting and intelligent birds, greatly inclined to associate with man whenever they get the least encouragement. Nearly every up-country homestead in Southland might cultivate their confidence, and have the close company of a pair of beautiful paradise ducks that would fly about the yard and allow the people to come within a dozen yards of them. But where they are saluted with a charge or two of shot at long distances it is no wonder that their intelligence gets them the character of being shy and hard to "get at."

At Lynwood Homestead, one of the oldest stations in the district, a pair of paradise ducks may often be seen, and these could not be hunted away with a pocketful of stones. There also may be seen the native pigeons flying about the yard and garden, feeding on the broom hedges in winter, and perching by the gates almost within arm's length of the passers-by. A piece of native bush at the door affords cover for numerous tuis, bell-birds, and kakas, and hundreds of black-birds and thrushes that keep up a concert for "foreigners"—but the patriotic New-Zealander says that the thrushes only spoil the music of the bellbirds and tuis.

The paradise ducks have not occupied all the North Island, and I take them to be very local, for I have known a pair to remain in a little bay in Te Anau Lake for a whole year, and probably for two years. The ablest drake, with his mate, takes possession of the best feeding-ground, marks out the boundary of his domain, and protects it against all comers. He keeps a sharp look-out for intruders, and if they alight on his side of the point he comes along, followed by his mate, and drives them off or has a fight. The victor remaining soon comes to know me. This is how I know that the one pair stayed so long, because they were always tame. The ducks only scream and scold, but the drakes collar each other by the throats and beat away with their wings until they are so exhausted they are unable to fly for some time afterwards.

Last year a great old fighting drake came in while my duck was away hatching, and, as in duty bound, her mate fought a great battle for his home and family. At first the flapping was fast and furious, but gradually got slower and slower, until one of them lay on the water, but never turned tail to his enemy. When I put off in the skiff the single drake remained and the pair went away, evidently thinking it too warm a place to camp. The strongest and hardiest have the best feeding-ground for their young, which are more likely to prosper and survive, thus illustrating natural selection and improvement.

About September there is a great deal of courting going on, among the younger ones, I suppose, for I think they pair for life, and that they do not pair until they are about two years old—which will account for the companies of nearly all ducks or all drakes that may be seen about at all seasons. There is a lot of jealousy and squabbling among the ducks when they are trying to arrange matters, but the drake looks on quite passively and only remonstrates with them now and then when they are making too much noise. But when he once accepts a mate he is an ideal husband, and will hunt away a stray duck with as much resentment as if she were a drake. If the swans, grebe, or shags intrude he takes no notice of them, for I suppose he knows that they do not interfere with his food, but when a pair of grey ducks come he chases them with the greatest vengeance, and then shows his speed and strength of wind to the best advantage. No wonder he is tough on the table when he is always in such high training.

On the 20th November last the pair that were nesting near my camp appeared with seven young ones. My attention was first called to them by the cries of distress and the efforts of the old ones to protect them from a harrier hawk that seemed to be unusually bold and persevering, attacking the duck and drake alternately, and doing his best to scatter the young ones. I suppose he succeeded, or got assistance from a ferret, for next morning there were only four young ones, and the day after only three were left.

Sometimes when the drake is away acting as a decoy a hawk thinks he has a chance of stealing a young one; then the mother screams her loudest for assistance, and when the hawk lets down his legs she dashes straight at him, and does all in her power to save her little ones. When the hawk sees the drake returning he generally flies away, but I have seen one pick up a duckling and the drake fly at him and strike with his wing so that the hawk lost his balance and fell. He did not let go the prize, however, but succeeded in carrying it off. If there are no young ones the ducks do not take much notice of the hawk, unless he lets down his legs to seize something, which irritates them.