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The rumour that ferrets had been found on the island is contradicted by the Caretaker, who has been on the lookout for signs of these animals.

Some interesting extracts from the reports of the custodian, Mr. Richard Henry, are appended hereto:—

“April, 1907.—There was a good crop of rata-honey, but no flax-blossoms, this year. The flax and rata seem to take turns about in providing summer fare for the birds. There is as much flax as rata on Resolution—bush flax, whose fibre is no good. Both these blossoms last a long time, because they get later as they go higher up the mountains. The fuchsias had also a fair crop of berries, which they seldom have here—they are so easily destroyed with bad weather—but there were quantities on Copper Mountain, in Wet Jacket, when I was there on the 1st of the month. I brought out four kakapos for Resolution, but it is much warmer and drier in there (in summer), and I had no heart to bring out any more of them, for I am certain that it is a matter of food with them now, as I wrote you in October last. Tuis and mokos were fairly plentiful, also kakas and pigeons—they gathered for the good season here. The two cuckoos were here, though I had not heard them for about three years previously, and other little birds were more in evidence than usual. By this I do not mean that those birds are increasing, but to show how they move about to meet the very changeable seasons in this place. Such movements make it hard to decide if they are disappearing, but I think they are all gradually going, with the exception of roas, wekas, kakas, and pigeons. None of our importations can get at the roas' food—it is too deep in the ground. The pigeon eats leaves for half the year; the weka is able to compete with any of them; and the kaka cuts wood and cracks the hard miro-stones; but kakapos miss the berries that used to enable them to lay up their great stores of fat.

“June 30, 1907.—In May and June I was all around those two Sounds, and anchored out at night for two spells of seven or eight days each. In the quiet evenings and mornings I can learn most about the birds that are present, for if I go puffing into a place in the middle of the day I may not see or hear a bird, and then I go away with the wrong impression. Most of the native birds are disappearing rapidly. The only ground-birds holding their own are wekas and roas, and the only fliers are kakas and pigeons. I heard very few kakapos on Resolution. I found that they were scarce in their favourite places and in poor condition. One poor old fellow was digging up the roots of a fern-tree, with his face all clotted with mud, and when I put him on the fern-stem to climb out of danger he was not able to climb, though in good times he was one of the smartest and ablest climbers. In two places I did not find any kakapos, though it was midwinter, and awfully cold. Whatever is the cause, it has been the same everywhere I have been these last two seasons. May was the month in which they used to be always fat, and comfortably hid away in their dens in the daytime, but now the ones I found were mostly out in the ferns, both on Resolution and on the mainland. Feeding so much in the daytime was new to me, and I thought it might be ferrets keeping them up the trees at night, for they are wise creatures. So I went all around the quiet coasts of Resolution, to every bit of sand and mud I know of, looking for ferret-tracks; but there was no sign of them, and I am satisfied that there are no ferrets on Resolution, for they are so fond of being about creek-beds and beaches that they could not keep away, and the birds are all low down at the time. I generally saw some kakapo-tracks, and plenty of roas and wekas. In about fifteen different anchorages I did not hear a single blackbird or thrush. Of course, they may have been in some places, but shy and silent; but there are none on Pigeon Island this winter, though they were such a nuisance here last year. At the two heads of Breaksea Sound there was a pitiful silence of all the small birds that used to be there; not a thrush, canary, creeper, tui, or moko did I hear, though those places used to be ringing with them. I only saw tits, fantails, white-eyes, and warblers, and heard a few kakapos at night, but very few compared to what there used to be, and when I went for a hunt I did not find one there. I anchored specially under Mount Vancouver to listen for the native thrushes that used to be there; but there were none, nor was there a duck in the creek opposite, where there used to be always some. I met parties of creepers and canaries when I was in the bush on Resolution, but no thrushes, and now on Pigeon Island there are plenty of tuis and mokos, happily singing and playing as if they had honey, but I think it is panax-berries they are eating. Those berries ripen very slowly—only two or three ripe ones on a panicle of several hundreds. If they were to ripen all at once the white-eyes would come for them, but they cannot wait, and so the other birds get a chance. There was a great horde of white-eyes here in April that ate up everything that was ripe. Perhaps that was why the blackbirds left. There are more tuis on Pigeon Island now than anywhere else I have been in the Sounds. The absence of blackbirds is one reason for it, but there seems to be a great disturbance among the birds, and in their habits. The sparrows stayed here all the summer this year. In other years they went away in January, but in this they stayed until May. By great patience I managed to shoot a few of them, and then they all left.

“October 9, 1907.—Yesterday I was in the shallow harbour near Waihopai, and the sandy bottom 10 ft. deep was paved with crayfish shedding their shells. I always thought that they went away into crevices for safety to shed their shells, but this lot were at the mercy of all the fish. In October the cod are always stuffed full of soft crayfish. The crayfish also gather in great companies for their hatching in May, many hundreds of them, not only covering the bottom, but two or three deep in some places. I often saw them in companies in spring-time, but did not know that they were soft-shelled. At North Port in January they were in great heaps in the shallow water, so that a boat would stick on them, but I did not know what business they had on hand there. No doubt there are several applicants for every item of food. If we bring lobsters out here they will have to eat the crayfish or the crayfish will eat them, and the same with all other sea-fish. It will be a case of who is the best fighter and greatest glutton or the best racer.