

every symptom of pleasure. It would then get up, rub against it with its sides, and roll upon it on its back, striking out with its feet whilst in this position.

“One of these birds, sent on shore by Capt. Stokes to the care of Major Murray of the 65th Regiment at Wellington, was allowed to run about his garden, where it was fond of the society of the children, following them like a dog wherever they went.

“Nearly all the adult *Kakapos* which I skinned were exceedingly fat, having a thick layer of oily fat or blubber on the breast which it was very difficult to separate from the skin. Their stomachs contained a pale green, sometimes almost white, homogeneous mass, without any trace of fibre in it.

“There can be little doubt but that their food consists partly of roots (their beaks are usually more or less covered with indurated mud), and partly of the leaves and tender shoots of various plants. At one place where the birds were numerous we observed that the young shoots of a leguminous shrub growing by the banks of a river were all nipped off, and this was said by our pilot, who had frequented these places for many years in a whaling vessel, to be the work of the *Kakapo*.

“Their flesh is white, and is generally esteemed good eating.”

I have also been kindly favoured with the following notes on this bird by His Excellency Sir George Grey, late Governor of New Zealand and now Governor of the Cape of Good Hope:—

“The *Strigops* is called *Kaka-po* or Night Kaka by the aborigines of New Zealand, from the nocturnal habits of the bird. During the day it remains hid in holes under the roots of trees or rocks; or, very rarely, perched on the boughs of trees with a very dense thick foliage: at these times it appears stupid from its profound sleep, and if disturbed or taken from its hole immediately runs and tries to hide itself again, delighting, if practicable, to cover itself in a heap of soft dry grass; about sunset it becomes lively, animated and playful, issues forth from its retreat and feeds on grass, weeds, vegetables, fruits, seeds and roots: when eating grass it rather grazes than feeds, nibbling the grass in the manner of a rabbit or wombat. It sometimes climbs trees, but generally remains upon the ground, and only uses its short wings for the purpose of aiding its progress when running, balancing itself when on a tree or in making a short descent, half-jump, half-flight from a higher to a lower bough. When feeding, if pleased with its food, it makes a continued grunting noise: it is a greedy bird and choice in its food, showing an evident relish for anything of which it is fond. It cries repeatedly during the night with a noise not very unlike that of the Kaka, but not so loud.

“The *Kakapo* is a very clever and intelligent bird, in fact singularly so; contracts a strong affection for those who are kind to it, shows its attachment by climbing about and rubbing itself against its friend, and is eminently a social and playful bird; indeed, were it not for its dirty habits, it makes a far better pet than any other bird with which I am acquainted; for its manner of showing its attachment, by playfulness and fondling, is more like that of a dog than a bird.

“It builds in holes under trees and rocks, and lays two or three white eggs, about the size of a pullet's, in the month of February; and the young birds are found in March.

“At present, 1854, the bird is known to exist only in the middle island of New Zealand, on the west coast, between Chalky Harbour and Jackson's Bay, and in the northern island about the sources of the Whangarie, and in part of the Taufa countries. It was, within the recollection of the old people, abundant in every part of New Zealand, and they say that it has been exterminated by the cats introduced by Europeans, which are now found wild and in great numbers in every part of the country; they say also that the large rat, introduced from Europe, has done its part in the work of destruction.

“The natives assert, that when the breeding season is over the *Kakapo* lives in societies of five or six in the same hole; and they also state that it is a provident bird, and lays up in the fine season a store of fern root for the bad weather. I have had five or six of these birds in captivity, but never succeeded in keeping them alive for more than eighteen months or two years. The last I had I sent home as a present to the Zoological Society, but I am informed it died off Cape Horn.”