

light grey, with seven rows of light dots; abdomen, fawn colour; a yellowish green ring round the eyes. The crest on the nape and back is small, the spines are small and round, the scales on the skin fine and soft to the touch. Measurement of adult: 1 foot 5 inches, total length; length of head, 2·5; width, 1 inch; front leg to the tip of toe, 3 inches; hind leg the same. It may be that this variety does not deserve to be ranked as a distinct species from the common *Tuatara*, but at the same time I think it a very well-marked local form, which has probably arisen during long isolation on Hauturu Island. In many respects this variety seems most distinct from the common *Tuatara*, the crest both on the nape and the back are much finer, the separate spines are round, not gently flattened as on the common species. The form of the head is more of an oval shape, the scales, including those at the sides of the body, are smaller, and softer to the touch, the colour markings are decidedly different from the common *Tuatara*. The difference in colour might be due to the lighter character of the soil on which they live, as I have often found with animals and birds.

Here I have a series of specimens for observation, which Professor Thomas, F.L.S., T. Cheeseman, F.L.S., and I, have examined carefully. These gentlemen agree with me in the general tenor of these remarks.

ART. XXI.—*Notes on the Habits of the Polecat, Ferret, Mongoose, Stoat, and Weasel.* By A. REISCHEK, F.L.S.

[Read before the Auckland Institute, 30th November, 1885.]

PUTORIUS PUTORIUS.—Polecat.

This animal is common in Europe, except North Russia and Lapland, and is found in Siberia, Kamtschatka, and Tartary. It frequents mountains, forests, plains, and settlements; and makes a comfortable nest of grass, moss, leaves, &c., in hollow trees, or under the roots; between rocks, thick scrub, or in burrows, which they excavate if unable to find any already available. In severe winters they come near settlements, where they take up their abode in hay or straw stacks, stone walls, or some unmolested places about farm-houses, where they make great havoc amongst the poultry and eggs; and in Austria a reward is offered for their destruction. They destroy all the small animals and birds which they are able to overpower, and are even dangerous to children.

At a place in Austria where they are numerous, on one occasion when I was out hunting, I disturbed a hiding-place of these animals amongst the rocks, from which four came out,

and, instead of attempting to escape, they defended themselves in a most plucky and aggressive manner, by biting at my boots and stick, until I had destroyed the last. Their movements are active, and they are good climbers, swimmers, and divers. The female, after a period of two months, brings forth from three to six young, which are full-grown in about four months.

PUTORIUS FURO.—Ferret.

These animals belong to the same class as the former, but are smaller in size and more delicate in organisation, and cannot stand cold climates. They were reared in confinement in ancient times, and are mentioned by Pliny. They are now used for destroying rabbits and rats; but they are almost as destructive as their ally the polecat to small animals, birds and their eggs. They increase rapidly, having from four to eight young at a time.

HERPESTES ICHNEUMON.—Mongoose (Pharoahan Rat).

These animals are useful in destroying snakes and vermin, but are very destructive to domestic and wild birds and their eggs, besides killing animals much larger than themselves through their cunning and activity. They destroy more than they eat, in most cases merely sucking the blood and devouring the brain. The Arabs and Egyptians hunt and destroy them at every opportunity. They are common in Africa, Egypt, and Barbary, inhabiting the lowlands, and generally near rivers, where they conceal themselves in burrows or thick undergrowth, from which they watch for their prey. There are several varieties and species belonging to this genus, whose habits are similar to the species already described.

MUSTELA ERMINEA.—Stoat, or Large Weasel.

This animal when full grown is about 14 inches in length, with a very slender body and short legs. The colour in summer is a reddish brown; throat, under-part, and inside the legs, white. In winter it changes to white, except the black brush on the tail. I have shot, on several occasions, piebald and spotted ones. They are very active, day and night; are expert in climbing, swimming, and even diving. Pursuing their prey stealthily, they make a final spring to secure it. I do not know any animal pluckier or more vicious than these: they attack and overpower animals three times their own size. If one cannot master its prey, on its making a hissing noise others come to its assistance to conquer the victim, biting at its throat till it succumbs. They even attack children, if they interfere with them. They are useful in destroying rats and mice, but do great harm amongst poultry, small animals, birds and their eggs. I know cases where they killed every fowl about the house, and pigeon in the cots, in one night.

These animals inhabit plains, mountains, and forests, hiding in burrows or under stones or in thick hedges; and I also found them in farm-houses, where they had a dry place of concealment, and where they make a nest of grass and moss to sleep.

In the month of June, in Austria, the female brings forth after five weeks from four to eight young, which she protects with great bravery. The family stay together till the winter.

MUSTELA VULGARIS.—Common Weasel.

This pretty little animal has the same habits and habitats as its ally the stoat, and is not behind it in bloodthirstiness. If the larger carnivorous animals were as courageous and vicious as these, they would soon reduce materially the limits of animal life.

ART. XXII.—*The Protection of Native Birds.*

By HUGH MARTIN.

[Read before the Nelson Philosophical Society, 2nd March, 1885.]

BIRDS peculiar to New Zealand that should be preserved in island reserves:—

A.—BIRDS INHABITING THE MAINLAND.

4. *Athene albifacies*.—Whekau, Laughing Owl. South Island, and Kaimanawa Range in North Island.
9. *Pogonornis cincta*.—Hihi, Matakioke, Stitchbird. North Island.
10. *Prothemadera nova-zealandia*.—Tui. Both Islands; also, Auckland and Chatham Islands.
11. *Anthornis melanura*.—Korimako. Both Islands, and Auckland Islands. Rare in many parts.
32. *Turnagra crassirostris*.—Piopio, Southern Thrush. South Island. Now rare, and in many parts extinct.
33. *T. hectori*.—Piopio, Northern Thrush. Southern part of North Island.
37. *Glaucopsis wilsoni*.—Kokako, Blue-wattled Crow. North Island. Very irregular in distribution.
38. *G. cinerea*.—Kokako, Orange-wattled Crow. South Island. Very irregular in distribution.
40. *Creadion carunculatus*.—Tieke, Saddle-back. Both Islands. Flight feeble.
41. *Heteralocha acutirostris*.—Huia. South part of North Island, in Ruahine, Tararua, and Rimutaka Ranges.
42. *Stringops habroptilus*.—Kakapo. Both Islands and Chatham Islands. Incapable of flight. Very rare.
47. *Nestor meridionalis*.—Common Kaka. Both Islands.