

## *Native Rat Found Living With Larger Species*

Three different species of rats have been found living amicably together on Kapiti and Stewart Islands. Previously it had been thought that the smaller of the three—the kiore or native New Zealand rat—had been driven from the country when the white man brought the larger types, the Norway rat and the ship rat, to New Zealand.

The man who has disproved this theory is Mr. J. S. Watson, of the ecology section of the Scientific and Industrial Research Department. It is he who has found the kiore living on many of the islands around the coast and who also discovered traces of this rat in notornis country in Fiordland.

This discovery is not only of major ecological significance, it is also of some economic importance as it will enable scientists to in-

vestigate the habits of the kiore so as to be able to find a way of dealing with the species, which has become a menace in parts of the Cook Islands.

The kiore is similar to the common types of rats, though very much smaller.

It was introduced to New Zealand by the Maoris many centuries ago and used for food. It has been found in many parts of Polynesia.

## **HEDGEHOG HABITS UNDER STUDY**

One of the first full-scale investigations anywhere in the world is being made into the habits of the hedgehog by a young scientist in the animal ecology section of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. He is Mr. R. E. Brockie.

His investigations have extended over the past 2½ years in New Zealand and he is soon going to England, where he will continue his research.

Much of his time has been spent studying the eating habits of the wild hedgehog and he is satis-

fied that the conviction held by many people that their favourite food is chicken or game bird eggs is a fallacy.

Mr. Brockie will admit that given a broken egg the hedgehog will make a satisfying meal of it; but an egg in an unbroken shell has been ignored by all the hedgehogs to which he has offered one.

He has found that their main food is slugs and snails, though it has varied from place to place, depending on what is available.

To try and get a check on the population densities of hedgehogs

in certain parts of the country, Mr. Brockie for some time has had members of his department keep a close watch for dead hedgehogs as they travel by car round the country. These reports have given him a reliable indication of the various population densities.

Mr. Brockie says research in recent months has shown that hedgehogs are the carrier of *Lep-tospira pomona*, which takes a heavy toll of calves each year and which is also found in human beings. Previously it had been thought that the disease was spread only by pigs.