

Junior Along the Track

Timaru.—On Labour Day last year, I happened to catch sight of a sparrow chasing a wax-eye. They chased each other round about until finally while the wax-eye had half turned to see its adversary, it banged into a wooden fence and clung there. I took it inside and gave it some honey and water which it drank when I left the room. After a while it flew away again.—*H. Willberg, 13 years.*

Hatters Terrace, Westland.—Last November a pair of long-tailed cuckoos were seen every day flying from tree to tree in the school grounds. They continually called to each other.

During lunch one day, we were sitting on the school steps watching one of the cuckoos. A black-bird flew into the tree and immediately began its sharp protesting notes. Suddenly we were startled by sharp cries and then there was silence.

The cuckoo then flew to the plantation with the blackbird in its beak.—*Brian J. Talbot.*

[*The Head Teacher saw this too.—Ed.*]

Inglewood.—In the bush above my home, close to the Mt. Egmont reserve we found a Harrier Hawk's nest. The nest was in a swamp clearing in the bush. The nest was just a platform beaten out in a clump of toi-toi. It was lined with rushes with some dried grass as well. On the platform we found two young hawks and one white egg about as big as a good size bantam's egg. It was very interesting watching the young birds grow, and it was great the way that they used to sit back on their tails and open their beaks and claws ready to strike at us if we went too near them, but they made no sound at all. We took several snaps of them in different positions.

After some time the young birds left the nest and lived on a big log not very far from the nest. When we went near the young birds their parents flew overhead or sat on a tall tree screaming at us. When we saw the hawks the last time the larger one of the two flapped his way up on to a small waiwaka tree and glared most fiercely down at us.

One day my brother saw one of the parent birds capture and carry away a stoat to its nest.—*Florence Perrett, 13 years.*

[*We publish one of Florence's snaps below. It would be quite possible for a harrier to deal with a stoat, though we have not heard of this before. Look at the portrait inside the back cover!—Ed.*]

Marton.—I am at Nga Tawa, a boarding school in Marton, which has a native patch that belongs to the school. In the native patch are native trees and shrubs of N.Z., e.g., rimu, kowhai, red beech, totara, whau. In nature study we sometimes go down to it and learn the names and what they look like, so we can recognise them at any time.

Often when a girl is leaving she buys a tree and plants it in the native patch. She looks after it till she leaves, and then another girl adopts it.—*Priscilla Williams, 11 years.*

[*A good idea for other schools.—Ed.*]

Kerikeri.—If you rub a cork on a flat bottle with water on the side you are rubbing, it makes a noise like a fantail.—*Deirdre Dwan, 12 years.*

Oamaru.—Last weekend, when, at Kakanui, I was returning from a swim across the river basin I surprised a medium sized grey-brown bird with long legs which I think must have been a dotterel. It was feeding along the river bank and seemed undisturbed by my presence. I swam to within a yard of it and followed it as it moved along the water's edge with a little running step. I watched it for about three minutes then had to stand up because of shallow water whereupon it ran for about three yards and then flew a little way still seemingly quite unafraid and uttering no sound. I was interested to note that when its wings were spread they revealed a creamy-white band following the line of its fairly long narrow wings. When it stopped flying it continued pecking among the stones completely ignoring me as if nothing had happened.—*Christine Allan, 15 years.*

[*This would be a wader of some sort. Depending on its size it could be a N.Z. Dotterel or one of the larger migrants such as Hudsonian Godwit, especially if beak and legs were noticeably long.—Ed.*]

Mauriceville.—One day I went over to the orchard where I heard a noise which sounded like a mason bee but louder. I went home and told my father. After a few days he went over and had a look. He found where there was a hole in the tree. Suddenly a kingfisher flew out. It must store its food because there was a lot of rotten meat and rubbish in the hole.—*Dawn McGovern, 12 years.*

[*Kingfishers have a burring or hissing note, and the sound could have come either from the adult or from young ones which were probably in the hole. A kingfisher's nesting hole is most insanitary.—Ed.*]

SOWING RARE NATIVE PLANTS

Leon Hampson-Tindale, whose address is "opp. Park Rd., Western Hutt Rd., Lower Hutt", writes:—

I am a junior member of the Society, and I have made a hobby of collecting seeds of rare native plants, e.g. taurepo, and planting them in bush where they have not grown previously. If you know of any other junior members interested in this, will you please ask them to communicate with me for the purpose of "swapping" seeds.

Will any junior interested write to Leon direct.

In bush which has been so changed by man or by animal pests that it is never likely to regain its natural state and in plantations or gardens, this is a very worthwhile activity and we congratulate Leon on it. We feel, however, that we must sound a note of warning where untouched bush is concerned: to plant strange seeds in that might not be so good—it would be going contrary to nature.

