

# JUNIOR SECTION

Dear Children,

I do hope you will write to me with ideas and suggestions. I should like you all to feel that this is *your* section of *Forest and Bird* and that all your letters will receive careful attention.

What about some jokes about forests and birds, somebody?

With school holidays and Christmas not far off, I should like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a wonderful summer holiday.

Cheerio.

Huia.

It is deeply regretted by the President and all of us at headquarters that we have not been able to help all those children who have taken so much trouble in writing to us asking for pictures and information on birds, trees, ferns, and so on. You see, our problems are that we have not enough books to send to all those who write to us, postage is very expensive, and there are simply not enough of us to cope with all these requests anyway! Most of us are volunteers, that is, we have much work to do which takes up most of our time.

We have, however, been seeking ways and means, and our President has asked me to tell you all about some excellent sets of loose-leaf pictures of native birds that can be supplied at cost price (10s.) to people, such as teachers, scout leaders, and guide captains, who are actively engaged in instructing young people. *New Zealand Forest-inhabiting Birds* is a set of beautiful coloured pictures about  $9 \times 5 \frac{1}{2}$  inches from paintings by Miss L. A. Daff (you will have seen many of them on the covers of earlier *Forest and Bird* magazines). These pictures, with a white border on a pale grey background, look very nice indeed framed. There is also *New Zealand Sea and Shore Birds*, available to the same class of people for 7s. 6d. The pictures in this set are a little smaller.

These sets are ideal for instruction because each picture on its separate sheet may be paired with a second sheet on which is a description of the bird in the picture. So you see, if a teacher wanted to give a project on birds she could hand to each child a picture of a different bird and the description that goes with it, thus overcoming the problem of

not having enough pictures to go round, as often happens when books are used.

By the way, you may be wondering why none of your letters are included in this issue about the new section, as I had promised in our last journal. Well, the reason is that this issue has had to go to the printers before you have even received your August number.

## KNOW YOUR BIRDS

When you read this section you will probably wonder why I have included a bird that is not a native New Zealander. Well, there are several reasons, and one is that many species of introduced birds are now very much a part of our landscape and therefore cannot be ignored. Also there are many things that we can learn from studying them at close quarters which will help us in studying some of our more-shy native birds. Above all, the blackbird was chosen because, owing to its habit of coming into our gardens, it must be known to most of you and therefore it is so easy to study and get to know.

## THE BLACKBIRD

Introduced into New Zealand. Male: all black (not shiny-black like the starling) with bright orange bill and eye rims; feet dark brown. Female: brown, frequently mistaken for a thrush which, however, has a speckled breast and shorter tail. Young birds brownish.

Feeds on various insects, seeds, and fruits. Runs swiftly on lawn. Tail sways upward gracefully when it alights. One of the few introduced birds that may be seen and heard right into the bush as well as in open country. Does not gather in flocks as does the starling.

Only the male sings. It has a loud alarm note uttered whenever the slightest bit alarmed. For this characteristic the blackbird has been referred to as the policeman of the woods. He so quickly gives loud warning of the presence of cats or other enemies.

The nest is made of grass matted together with mud and lined with finer grass. Eggs are generally found from September to November.

If you want to tame it offer it sultanas. One hears of blackbirds becoming so tame that they will peck at a window for the tidbits which they have come to expect.