

Paeroa.—My friends and I were on our way to the dam where the water pipes are put for our supply of water and there was a wood pigeon sitting on the branch of a dead tree about two yards away. It was picking berries off the tree beside it and calling coo-coo at intervals. Looking down we saw that we were very high up. From the place where we were standing we could see right across the Hauraki Plains and could follow the path of the river for about three miles.

—*Fiona Hartley.*

Auckland.—Today we went to Beachlands and on the way I counted twenty-four kingfishers. They were on the power lines for the most part and looked very pretty sitting there. It is the first time I have seen so many kingfishers.

—*Sharon Dunn, 10 years.*

Wanganui.—I looked up from my work on hearing a lovely chirping sound. I saw that it was a little silveryeye hopping around on the branches. Soon there were lots of them. I noticed one hop along to near the end of a branch to a pinky-purple bell-shaped flower and stop. He then turned upside down and inserted his beak into the flower. I presume he had a lovely feed of sweet nectar. Then a blackbird landed on the same branch and the silveryeyes flew away. They were soon back and repeated their nectar drinking. The tree they were on is a big evergreen with a rich green colour for the leaves and the flowers are as I have said pinky-purple and hang like a small bell.

—*Sheryl Bielski, 14 years.*

[*Hardly enough information to identify the tree.*
—*Ed.*]

Whakamara.—Dad and my brother went down on the tractor with their power saw, hand saws, and an axe to saw down a dead tree. Dad told me that many years ago there was a big fire through the bush and this tree burnt and died. It was a native totara. While they chopped it down, we saw six pigeons and we heard some tuis and all the time we heard and saw bellbirds and fantails. It took them some time to chop the tree down as it was 15 ft. round. The only thing growing on it was a kiekie. On the way home we heard a kiwi and morepork.

—*Max Goldsack, 12 years.*

St. Andrews College.—I thought I would write about the keas at Arthur's Pass. The first morning I was there I woke up and heard a noise as if there was a cat outside, but I could see no cat anywhere. After a while I found that keas were making those queer noises. They were up in the beech trees and every now and again they flew down on to the car, where they pecked at the mirror. The birds have a lovely coating of orange feathers underneath their wings, and their body is coated with dark green feathers. They seem very tame and I managed to get a very close-up photograph of one of them. I am very keen to know whether they are in the same family as the kakapo and the parakeet.

—*Andrew Harrison, 13 years.*

[*See recent article in Forest and Bird on N.Z. parrots.*—*Ed.*]

Lower Hutt.—During the Christmas holidays we went to Rotorua to see the famous Rainbow Springs. We saw pools of trout and native bush. While we were walking down a small track, we found the nest of a whitehead. It contained three eggs and was about three feet above the ground. Mum put some bread in the nest for the bird and we went away leaving the nest undisturbed.

—*Michael Murphy, 13 years.*

Havelock North.—On the 21st of March I attended the opening of the Lowry lodge, near the Taihape road. A little more than half way we halted for lunch near a lovely little country brook lined with pongas. When we arrived there were three organised tramps. One was to the ridge overlooking the Heretaunga Plains; the other two were to the caves and the bush tracks. I chose the ridge, and on the way up I noted the beautiful rock formations. There was a noticeably large amount of pig rooting. This time we went back to the lodge by the bush track. We had to push through the manuka scrub. There was little chance of getting lost there if you kept to the track because of the brightly painted tin tops nailed to the trees and rocks. There were also a number of bellbirds and fantails. I particularly noticed the large native blue wasps landing on the spectators' backs.

—*David Annard, 11 years.*

Waipukurau.—Last year when I was going around a dam near my house, I saw two cygnets and two swans on the dam. The cygnets' colour was greyish-brown. There was an island in the middle of the dam on which raupo grows. The swans nest in the raupo. The swans come back every year to nest. There are also many grey ducks, mallard ducks and pukekos there. They nest there too. I have often heard grebes in the raupo but they keep well hidden. All around the dam are many skylarks.

—*John Mackie, 9 years.*

Auckland.—During the May holidays 36 children, including myself, went on a trip organised by the teachers of Avondale College, and the N.Z. Army, who supplied transport, etc.

It was on the private property of Mr. Bethell at Bethells Beach, who gave us permission to camp there. While we were on manoeuvres through the bush I noticed an abundance of wildlife.

I counted three native pigeons, two of which were only about 10 yards from us and never moved; the other I studied with binoculars. Although the tuis were constantly singing I wasn't fortunate to see any. Fantails were always within touching distance, chirping their delightful chirp, and of course there were opossums, which kept us awake most of the night.

I saw a pair of red-fronted parakeets in a clearing and observed several harriers gliding gracefully above. I really enjoyed studying close at hand our native birds in their own environment.

—*Anthony Nicholson, 15 years.*

[*Yes, opossums are unfortunately spread over most of N.Z. now. They are one of the pests that present many problems to the authorities who are trying to reduce their numbers.*—*Ed.*]