

While I was photographing it, the bird waded within easy distance for about five minutes, apparently annoyed at being disturbed, but not appearing alarmed. At one stage it waded into the water up to the body in the same manner as that depicted in D. A. Urquhart's photograph of the Marsh Sandpiper at Mangere (*Notornis* VIII, 210, Plate XXXII). When it eventually took to the air, it flew off to the inland end of the pool making rapid wingbeats and calling "chip-chip-chip" frequently, which agrees with the description of its call in Witherby. The bird alighted in vegetation in a less accessible part of the pond and was not relocated. Subsequent visits by F.F. and M.B. shortly afterwards also failed to relocate it.

The pool, of about 10 acres, is on the property of Mr. R. V. Nowell, three miles from Hawera, and is used for watering his stock. Small numbers of Pied Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) are usually found there. It is separated from the coast by 220 yards of lupin-covered black-sand dunes, with a drop of 250 feet of sharp cliff to the sea beach. When first seen, the bird was standing on black sand near the lupins.

Since observing this bird, I have been able to see J. L. Kendrick's movie of the Marsh Sandpiper recorded in *Notornis* X. Its appearance and flight agree with my notes and recollection of the Hawera bird.

— MAURICE G. MACDONALD



GREENFINCH-LIKE SPARROWS

For several years I have noticed 'greenfinch-like' sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) periodically in my garden at feeding time. Many of the females appeared to be a 'yellowish green' about the head, and over the breast in particular. At first, I dismissed the yellowness of the sparrows as an optical illusion under certain lighting conditions or as contamination by paint. However, as the yellowing appeared seasonally, I decided to seek some other reason for it, perhaps pollen dust. It was soon found that the season of 'yellowing' coincided with the flowering of the Pohutukawa (*Metrocideros excelsa*). It was found that the sparrows have a liking for the nectar, and for the insects that visit the Pohutukawa. In their search for the nectar and insects, the sparrows 'wade' through the numerous stamens and, in so doing, become discoloured by the adhering pollen. The staining of the plumage is slight, but sufficient to be remarkable.

The males, because of their black 'bibs' and darker plumage, do not show the discolouring, although they frequent the flowers as much as the females.

This observation is of interest as it shows how a bird which is a seed- and insect-eater (omnivorous in many respects) can assume the role of a pollinator. In the past, I have frequently observed various finches indulging in nectar feeding. However, I believe that the true pollinators of the Pohutukawa (apart from wind) are the many moths which visit the flowers at dusk, and that the sparrows merely clean up the remains of the 'banquet' of the previous evening. From casual observation it appears to me that Pohutukawa flowers secrete most nectar towards evening and that the anthers dehisce about the same time, thus catering for the nocturnal moths.

— C. McCANN