

The bird was perched, low in the understorey, holding a small millipede (approx. 3cm long) crosswise in her bill. She repeatedly thrust her head under her wing and shook it about, as if preening violently. She then withdrew her head, thrust it under the other wing, and again shook it about. After she had done this several times she leant forward and transferred the millipede to her feet, holding it along the branch on which she was perched, and poking roughly at it with her bill. After several jabs she again took it cross-wise in her bill and recommenced thrusting it under one wing then the other.

This basic pattern was repeated three times, the shrikebill dropping the millipede into tangled undergrowth the third time she lifted it from her feet. She looked down at the spot where it fell, but made no attempt to retrieve it, and after a few seconds flew off through the forest, followed by a male Black-faced Shrikebill which had been preening and calling on a vine a few metres away.

Unfortunately I was unable to find the millipede amongst the dense tangle of fern into which it had fallen, so cannot offer an identification.

FERGUS CLUNIE

*Fiji Museum,
P.O. Box 2023,
Suva, Fiji.*

★

WASP STINGING A BELLBIRD

In early March 1973 on Hen Island I observed a juvenile Bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*) fall to the ground and lie there with very little movement. When I picked it up I observed a Tasmanian Wasp (*Polistes humilis*) stinging the bird on the right side of its rump. The bird was very drowsy but after being fed some honey water began to recover. Some ten minutes later it was looking quite bright but examination showed that its right side, particularly the leg, was still partially paralysed. However, half an hour after being rescued the bird had recovered sufficiently to fly away.

Dr J. C. Watt, Entomology Division, DSIR, Auckland, who identified the wasp for me added the following notes —

“It was apparently accidentally introduced from Australia and has been in the North Island for some years. The nest is a small inverted cone of greyish paper attached to the branches of trees or shrubs. Generally this wasp will only attack man when provoked. Thus, one would imagine that the Bellbird must have provoked it in some way.”

C. R. VEITCH

*Wildlife Service,
Department of Internal Affairs,
Box 2220,
Auckland*