

DECREASE OF GREY WARBLER

There has been a drastic decline in the numbers of Grey Warbler (*Gerygone igata*) recorded in my garden, compared with thirty years ago, although the environment has remained unchanged. In a daily record of all species seen in the garden over a twelve month period, the figures for May 1942 to April 1943 gave a total of 257 for the Grey Warbler whereas those for May 1971 to April 1972 gave the much reduced tally of 39. Now weeks may pass without a Warbler being recorded but thirty years ago it was a constant inhabitant and actually breeding. We do not use any sprays.

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FERNBIRDS ON THE HILLS WEST OF DUNEDIN

There have been several uncertain reports of Fernbirds (*Bowdleria p. punctata*) on Flagstaff and Swampy hills on the western boundaries of Dunedin city, but they have never been confirmed.

On 24 June 1973 Mr Neil Henderson and others saw one Fernbird and heard two others along Burns Track at an altitude of about 1600' (488m).

The general vegetation in the region consists of tussock (*Chionochloa rigida*) 1m high and scattered flax (*Phormium tenax*) 1.5m sometimes clumped. The flax bushes are about a metre apart with tussock between. Odd coprosma bushes (*C. rugosa* and *C. propinqua*), Olearia, Hebe, Manuka (2m), Aciphylla, Gorse and Cassinia are sparsely scattered throughout.

Drainage is good, and the terrain generally dry except in one shallow valley where there are numerous patches of boggy ground. These wet areas are clothed with *Carex spp.* with scattered flax 2m high with Coprosma and occasional Hebes on firmer ground.

On each of two subsequent visits, 29 July and 4 August 1973, we saw one Fernbird in the wet area. Three others, however, were seen widely separated (over 1 mile apart) amongst the tussock and flax — one bird was seen at over 2000' (610m) close to the summit of Swampy.

All the Fernbirds heard calling (a total of four) were tracked down and good views obtained of each. They appeared to be no different in colour or pattern from the birds RSG has seen at Tuakitoto.

The rolling and sometimes steep terrain covered with tussock and scattered areas of flax extends not only west towards Middlemarch but also north to the Shag Valley and south to the Maungatua. It is likely that Fernbirds are scattered throughout.