

## THE ADAPTABLE HOUSE SPARROW

A Kowhai coming into flower in the garden on 18 October 1973 was the scene of much activity on the part of a group of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*). They were feeding on the nectar but were not adopting the usual technique of the honeyeaters or the silver-eyes — they were taking a short cut to the nectar by piercing neat holes in the base of the flower. An examination of the flowers showed that the greater number had holes pierced in them. About half a dozen Sparrows could be seen in the tree during most of the day and this method of feeding continued for several days.

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## THE ROBIN AS A FIRE FIGHTER ?

For a long time I have been curious about an observation which I made during a walk between Flora and Salisbury Hut in the vicinity of Mt Arthur east of Nelson. It was New Years Day of 1958 and we were on the track for Salisbury Hut. I had stopped to watch a South Island Robin and a Fantail when two deer stalkers came along and we talked for a while. They mentioned that the Robin was credited with putting out bush fires, and to demonstrate they put a lighted match on the track. The Robin immediately came up to the match, seized it in its beak and shook it out.

I imagine that the Robin was attracted to the bright light, picked the match up and, finding it was hot, shook it out, but I have often wondered if this behaviour has ever been reported in the literature.

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