

LITERATURE CITED

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SHORT NOTE

ROCK WREN USING AN ANVIL

Since interest in the subject of birds as tool-users is now world-wide, the following incident seems relevant and may be worth recounting.

On 14 January 1970 when my wife and I spent some time watching Rock Wrens (*Xenicus gilviventris*) not far from the Homer Tunnel, one was seen to catch a rather big bright-green grasshopper and to batter the body to pulp on a piece of corrugated iron, a relic perhaps from the building of the tunnel and swept away by an avalanche. For so small a bird a grasshopper of this size seemed a rather unwieldy morsel. But both Guthrie-Smith (1936: 146) and Soper (1972: 19) mention grasshoppers among the items of prey taken by Rock Wrens; and it seems that in summer these insects form a normal part of their diet. This being so, to render grasshoppers edible, Rock Wrens must be in the habit of 'softening them up' on a handy 'anvil' in much the same way as the Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) smashes snails on a stone.

As to the identity of the grasshopper, I consulted Dr R. R. Forster of the Otago Museum and Mr J. S. Dugdale of the Entomology Division, DSIR, and I am grateful for their helpful interest. Both suggest that the grasshopper was either *Sigauss australis* or *Alpinacris tumidicauda*, with the balance of the rather inadequate data favouring the former.

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