

4 a.m. next morning saw us heading for the coast again bent on seeing Marsh Crakes. Half the party went to Te Teko and were successful while the rest met no success at Matata; some Fern Birds were seen though and provided new species for some members. Both groups then headed for Rotoma where the Kokakos turned on a star performance. Good views of Bitterns were also had at nearby Soda Springs. The second group tried again for crakes at Rotongata but the elusive birds were heard more than seen and these were only Spotless Crakes.

Goodbyes were finally said at the Blue Lake Camp and the school came to an end.

Raymond Jackson,
9 Kenrick Road,
Rotorua



SHORT NOTE

INEXPERIENCED HUNTING BEHAVIOUR BY AN AUSTRALASIAN HARRIER

On 18 January, a fine evening, I was lying down in a flat rough paddock beside a trained native falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae*) being used for research. The falcon looked up from feeding and I turned and noticed a Harrier (*Circus approximans*) about 400 metres away. The Harrier, a young bird, probably female, was flying steadily towards us searching the area below. About 30 metres from us she broke her flight and started circling over something without noticing me lying quietly. She circled with legs dangling, almost landing several times and interested in something in the shortish rough grass.

I sat up slowly to get a better view and saw to my surprise that she was circling over my black cocker spaniel bitch who was snuffling around after mice. The dog, being used to trained hawks flying about, was oblivious to the Harrier a metre or so over her back.

Eventually the hawk landed about two metres from the dog. The dog glanced up at the hawk which promptly took off in fright. After circling once more the hawk flew across the paddock and landed on the top of a 5 metre sawn-off pine windbreak, another sign of inexperience.

Judging by the date and the bird's immaculate plumage, she was in the process of becoming independent. This is the period when a lot of hawks run into difficulties. I have had experience of trained Eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) and Goshawks (*Accipiter gentilis*) attacking pointers and springer spaniels but I would not have expected such behaviour from a Harrier.

N. C. FOX