

TWO NOTES ON ROBIN BEHAVIOUR

Although there is no red in the plumage of our so-called Robin (*Petroica australis*), it is easy to understand, if one lives in daily contact with these confiding birds, why the early settlers instinctively transferred the name of the familiar English garden bird to the toutouwai of the N.Z. forest. Sometimes when I am splitting posts at Minginui I have three or four Robins near me, and once I had five together. They get almost underfoot and great care is needed to avoid dropping posts on them. One October when a pair had a nest thirty feet up in a small tawa, I wasted a lot of time cutting out grubs and white ants for them to take to the young. If I went near the nest they would take the food and hide it in the top of a punga or on a heap of moss on a branch until I moved away. In November a very tame large male sometimes brought a young one and fed it on small pieces of bread from my lunch.

R. ST. PAUL



At the end of January, 1957, Robins were quite common up the valley of the D'Urville river. On one occasion one was sitting about 8 feet away from me, when a hare happened to pass close by. The Robin immediately flew at the hare and chased it away through the beech trees. The hare seemed most alarmed.

M. BREEN



A SURVIVING COLONY OF FERNBIRDS AT ROTORUA

On 6/7/58 I visited the duneland between Lake Rotorua and the swamp north of Kawaha Point. I had not gone more than five yards when I flushed a small, dark brown bird which flew for a few yards and landed again in a clump of sedge. Although I had never seen a Fernbird (*Bowdleria punctata*) before, I knew at once that this was one. I worked my way further into the swamp and in a matter of minutes surprised another. It was quite easily followed because the bird rustled the dry sedge leaves as it made its way through them. It was not long, however, before it took wing, flying about twenty yards before it landed. I did not follow it but watched its rather laboured flight with the ragged tail drooping. Its rapidly beating wings made a whirring sound rather like that of a sparrow, but quite distinct.

Some way in front of me was a small patch of raupo and, thinking that this might be a likely place for more Fernbirds, I made my way between the sedge clumps towards it and located two more birds, probably a pair. One flew on to a raupo stem and watched me whilst it made its curious, bell-like "u-ttick" calls. I now saw almost every detail of its plumage. The back and wings were a medium brown, streaked with dark brown or black, chest and under parts grey streaked with dark brown. The slightly curved bill was black and the legs a dark colour. In size it was larger than a sparrow, about seven inches in length.

I had heard that a Fernbird will inhabit scrub as well as swamp and as an extensive area of scrub bordered the swamp I wondered whether it would produce Fernbirds too. Sure enough, after fighting my way through blackberry and bracken, I heard two, and later saw one