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SHORT NOTES

SOUTH ISLAND ROBIN EATING VENISON

The tameness of the Robins (*P. australis*) in the Eglinton Valley is proverbial, but I have never found them so tame as in May 1961. All eleven birds which I contacted at various parts of the valley (five of them in an area of about ten acres) readily accepted small pieces of bread and though they did not actually feed from my hand, most of them would quite happily take bread fragments dropped on the ground just by my foot. They were not at all interested in bits of biscuit. The pieces of bread were usually carried in the bill to a perch on branch or stump, and most birds returned for more — one bird had twelve pieces. Two birds on the roadside were particularly tame; both were I think cocks, one rather aggressive and the other rather cowed. The aggressive bird took its food to a perch, but the other preferred to hop under the car and eat its portions. After feeding these birds for a little time I left them and went into the bush for about half an hour; when I returned they were still there, the first bird on a perch, the second bird on the ground by the front wheel of the car, body held semi-erect but slightly crouched, wings slightly drooped and tail spread, with the tips of the feathers touching the ground; its whole attitude was expressive of supplication and expectancy.

Robins were watched taking insects and worms from the forest floor, and one bird was seen "marking time" and later collecting an insect from the moss where it had been treading. A deer had recently been killed, skinned and some of the flesh removed. In the process of cutting the meat some small fragments of flesh had been scattered on the ground around the dead beast. As I first came upon the dead deer I saw a Robin take and eat one of the meat fragments, and on my return half an hour later I watched the bird again hop up to the carcase and take another piece. I do not know if this carnivorous behaviour has been previously recorded.

— A. T. EDGAR