

## BELLBIRD ATTACKING SPARROWS

On 20/4/61 a happy-sounding (male?) Bellbird (*A. melanura*) was heard in the tall gum-trees at the bottom of my garden in New Plymouth. Thence, he moved to an oak tree near the house. The sight of a dozen House Sparrows (*P. domesticus*) milling over a lump of bread at the feeding-table on the lawn seemed to put ideas of mischief into his head, for he made a 50ft. dive, worthy of any falcon or sparrowhawk, at the sparrows. No attempt was made to strike but the Bellbird passed a foot above them and rose into a copper beech nearby. The Sparrows also scattered into the same tree; where the Bellbird sorted out a victim and put it to flight around the lawn and trees at a speed of which I never thought either was capable. While the Sparrow took shelter in some kowhai trees, the Bellbird returned to the oak to await the Sparrows who were soon busy again at the feeding-table. Then down swept the Bellbird to repeat the assault. This went on some half a dozen times till he tired of the game.

— C. T. GIBSON

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## HARRIER ATTACKED BY SPUR-WINGED PLOVERS

Towards dusk on 30/6/61, I witnessed the following attack on a Harrier (*C. approximans*) by a party of five Spur-winged Plovers (*L. novaehollandiae*). This took place over paddocks immediately south-west of the Meteorological Office, Invercargill. My attention was drawn to the scene by the amount of noise the plovers were creating. The mode of attack appeared systematic and was observed as follows:—

One of the party would swoop and attack the Harrier from the rear. Completing the attack, it would rise to the level of the remaining birds; and as this occurred, another of the party would swoop in, again from the rear. This second bird having attacked, yet another would swoop in, and so on. The object of this mode of attack was seemingly to keep the Harrier in a vulnerable position near the ground. This they achieved, and when I lost sight of the birds against a line of conifers, the Harrier was still near the ground and the attack was continuing. By this time the birds were 800 yards away.

— E. J. LE HUQUET

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## GREENFINCHES AND SILVEREYES STRIPPING COTONEASTER

I was interested in A. T. Edgar's notes on Greenfinches (*C. chloris*) eating cotoneaster berries at Titirangi. For some years now a cotoneaster bush at Puketitiri, Hawkes Bay (2000 feet a.s.l.) has been regularly visited by numerous Greenfinches as well as Silvereyes (*Z. lateralis*) which feast off the berries.

It is quite common for up to fifteen Silvereyes and six or eight Greenfinches to be in the bush at once. They are usually present between April and May. They start with the topmost berries, furthest from the ground and work down the bush, completely stripping it of berries as they go. In fact, this last winter the bush was completely devoid of berries within a few weeks of their ripening. It is a large bush, too.

— PAM. M. LEWIS