

BIRDS OF THE WAYSIDE.

Observations of Camping Trampers.

(By H. Ross, Invercargill—a junior member.)

One bird we nearly always heard, wherever we set up camp, was the melodious grey warbler. It seemed not to matter what was the nature of cover afforded—willow trees, black scrub, flax or fir plantations—the riroriro was ever to be found. When we were fortunate enough to see the little chap he was usually fluttering high up among the tree tops, twirling or twisting among the branches in an ecstasy of never-ending delight. From time to time the sweet cadence of music was wafted down to us. Almost invariably the warblers were to be found in pairs.

In South Canterbury, miles and miles from any bush, we saw a pair of shy rock wrens, one of the smallest of New Zealand birds, inhabiting a pile of rocks under a railway bridge. The cheerful pair appeared to be very much at home there. Hopping from rock to rock they went briskly about their business, which appeared to be searching for minute particles of food adhering to the stones. In between times they peered at us with bright friendly eyes and uttered their low-voiced cries. It was only through hearing their notes that we were able to locate them.

In spite of close examination we found no trace of a nest, but somewhere in that pile of stones they would, no doubt, build a home. I think, too, that any spiders sharing the stones would have a very unhappy time.

At one place we camped near a clump of blue-gums. From somewhere among their tops, clear and sweet, came the notes of a bell-bird. Until far into the dusk he sang, and from time to time throughout the night he uttered a sleepy "ticka ticka tock," as though to let us know he was still there. Long before dawn he resumed his carolling.

For some time after this we saw no native birds. Raucous-voiced magpies were present in large numbers. Also we noticed several German owls which had been killed by motor-cars. Dozens of hedge-hogs had met a similar death.

While we were chatting at one stage, a vivacious thin-looking tom-tit fluttered down from the telephone wires to the top of a post. Here, after bobbing up and down and vigorously jerking his tail several times, he suddenly emitted several piercing trills of song, in order, no doubt, to let us know he didn't feel nearly as bad as he looked. We were delighted to see him; yet the person to whom we spoke remarked: "What a horrible squeak." Some people are not interested in birds.