


have a beak that is curved to the side. Wrybills nest on the shingle river beds in the east of the South Island, but they spend the winter on the estuary and harbour mudflats in the northern part of the North Island.

Other New Zealand birds, like the South Island pied oystercatcher, are partially migrant, which means that some of them move north for the winter and others do not, as if they can't quite make up their minds. To further complicate the issue, there are some recent arrivals from Australia like the silvereye and the welcome swallow who do not seem to have developed a migration pattern here, although they do migrate in their Australian homeland.

All in all it may seem rather confusing, but migration is one of those fascinating subjects about which the more you learn, the less you seem to know! 



Most of the eastern bar-tailed godwits (*opposite*) arrive in New Zealand in September and leave again in March. They can be seen feeding on exposed tidal mud-flats and wet sand throughout the summer months. Numbers have been estimated at around 70,000 in the North Island and 30,000 in the South Island and Stewart Island. The bird in the foreground is in non-breeding plumage, the

other has the more colourful breeding plumage which you will see on some individuals towards the end of the summer. Each year some 10,000 or so godwits remain here for the winter as well, and it is assumed that these are non-breeding juveniles.

Shining cuckoos (above) have been known to arrive from the Solomon Islands as early as

August, but most of them appear in the second half of September. They can be seen wherever there are grey warblers nesting, for it is to the grey warbler that this little cuckoo entrusts the care of its own young. The English name does not appear anywhere in the shining cuckoo's song, but if you listen carefully you might hear the Maori name pipiwharauroa.

## The Frank Alack Award Winner.


**T**his composition, entitled "The Parson Bird", was awarded first prize in the Frank Alack Award competition.

**S**ilently alert, the tui sits, waiting patiently. His metallic green and purple plumage camouflages him from the rest of the garden. He is completely hidden from view, or would be, except that I can see his stark white throat feathers. A fantail passes merrily by, playing tag with his mate. Tui barely twitches, he knows the fantails, they're his friends. The sun penetrates through

the clouds for a moment, catching Tui's iridescent emerald wings and tail and yet, Tui knows nothing of this. His beady black eyes are watching, and waiting. Gently, a faint zephyr whispers through the lacey white features about his neck. He twitches again, and turns his head slightly to take in all of his surroundings.

Suddenly, he bursts into a song which sounds to me like the chiming of church bells, intercepted occasionally by the throaty coughs of the parson. As his song builds in strength, I see his throat pulsating with the energy he puts into the performance. Each lustrous note echoes around the garden, filling every corner with rich music. All the other creatures appear to hesitate, as if caught up in the

magic that surrounds them. When he has finished, I feel like giving him a standing ovation. But I don't. Instead I sit silently, watching.

Unexpectedly, he seems to catch sight of me watching him from the window. We stare at each other for what must be an eternity. Finally, it is he who breaks the spell. But he doesn't fly away. Instead, he hops over to the kowhai tree, and, still wary, takes a drink of nectar. 

Karen Johnston (15 yrs)

