

escapee. This record has been accepted unanimously by the Rare Birds Committee of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

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KEYWORDS: Northern Pintail, first record, New Zealand.

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Territorial dispute between two male Bellbirds (*Antbornis melanura*) ends in death by drowning

Mid morning on 15 December 1998 we were walking beside a small, slow-moving stream feeding into the Travers River, Nelson Lakes National Park, when we became aware of a Bellbird (*Antbornis melanura*) flapping its wings and splashing in the water about 15 m upstream from us. At first glance we thought it was a bird bathing, but soon realised that there were two birds fighting each other. One of them managed to get on top of the other. Four times over the next minute or so the submerged bird managed to lift its head out of the water, but the other bird, a male, promptly put its foot on it and pushed it under again, all the while continuously flapping his wings. When the victim ceased struggling the male, still flapping his wings, continued to stand on the submerged bird. During the next four minutes the birds floated to within two metres of us. At this point the survivor became aware of our presence and flew onto a low branch of a nearby tree where he appeared very tired and spent the next two minutes alternatively resting and preening. Meanwhile, the drowned bird, floating on its back, drifted farther downstream. We retrieved the body and ascertained that it too was a male.

As there was a large number of Bellbirds in the area we presumed the fight began as a territorial dispute. Territorial disputes are normally resolved by aggressive displays, vocal threats and aerial chases, however, birds occasionally resort to physical combat. A conflict between male Bellbirds observed by Taylor (1969) is similar to our observation – the birds dug their claws into the head and body of their opponent and locked together breast to breast, they were so engrossed in combat that they were unaware of observers, and at the end of the fight one bird flew only a short distance before resting for several minutes.

The death of one of the birds we observed was unlikely to have been a deliberate act of drowning, but came about because the two fighting birds ended up in the water and not on the forest floor as in Taylor's (1969) observation.

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TAYLOR, R.H. 1969. Male bellbirds locked in combat. *Notornis* 16: 63.

KEYWORDS: Bellbird, territorial dispute.

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