

Junior Ornithologists.

By A. G. Edquist.

In 1910 School Bird Protection Clubs were inaugurated in the Public Schools of South Australia.

The idea was to secure a large number of children's clubs officered by the youngsters themselves, unless the scholars wished the teacher to act as President.

During the course of Nature-study the teachers brought under the notice of the children the importance of birds to Australia, and urged them to band together and help their elders in protecting our unique and wonderful avifauna.

As a result over 500 clubs have been formed and tens of thousands of members have been enrolled.

With so many sharp-eyed observers interested in the welfare of the *native* birds, a better time is in store for our feathered friends.

One result has been that native birds are more numerous about the City environs to-day than was the case a few years ago, when the shanghai was as much a part of the schoolboy's outfit as was his pencil-case.



Schools' Competition Cup,
presented by The South-Australian Ornithological Association.
(From a block kindly lent by the Editor of "The Children's
Hour.")

More than one ornithologist has remarked on the reappearance of certain birds in our parks during the last few years, and on the increased numbers of other species which were not entirely driven away.

The movement has the full support of the South Australian Ornithological Association. To show their practical sympathy with the movement the members have subscribed towards a trophy, which is offered for competition each year.

The winning club holds the cup at their school for twelve months.

The winner receives a photograph of the trophy and book prizes to the value of one guinea.

The second prize consists of one guinea's worth of books, part of the collection going to the winner of second prize and part to his school library.

The purpose of dividing the prize between the prize-winner and his school is to make him understand that by helping himself he is helping to make tradition for his school, and also that service for others is a worthy ideal.

The competition consists in essay writing and in drawing birds from nature.

When essays are to be submitted for competition, each competitor is required to write two, one on a tree and one on a bird.

The essay which follows has been reproduced without alteration of detail. Sometimes the young observers are at fault, but usually their observations and deductions are very accurate, especially for young children.

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY.

By Thomas Mitchell, aged 10 year 5 months, of Kangaroo Flat Primary School.

—The White-browed Babbler.—

This fussy and restless bird is found in our district as well as on Eyre's Peninsula. It is known by the names of "Hopping Dolly," "Kangaroo Bird," or "Cat Bird," and sometimes as "The White-eyed Chatterer." It lives on insects which it finds under dead leaves or dry bark.

As it hops along, taking bounds about four or five inches in length, it overturns all kinds of leaves, twigs and bark and

with its sharp eyes and beak it is able to pick up and eat insects which to us are almost invisible without the aid of a magnifying glass.

Its nest is built of small dry twigs, and is made almost waterproof by the old grass which the Babbler collects and plaits together. She then lines her nest with soft feathers. This nest is dome-shaped, about eighteen inches long and seven wide, with an opening.

The eggs have hair-like lines along the surface, and are of a creamish colour. It lays all the year round, and generally chooses a thick bushy tree in which to build its nest. It generally lays from two to four eggs. Its young are the same colour as the old birds, which are cautious and stealthy in their movements if danger is near.

If a Babbler hears danger approaching it holds its head on one side for a moment ere it utters the shrill harsh and warning cry which makes known the approaching peril to its comrades.

A Babbler puts up a very plucky fight when defending its young. It feeds them on moths, flies, and several other species of insect life.

“I know the song the Babbler is singing,
Out in the pine tree where he is swinging,
Brave little fellow! The skies may be dreary,
Nothing he cares while his heart is so cheery.”
