

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.”
