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A. J. WHITESIDE, 31 Milverton Ave, Palmerston North



SHORT NOTES

Morepork hunting House Sparrows

At dusk on 12/11/61 I watched a Morepork (*Ninox novaeseelandiae*) as it made a straight silent glide from the top of a tall deodar in my Remuera garden. Its objective across the road was a couple of large Italian cypresses where many House Sparrows both nested and roosted. The owl first alighted on the leader of one of the cypresses. Then it fluttered around the dense foliage like a moth round a lamp or a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) winnowing the ivy on an old building. A squeak was heard and one sparrow was seen fleeing.

The Morepork found a gap in the foliage, thrust in its head and shoulders and, after withdrawing, paused briefly before resuming its evening hunt. I could not be sure that the raid on the cypress had been successful.

When a pair of suburban Moreporks raised young in a specially designed and sited nesting box at King's College, Otahuhu, in 1960 (*Notornis* 9: 133-134), House Sparrows were a significant item in the owlets' diet, especially after they had become feathered.

R. B. SIBSON