

A NOTE ON POLLEN MITES FOUND ON BELLBIRDS

By David J. Gravatt*

During a bird banding programme on Little Barrier Island, the heads of Bellbirds (*Anthornis melanura*) were occasionally found to be covered in mites, which moved rapidly on to the hands of the bander. Specimens collected for identification were sent to Dr Atyeo, University of Georgia, who in turn sent them to the Canadian Department of Agriculture, where they were identified by Dr Evert Lindquist. The mites (all females) were *Neocypholaelaps novaehollandiae* Evans., of the Family Amerseiidæ. Evans' type material, all female, was collected from honey bees round Auckland.

According to Dr Linguist (personal communications) *Neocypholaelaps* live as pollen feeders in flowers, using insects and birds as means of dispersal. Species of the closely related genus *Hattena* Domrow, collected from honey-eating birds in Borneo and Australia, probably have similar habits.

It is interesting to note that the only bees on Little Barrier Island are solitary, though it is possible that mites could have reached the island on other insects or on the birds themselves. Since honey-eaters (Meliphagidae) must have colonised New Zealand from the Australian/Papuan region, and since closely related mites in these areas have similar habits, could it be that the honey-eating birds were responsible for the introduction of pollen mites into New Zealand?

*Department of Zoology, University of Auckland.

