



Overview

This article, written from the perspective of a wildlife photographer, will appeal to and engage young readers. The subject matter for his camera – tomtits in the Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary – is central to the information about photography. The written text is enhanced with photographs of the young tomtits, which the writer describes as the cutest of all baby birds. Students are introduced to some of the behaviours of the tomtit, along with many facts about the activities and equipment involved in wildlife photography. The article is organised into sections that focus firstly on the craft of a wildlife photographer, then on the tomtits, and finally on the ecosanctuary where the photographs were taken.

This article:

- provides facts and information about tomtits and photographing wildlife
- has photographs to illustrate the text
- has non-continuous text with subheadings
- includes a glossary.

A PDF of the text is available at www.schooljournal.tki.org.nz

Texts related by theme

“Adrian Heke: Photographer” SJ 3.3.05 | “Tunc Tezel: Star Man” SJ L2 May 2016 | “The Jungle in My Garden” JJ 52 | “Cats – Who Needs Them?” SJ L2 June 2014 | “Puketi Robins” SJ 2.1.11 | “The Bat That Walks on the Ground” SJ L2 April 2013

Text characteristics from the year 4 reading standard

Fieldcraft

There are secrets to getting good photographs of wild birds. You can't just go outside with your camera and hope you'll be lucky. To get good shots, you need some fieldcraft skills – those skills that get you close to birds and animals in the outdoors. First, you have to find out where the birds are and what they are doing. That depends on the time of year. In the autumn, they might be feeding on berries. In the spring, they might be looking for mates.

Once you've found the bird you want to photograph, you've got to go back to the same spot many times. That way, you get to know the bird's habits and behaviour. The more you know about the bird, the better you have of getting good

some abstract ideas that are clearly supported by concrete examples in the text or easily linked to the students' prior knowledge

by Paul Sorrell

Last summer, there were lots of baby birds at Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary. All of them looked cute, but the cutest were the tomtits (kōmiromiro). They were tiny, with big dark eyes and fluffy feathers.

The young birds were very curious. They had just left the nest and wanted to explore the world around them. Unlike their parents, they weren't scared of humans. That was good news for me as a photographer. I knew they would come over to check me out. When they did, I'd be able to get the close-up shots I wanted.

I found a good spot just off one of the tracks, and I went there many times over the summer. As a result, I came away

some places where information and ideas are implicit and where students need to make inferences based on information that is easy to find because it is nearby in the text and there is little or no competing information

Beautifully patterned, they are mainly brown and white, but female ngrirungiru have some light yellow colouring.

Tomtits feed mainly on insects. They sit on low branches, watching the ground for prey. Often they fly around a circuit in the bush, returning to the same spot every fifteen minutes or so. If you know where a hunting tomtit is going to land, you can be waiting there with your camera!



A male ngrirungiru

some compound and complex sentences, which may consist of two or three clauses

The sanctuary is also home to three special reptiles – the tuatara, the Otago skink (mokomoko), and the mottled green jewelled gecko (moko kākāriki).

Ōrokonui Ecosanctuary has a special fence that keeps the predators out. Because of the danger from predators, the people who work at the sanctuary spend a lot of time checking the fence line. They also set hundreds of traps. This helps to keep the birds and animals on the inside safe so that their numbers can grow. Perhaps one day we'll be able to see these endangered species living throughout Aotearoa again.

some words and phrases that are ambiguous or unfamiliar to the students, the meaning of which is supported by the context or clarified by illustrations, and/or written explanations



Reading standard: by the end of year 4

Possible curriculum contexts

ENGLISH (Reading)

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

ENGLISH (Writing)

Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

TECHNOLOGY (Technological Practice)

Level 2 – Planning for practice: Develop a plan that identifies the key stages and the resources required to complete an outcome.

Possible first reading purposes

- To enjoy an interesting article about taking photographs of tomtits
- To learn how a wildlife photographer works.

Possible subsequent reading purposes

- To make connections between this and other texts to deepen knowledge of birds and/or photography
- To identify the steps to take when photographing birds in the wild.

Possible writing purposes

- To research and plan a photography field trip
- To research and describe another New Zealand creature
- To write instructions for creating a bird feeder.



The New Zealand Curriculum

Text and language challenges

(Some of the suggestions for possible supporting strategies may be more useful before reading, but they can be used at any time in response to students' needs.)

VOCABULARY

- Possibly unfamiliar words and phrases, including “Ecosanctuary”, “perch”, “naturally”, “bird caller”, “squeaker”, “offshore”, “prey”, “circuit”, “predators”, “hectares”, “scrubland”, “mottled”
- Technical vocabulary, such as “fieldcraft”, “shots” (used to describe taking photographs), “portraits”, “long lens”, “tripod”, “digital recorder”
- A number of te reo Māori names of birds and other creatures.

Possible supporting strategies

- Identify words or phrases that may be unfamiliar. Set students up for success by explaining them briefly before they start reading.
- Check the pronunciation of te reo Māori names and support students to pronounce them correctly.
- English language learners could label a diagram of a bird with the names of its various body parts.
- Lead discussion about common expressions: “left the nest”, “a good spot”, “good shots”, “tricks up their sleeve”. In particular, make sure the students understand the multiple meaning of “shot” and what it means in the context of taking photos.
- Direct the students to the glossary.
- [The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction](#), pages 39–46, has useful information about learning vocabulary.
- See also [ESOL Online, Vocabulary](#), for examples of other strategies to support students with vocabulary.

SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

- Some understanding of the purpose of sanctuaries
- Some familiarity with native birds in the wild
- Some experience of taking photographs
- An understanding that wildlife photography requires skills and patience.

Possible supporting strategies

- Prompt students to discuss what they know about wildlife sanctuaries.
- Support students to make connections between ideas in the text and their own observations of the birds in the wild.
- Take students outside (where appropriate) to observe birds.
- Discuss the ways that birds (and other creatures) can be protected.
- Discuss the challenges of photographing wildlife compared with inanimate objects.

TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

- A non-fiction article in the form of a recount with explanations
- Photographs that illustrate the photographer's work, including some of his equipment
- Headings and sidebars
- Repetition of words or phrases: “I found a good spot”, “go back to the same spot”, “Once you're in your spot”
- Speaks directly to the reader with the frequent use of “you” and “your”
- The use of adjectives.

Possible supporting strategies

- Before reading, prompt the students to recall what they are likely to find in an article. Provide opportunities for students to talk with a partner to remind one another of the features of information texts.
- Review the use of features such as subheadings, photos, and a glossary.
- Discuss the impact of first-person texts, in which the writer “talks” directly to the reader.
- Give practice in using two or more adjectives together in a sentence to describe the birds in some of the photos. See [The English Language Intensive Programme Stage 1: Writing, 20a](#) for the order of adjectives and other words in a noun group. For many English language learners, the order will need to be explicitly taught.



Sounds and Words

Instructional focus – Reading

English Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Technology Level 2 – Planning for practice: Develop a plan that identifies the key stages and the resources required to complete an outcome.

First reading

- Set the purpose for reading, then skim and scan the article together, prompting students to identify the two main topics: photography and tomtits.
- Discuss the title: “Getting Closer”: *How does this relate to taking photographs? What makes it tricky to get closer to birds?*
- Read the first page together and model what readers do by thinking aloud: *I wonder why the adult birds are scared of humans and the baby birds aren’t ... What do you think?*
- Have the students work alone or in pairs or a small group to read, share, and discuss each section of the article. Tell them to pause and recall the main points in each section and to share any questions.

If the students struggle with this text

- Clarify that the article is by a man who spends time in an ecosanctuary and takes photos of birds called tomtits.
- Prompt the students to share what they know about birds that live in the wild. *Where have you seen birds in the bush? Did they behave like this? How does thinking about what you’ve seen help you understand what the writer is saying?*
- Clarify meanings: *What would be a “good spot” for taking photos of birds? Why?*
- Set a guiding question for each of the sections and ask the students to mark (with stickies) any problems or questions as they read. Discuss these at the end of each section, with you or with a reading buddy.
- Use a framework, such as a problem–solution template. Model how to use it, for example, to identify the problem of photographing birds that move a lot, and the solution – going back many times. A reading buddy could help another student use this to clarify the text.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose. You may wish to have the students reread quietly to themselves for the first subsequent reading (for example, to check understanding, to locate information, or to make notes).

The teacher

Direct the students to reread to the end of page 13.

- *Did you notice the author refers to himself as “I” in the introduction? Who does he mean by “you”? Why do you think he does this? What is the effect of addressing the reader directly?*
- *Who do you think Paul Sorrell expects will read his article? Why do you think that? What features has he used to make it interesting?*
- *What are some of the skills and “tricks of the trade” that Paul Sorrell uses?*

The teacher

Ask students to read page 15 and identify the main ideas of each paragraph.

- *Each paragraph has a different focus. What is the focus of each one?*
- *How does the way the ideas are grouped help you learn more about the tomtits?*

The students:

- use their knowledge of sentence structure to identify the author’s voice (first person)
- form hypotheses about the author’s purpose in using “I” and “you” to create a friendly relationship between writer and reader
- infer (from the tone of the text and their experiences as readers) that this is a good way to engage your readers
- identify and locate the features, such as photographs, interesting details, and the familiar structure of an article, that make it suitable for an audience of primary-school students.

The students:

- locate and identify the purpose of the first paragraph (to describe where tomtits are found), the second (the differences in appearance between male and female), and the third (to describe how the birds catch their food)
- recognise and explain that grouping ideas helps them find main ideas and supporting details about the tomtits.

Subsequent readings How you approach subsequent readings will depend on your reading purpose. You may wish to have the students reread quietly to themselves for the first subsequent reading (for example, to check understanding, to locate information, or to make notes).

The teacher

Ask questions to check that students use strategies to understand unfamiliar words or expressions.

- *On page 15, it says “[tomtits] fly around a circuit in the bush”. What do you think that means? Where might you do a circuit? Remember that making connections with things you know will help you work out meanings in a different context.*
- *Why does Paul Sorrell think they are good birds to photograph?*
- *On page 17, the author mentions a reptile called “the mottled green jewelled gecko (moko kākārīki)”. How can you use your knowledge of words in English and te reo Māori to work out what the gecko looks like?*

GIVE FEEDBACK

- *You located and evaluated the skills and tricks of the trade the author described. The list you’ve made will be helpful for our fieldtrip.*

The students:

- make connections between the text and their experiences of doing fitness or training circuits to understand that the tomtits fly in a circular path as they look for insects
- make inferences about the tomtits’ behaviour to work out that the photographer can predict where they will land
- use their knowledge of the Māori words “moko” (a facial tattoo) and “kākārīki” (green) along with the English words “green” and “jewelled” to infer that the skin of the gecko has jewel-like green designs. They look up the word “mottled” in a dictionary or online to complete their understanding.

METACOGNITION

- Show me a place where you were able to make a connection between the text and an experience of your own. Tell me how that helped you understand the text.



Reading standard: by the end of year 4



The Literacy Learning Progressions



Assessment Resource Banks

Instructional focus – Writing

English Level 2 – Structure: Organise texts, using a range of structures.

Technology Level 2 – Planning for practice: Develop a plan that identifies the key stages and the resources required to complete an outcome.

Text excerpts from “Getting Closer”

Examples of text characteristics

Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

Page 14

You can make your own bird “squeaker” by rubbing cork or polystyrene on wet glass. An easy way to do this is to fill a small glass bottle with water and put a cork in it. Take it with you when you go into the bush or to a local park.

INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions tell readers how to make or do something. They start with a goal, tell what is needed, and use action words to show what to do. They also use sequence words to show the order of the actions.

Explain that the purpose for writing a non-fiction text can include giving instructions.

- *Instructions can be written as numbered steps that tell how to do something, but they can also be written more simply, as if you were talking to someone.*
- *How you write instructions will depend on your purpose and audience.*

Tell the students to choose an idea where they want to explain how to make or do something.

- *Start by telling what it is.*
- *Use verbs that tell what to do and sequence words to show the order.*
- *What else will your readers need to know?*
- *Draft a simple explanation and then swap with a partner.*
- *Read each other’s work and give constructive feedback.*

Page 15

Tomtits are found in forest and scrub all over New Zealand. The most common are North Island tomtits (miromiro) and South Island tomtits (ngirungiru). Some other kinds can be found on a few offshore islands.

TEXT STRUCTURE:

PARAGRAPHS

Writers organise their ideas into paragraphs. Each paragraph has a different main idea. The details in the paragraph explain or describe the main idea.

Model paragraphing by unpacking the example.

- *The writer is describing tomtits. The first paragraph tells where they are found. The second paragraph describes them and gives examples of the different kinds of tomtits.*
- *Each paragraph has a separate main idea and contains details that help us understand more about those ideas.*

The male and female birds are different colours. Male miromiro are black and white, while male ngirungiru have beautiful yellow and orange chests. Females of both types are mainly brown and white, but female ngirungiru can have some light yellow colouring.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

When two or more things are similar in some ways but different in other ways, it is helpful to make this clear to the reader. Writers use words such as “most”, “some”, “while”, “but”, “both” to help make these comparisons.

Explain the use of comparing and contrasting.

- *If your purpose is to help readers identify things that are similar (like two types of the same bird), show readers what is the same and what is different about them.*
- *Plan before you write by using a diagram to help identify these similarities and differences: a Venn diagram is one way to do this.*
- *Once you’ve made a diagram, start by writing a sentence for each same or different detail: “Females of both types are mainly brown and white, but female ngirungiru can have some light yellow colouring.”*

Page 10

Unlike their parents, they weren’t scared of humans. That was good news for me as a photographer. I knew they would come over to check me out. When they did, I’d be able to get the close-up shots I wanted.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Writers provide extra detail with phrases that can come before or after the main idea.

English language learners may need support to write descriptions in timeless present tense and to use relating verbs, for example, “is”, “has”, “are”, and “have”. An **interactive cloze** task can help students to notice how these words are used. Design the cloze by deleting all the relating verbs. The students then fill in the gaps with the correct verbs.

English language learners may need support to know how to order adjectives in a noun group. See Text Features and Structure for more information on this.

Direct students to the sentences with a comma. Ask them to identify the main idea of the sentences.

- *Do we agree that the main idea is “they weren’t scared of humans”? How has the writer given us more details?*

Model the same structure:

- *The main idea of this sentence is “Tomtits feed mainly on insects”.*
- *An extra detail might be “Like many birds, tomtits feed mainly on insects”.*

Direct the students to their own writing.

- *Are there places where you can use a phrase to add a detail before the main idea to provide extra information?*

The use of sentence frames can assist English language learners to learn how to add additional information.

METACOGNITION

- Tell me about your audience and what you wanted them to understand. How does thinking about your audience help you decide what to provide?