

AN ARBOREAL NEST OF *VESPULA GERMANICA* F.

J. T. SALMON,
Victoria University of Wellington.

In early February of this year while walking in to Boulder Lake from the Aorere the nest of *Vespula germanica* F. shown in the accompanying photograph was discovered built around the trunk of one of the larger trees. The nest was situated in virgin forest some considerable distance in from the forest margin. As judged by the walking track it would be at least a mile but it may have been closer, in a straight line, to a margin or clearing than I could judge at the time. The surrounding forest growth was moderately dense, with a reasonable amount of undergrowth. The nest measured approximately 5-6 ft in height and about 20 inches through at its widest part. A close approach and accurate measurements were not possible owing to the angry temperaments of the inhabitants. The noise of the insects at work in the nest was considerable and could be heard as a loud, medium pitched, humming noise from some distance away. This unusual noise in the heart of the forest did, in fact, lead to the discovery of the nest. The overall colour of the nest was a light grey; it was of a papery but hard texture and could have been passed by, mistaken for a fungoid growth, if it were not for the noise. The entrance was near the top of the structure close in beside the tree trunk and would be about ten feet above the ground. Wasps appeared to land on the tree trunk close to the entrance before entering and large numbers were coming and going while I watched and photographed the nest. A number appeared to be continually circling around the apex of the nest near the entrance. Wasp nests in clay and earth banks are common around Wellington and other places but, in New Zealand, nests of *V. germanica* built upon trees in the forest are still unusual. An even larger nest, nearly 15 ft high, was reported on a tree from the Waitakere Ranges, Auckland, in 1960 by C. R. Thomas.

