

Extracts from the Late Mr. M. Symonds Clark's Diaries.

By J. Sutton.

Mrs. M. Symonds Clark has very kindly donated to our Association the diaries which her late husband kept over the years 1862 to 1916.

Mr. M. Symonds Clark, who died on the 10th July, 1920, at the age of eighty-two years, was an aviculturist during the above years, and was also a good ornithologist. He was a foundation member of our Association and a member for years of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. His residence for many years was at Hazelwood, Burnside, four miles from the city, but later he lived at "Hilltop," Belair.

It was his custom to record in his diary particulars of the nesting, etc., of the birds in his aviaries, as well as notes on the wild birds and other natural-history objects in the district in which he lived and those he observed in his outings in South Australia.

From time to time extracts from the diaries will be published exactly as they were entered up, and a beginning is here made with those referring to the two uncommon species of Parrots—the Bourke Parrot (*Neophema bourki*) and the Princess-Parrot (*Polytelis alexandrae*).

Neophema bourki, Bourke Parrot.

28th October, 1874.—To-day I bought at a shop in Grenfell Street two Bourke's Grass Parrakeets (*Euphema bourkii*), which I was told had come from 100 miles north of Port Augusta. The price was six shillings, and the woman (Mrs. Northmore) who sold them said she had had eleven pair a few days ago, only three of which remained to-day. They were very much alike, but there was a little difference in the colour, and I hope they are a pair. They appear to be young birds, and are tolerably tame. Mr. Waterhouse told me he had heard of birds of the same kind being brought alive to Melbourne, but he believed there were no specimens in the Melbourne Museum. He has had two in the Adelaide Museum for some years, but considered them very rare. I was told that the man who brought them to town had never seen the kind before. Those described by Gould were found by Sir Thos. Mitchell on the Darling.⁽¹⁾ Capt. Sturt found them at the Depot.⁽²⁾

27th June, 1875.—This morning I found my male *Euphema bourkii* dead in aviary. I had not before noticed anything the matter with it. It seemed to have been pulled about by the other birds a little, having lost many feathers and had its beak bitten a little. It differed from the other one, which I believe to be a female, in having the colours rather brighter and a stain of blue upon the forehead, where the other bird has a pale brown with no sign of blue. I skinned it, but the feathers of the rump particularly came out so badly that I gave up the idea of stuffing it, just anointing the skin with Swainson's arsenical soap and stuffing it out with tow. Dissection showed it to be certainly a male. They were very pretty lively birds, and hitherto had seemed quite healthy.

7th July, 1885.—Yesterday my remaining Bourke's Grass-Paroquet (*Euphema bourkii*) of a pair that I bought 28th Oct., 1874, died. It had seemed ill two days before—the day before I had put it in a cage by itself. It was the one I always

considered to be the hen bird. It was in good plumage, and differed from the male, which died just over ten years ago, in having no blue on the head. It was a very active, lively bird, and was some time ago apparently much attached to a male Shell Paroquet that I then had. Lately it has had only a hen Cockatoo Paroquet for a companion, but was left in the same cage with two Leadbeaters and one Long-billed Cockatoo. I took it to the Museum, as they had no specimens there, some that were in the old building having been destroyed by moths. Mr. Beazley, the taxidermist, said he would stuff and mount it.

11th April, 1886.—On the 5th I brought home a pair of Bourke's Grass Paroquets (*Euphema bourkii*), which I obtained from a man named Towers, in Rundle Street, giving him my two Port Lincoln Parrots (one of which had been given me by Davis and one by H. W. Crompton) in exchange. Towers had several of these birds in a cage, only the second lot alive that I had ever seen. He also had a number of the smaller sort of Darling Doves⁽³⁾ with spotted sides. The price of these and of the Bourke's Paroquets was 7/6 per pair. One of the Bourke's Paroquets, a hen, I believe, I found dead yesterday, and took it to the Museum. The one that I took there in July last was not preserved, as Mr. Beazley said it was too fat to preserve properly.

27th June, 1886.—About ten days ago my other Bourke's Grass Paroquet died. It was not worth preserving, having no tail. I saw a few of these birds at Towers' shop yesterday.

24th February, 1891.—Last week I saw eleven living specimens of *Euphema bourkii* for sale at a shop in Rundle Street, price 10/- per pair, or 7/- if the lot were taken. I informed Mr. Minchin, of the Zoological Gardens, who bought them all.

6th January, 1892.—In December last I sent Foglia (Rundle Street) to the Zoological Gardens with one *Euphema bourkii* and two *Euphema elegans* (or *E. aurantia*), price 6/- the lot, which Mr. Minchin bought.

16th July, 1903.—Yesterday at Foglia's shop, in Rundle Street, I saw four specimens of *Euphema bourkii* apparently healthy and in very good order. They were not for sale. I have not seen any for many years. Foglia had some which, at my suggestion, were bought by the Zoological Gardens, and Foglia said he had not had any since.

21st January, 1905.—At Foglia's shop I to-day saw eleven Bourke's Grass Parrakeets, which he said had come from the North. He had had six pairs, but one had died. They seemed

in very good order. Foglia said he was going to take them to England. He expected to get £7 7/- a pair for them.

3rd March, 1905.—About a week ago I saw about 24 Bourke's Grass Parrakeets at Foglia's. They asked, I think, £2 2/- a pair for them, but intended sending them to England.

Polytelis alexandrae, Princess Parrot.

13th August, 1890.—About six weeks ago, when passing the house of Mr. A. T. Magarey, near Crafers, I saw in a cage outside the house a Parrakeet something like the Rock Pebbler (*Polytelis melanura*), but with some pink about the face and throat. On the 7th inst. I met Mr. Magarey in town and asked him about this bird. He said that his cousin had brought it from Charlotte Waters, together with another one now in the possession of W. J. Magarey. He thought his bird, (which did not talk) must be a hen and the other (a very good talker) a cock. I feel satisfied that these are the Princess of Wales Parrakeets (*Polytelis alexandrae*). Mr. W. J. Magarey said he would take me to see his bird shortly. The species I have named was discovered by Mr. F. G. Waterhouse near Newcastle Waters⁽⁴⁾ 28 years ago, and he did not think any other specimens than two he obtained had been brought to Adelaide.

19th August, 1890.—I saw *Polytelis alexandrae* at Mr. W. J. Magarey's, "Heathpool," brought from Charlotte Waters by Mr. F. G. Magarey about three months ago with another bird, now in the possession of Mr. A. T. Magarey, said to be last season's birds. Mr. W. J. Magarey says the Natives know very little about the birds.

20th August, 1890.—I examined specimen in office of Mr. A. T. Magarey supposed to be a female. Total length about $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Throat and part cheeks pale rose pink extending about an inch downwards from bill and round the sides of neck to below ears; Top of head grey with bluish tinge running into brown on forehead; Back olive green; Wing coverts and shoulders apple green; Rump bluish French grey darker than head; Primaries first bluish on outer web, others then green, all narrowly edged with yellowish brown; Tail centre feathers dull dark green, others with reddish tinge; Inner webs of same edged with dull red; Breast and abdomen olive grey, a little red and yellow showing about the flanks more especially when the bird stretches its legs; Bill coral red; Upper tail-coverts olive green; Irides orange; Under wing-coverts apple green.

27th August, 1890.—Mr. W. J. Magarey's *Polytelis alexandrae*: Crown greyish sky-blue becoming olive grey on

forehead; Back of head, of neck, upper part of back and scapulars olive green, back and scapulars being darker than neck; Scapulars drooping over wings; Lower part of back from centre and rump darkish sky-blue mixed with grey, some of the feathers distinctly blue; Upper tail-coverts olive green; Lores greenish olive; Ear coverts olive green like back of neck; Throat pale rose pink extending fully an inch below beak and sideways below coverts; Breast and abdomen blue grey becoming more grey on and about flanks where a few (some pink) feathers show among the others more especially by the vent; Under tail-coverts olive grey tinged with green; Length $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches; Tail nearly 10 inches; Primaries first bluish on outer webs, others olive green, all edged with brownish yellow; Upper and lower wing-coverts bright apple green, shoulder same colour with bluish tinge dark green at edge; Tail centre feathers dull dark green, others with red on inner webs and some dull bluish green on outer—when spread the red on the tail shows much more brightly from upper side; Quills black; Bill coral red, brownish at point; Irides orange. The rose pink on throat when the bird stretches his neck extends 2 inches below the beak. A few pink-edged feathers are mixed with the olive grey of the upper part of the breast.

7th September, 1890.—Mr. A. T. Magarey told me on 5th that the two *Polytelis alexandrae* were obtained at a place called Crown Point, about 50 miles north of Charlotte Waters. We found both this place and Howell's Ponds marked on a map that he had—the one about Latitude 25.50 South, Longitude 134 East, the other about Latitude 17, Longitude 133. I was told that the natives did not know these birds, and had no name for them. Mr. David Lindsay, who has seen Mr. A. T. Magarey's bird, could not recognize it from its appearance, but thought he remembered hearing its note, and thought it must be similar to a bird that they called the Spinifex Parrakeet.⁽⁵⁾

14th September, 1890. — I to-day described *Polytelis alexandrae* to Mr. S. G. Hubbe, who said he remembered the bird well, having seen it on the Woodforde and Hanson. He did not often see it in the daytime, but in the dusk of the evening. He had shot six at a time to eat. When flying they looked mostly blue on the back. He said they were smaller than Rock Peblers, though they might be longer in the tail. He knew the Spinifex Parrot, which was different—more like a Rock-Pebbler in colour, but perhaps not so long in the tail as that bird.

14th April, 1891.—About 30th March last, when passing by Mr. A. T. Magarey's house, near Mount Lofty, I saw his *Polytelis alexandrae*.

16th July, 1891.—On 7th I saw some of the birds obtained by Dr. Stirling on his recent trip across from Port Darwin. There were two specimens of *Polytelis alexandrae* shot by the Doctor near Newcastle Water. He said he saw only one flock of them, into which he fired, bringing down three, one of which he lost in the grass whilst reloading his gun. He heard of these birds at various places on his journey. The specimens were both marked "male," had very long tails, the centre feathers about six inches longer than the next pair. In colour they were much like the two living birds I have seen, but appeared to have more green upon the wings. It may have been that the wings were less hidden by the scapularies in these birds than in the living ones.

25th July, 1891.—Yesterday I measured the two specimens of *Polytelis alexandrae* obtained by Dr. Stirling. The total length of one was 16 inches, the tail being $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The other measured 17 inches and the tail $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The centre feathers were about $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches longer than the next pair of feathers.

30th August, 1891.—I saw this afternoon Mr. W. J. Magarey's *Polytelis alexandrae*. The patches of green on the wings appear to be larger and brighter in colour than they were when I last saw the bird a year ago. The top of the head is still rather grey than blue, and the lower part of the back more distinctly blue. The under parts are more grey. On the throat below the pink the olive colour blends into the grey, which gets more of a blue or French grey towards the tail blending into the blue of the back on the sides. When the bird raises itself upon its feet the pink feathers among the blue-grey show upon and between the legs. The pink on the throat does not extend so far round the sides of the neck as the yellow in *Polytelis barrabandi*,⁽⁹⁾ but it extends further down than the crimson on that bird. The pink is not very bright. The inner webs of the primaries have a good deal of buff upon them, the outer webs mostly margined broadly with pale greenish brown. The bird was very active and playful, running rapidly over the floor when let out of the cage. It is in good condition and very pretty, for though the colours, excepting the green on the wings, are not very bright they are very delicate and blend into one another.

16th February, 1892.—I have omitted to note here that Mr. A. T. Magarey's *Polytelis alexandrae* has laid five eggs this season. I saw two or three of them at the Museum. They are white.

25th February, 1892.—On the 22nd Mr. A. T. Magarey gave me a number of feathers which had been moulted by his *Polytelis alexandrae*, and the same day Mr. W. A. Magarey gave me a few from the male bird. I sent a few of the former to Mr. T. A. Forbes Leith on the 23rd.

12th June, 1892.—On 10th inst. I again saw Mr. A. T. Magarey's *Polytelis alexandrae* at his office. The pink on the throat is deeper in hue than when I last saw the bird, and I think the green on the wings is more extensive and brighter, but the blue, or rather grey, on the head is about as before. This bird, the female, is to be placed with Mr. W. J. Magarey's male in the hope that they may breed. I have obtained a piece of aloe that should make a very good nest for them.

30th November, 1892.—Yesterday I saw Mr. Robert Oldfield, who is engaged in working a mica deposit about 140 miles north-east of Alice Springs. On my giving him some description of the Princess of Wales Parrakeet he said he did not think he had seen it. . . .

3rd April, 1894.—About a month ago Mr. A. T. Magarey lost his Princess of Wales Parrakeet, it having escaped or been let out of its cage.

27th May, 1894.—I believe Mr. Magarey did not find his bird again.

21st March, 1895.—On the 15th inst. I saw three young Alexandra Parrakeets (*Polytelis alexandrae*) at the London Inn in Flinders Street, Adelaide. The landlady said they had been brought down from the interior by a young man with some others. These are the only living ones I have seen excepting those belonging to Mr. W. J. Magarey and Mr. A. T. Magarey, the latter of which escaped some time ago. Mr. Hallack told me he had seen two living specimens at the Exchange Hotel, Hindley Street, a few weeks ago, which came from the Northern Territory (perhaps from the Interior). I have been told that the Horn Expedition last year obtained 15 specimens of *Polytelis alexandrae*. Mr. Winnecke, who was leader of that expedition, told me recently that a short time ago these birds had visited the Hale River district, near Alice Springs, in numbers, had bred there, and had afterwards disappeared. Some people in the neighbourhood had obtained a number of young birds, and

he (Mr. Winnecke) has arranged to buy 30, which will be sent down immediately. The lot will cost him £37 10/-, and he wants to sell a number of them at 25/- each. The three birds that I saw at the London Inn were very dull in colour, but they were very attractive birds, being tame, though apparently rather neglected.

22nd March, 1895.—I this morning saw at Mr. Winnecke's office the 30 Alexandra Parrakeets which had arrived yesterday. They were all young birds and in fair condition and quite tame. The pink on the throat and the pale green patches on the wings were very distinct, but the crown in most was grey rather than blue. One had a little pink on the forehead. Another had some bright yellow feathers at the back of the head behind the grey crown, and a few yellow feathers among the scapularies or upper wing-coverts. I saw a few yellow feathers in one or two others, and I fancy these must be the remains of the first plumage. One or two were very noisy, with a voice something like the whistling cry (not the warble) of a Cockatoo Parrot.

16th April, 1895.—On the 6th inst. I saw another living Princess of Wales Parrakeet, which Mr. Benda had on the tramcar taking to his father. He said the Warden of Gold Fields had brought this down with another which he had at the same time that Mr. Winnecke's lot came down. The same day Dr. Perks told me he had three which a policeman had brought down. He had a fourth which died. Four birds being advertised for sale, I went to Walkerville to see them. I saw the birds, two of which I suppose to be males were particularly pretty birds. One of the others had some yellow feathers in the back. They were young birds, and had been brought down a little time before Mr. Winnecke's. Mr. Lloyd, who advertised them, was away, and I could not learn the price. I offered £1 for one and asked that Mr. Lloyd should call upon me. I have now seen 40 living specimens of *Polytelis alexandrae*.

1st October, 1895.—A short time ago Mr. Winnecke told me he had been informed from Melbourne that the name of the Princess of Wales Parrakeet had been changed to *Spathopterus alexandrae*.

8th October, 1897.—On 26th September I went to see Mr. Zietz's Princess of Wales Parrakeets. He has two males, one of which belongs to Mr. Winnecke, and one hen. The hen was on the nest in a hollow log, where I was told she had been sitting a week. A broken egg had been seen on the floor of the cage before she began to sit. Mr. Zietz had not seen eggs in the nest. I did not see the hen. The two males were beautiful

birds with very long tails. They had red in the tails as in young birds. The green on the wings was very bright and the blue on the crown and rump and the olive grey of the back very delicate.

20th October, 1897.—Saw Mr. Zietz and Mr. R. Zietz this afternoon. They have thought for the past week or more that there were young in the nest of the Alexandra Parrakeets, and Mr. R. Zietz said he has heard chirping in the nest while both old birds were on the floor of the cage.

27th November, 1897.—I have heard that Mr. Zietz's Alexandra Parrakeets hatched two young ones, which both died. One, I understand, was partially fledged.

15th March, 1898.— . . . At the Australian Museum, Sydney, I saw a living specimen of *Psephotus chrysopterygius*,⁽⁷⁾ which Mr. North had in a cage in his room. Mr. North showed me a specimen of *Polytelis alexandrae* obtained by Mr. Waterhouse, which has been preserved at Sydney. He also showed me some of the recently obtained specimens of this bird, and opened out the wing of a male to show me the shape of the third primary, which led to the name of the genus being altered to *Spathopterus*.⁽⁸⁾

4th December, 1898.—Mr. Zietz was here a week ago. He believed his Princess of Wales Parrakeet was sitting again.

23rd November, 1899.—Mr. A. F. Zietz told me on 21st inst. he thought his Princess of Wales Parrakeets had four young ones. The young one reared last year he thought was a female. It has got on well.

12th June, 1902.—Mr. W. J. Magarey yesterday told me that his Alexandra Parrakeet died about three months ago. It must have been over twelve years old, as I saw it first in August, 1890, some time after Mr. Magarey had received it.

7th March, 1904.—Soon after Christmas last I saw 6 Princess Alexandra Parrakeets, 8 Rock Pigeons⁽⁹⁾ which Mr. Gee and Mr. Grundy had just brought down from Arltunga. They had had one other of the Parrakeets, which had escaped before they started. They, the Parrakeets, had all been taken from the nests this season on the Hale River.

3rd March, 1905.—On 26th February I saw Mr. Gee's Alexandra Parrakeets. They appear to be three males and one female. The three have the spatula-ended feathers in the wings. They have much improved in appearance, the colours deepened, and the tails long. They are very tame, perching on

my shoulders and hat when I was in their aviary. The three Rock Pigeons which were with them seemed in good order, but not very tame.

- (1) Should be Bogan River, (in 1835?).
 - (2) Depot Glen, on Evelyn Creek, eight miles on the left of the present main roadway between Milparinka and Tibooburra, in north-west New South Wales.
 - (3) Diamond Doves (*Geopelia cuneata*).
 - (4) At Howell's Ponds, C.A., between 21st April and 15th May, 1862.
 - (5) Night Parrot (*Geopsittacus occidentalis*).
 - (6) Superb Parrot or Green Leek (*Polytelis swainsoni*).
 - (7) Golden-winged Parrot.
 - (8) *Spathopterus*—Gr. *spathe*, a spatula or spoon; Gr. *pteron*. a feather.
 - (9) Plumed Pigeon (*Lophophaps plumifera*) probably.
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