

PSITTACINES OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

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Following Dr. Lendon's paper "The Distribution of the Australian Psittacines," *S. Aust. Orn.*, 25 (1968), 3-17, the following notes, mainly from the Darling Downs of south-eastern Queensland may be of interest. My thanks to Cecil Cameron of Rockwood, Chinchilla, for the use of his notes.

RAINBOW LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus haematodus*).

At Jandowae, this is a rare species, being seen on a few occasions only, over the past eight years. During August and September of 1966, when there was an abundant food supply, several pairs were seen regularly 15 miles north-east of the town. They gave every indication of nesting, though I could not locate a nest. At Inverramsay, it is a common species, and when sorghum crops begin to ripen in the autumn, this species flocks in thousands, becoming a pest. It associates while flocking on the crops with the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus*) and the Musk Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta concinna*). At Rockwood, it is a very rare visitor, this being the most westerly record I can locate.

SCALY-BREASTED LORIKEET (*Trichoglossus chlorolepidotus*).

This Lorikeet penetrates further inland than other Lorikeets, except perhaps for the Little Lorikeet (*Glossopsitta pusilla*) which possibly extends as far west as the Scaly-

breasted species. It is the most common of the lorikeets, and is relatively common along the creeks of the northern Darling Downs which flow westward. When the River Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) are flowering, the species becomes common and breeds. This lorikeet also follows the ripening of the berries of the Pepper Tree (*Schinus molle*) and feeds on the sticky substance coating the inner hard seeds.

At Lake Broadwater, which is surrounded by a large expanse of River Gums, they breed prolifically during a good season, and may be almost entirely absent in adverse seasons. In 1966, the nesting season commenced during the last week of May, when the first eggs were noted, and continued through the winter and spring. The last eggs were noted in mid-September. In 1967, a poor flowering season, no nests were located, and only a few birds were present.

At Inverramsay, the species is less common than it is on the northern Darling Downs (Jandowae-Chinchilla areas). Small numbers mingle with the flocks of Rainbow and Musk Lorikeets, on the sorghum crops. It is the commonest lorikeet at Rockwood, feeding on eucalypt blossom when available, but seems to find plenty to eat among eucalypt leaves at other times, especially the Poplar Box (*E. populnea*). No doubt this species occurs some distance west of Rockwood.

MUSK LORIKEET*(Glossopsitta concinna)*.

At Inverramsay, it is a common species, flocks of up to several hundred individuals being noted on sorghum. I have seen it at Wallangarra, and at a point 17 miles south of Warwick. I have no records from Jandowae, other than two probable records of high flying lorikeet flocks, which gave the indication of being Musk. I have never seen it on the Bunya Range, nor have I any records west of Inverramsay.

LITTLE LORIKEET *(Glossopsitta pusilla)*.

This species is rather uncommon at Inverramsay, while at Jandowae, it is only seen in transit, over the open plain areas, and is a rare species along the Red Gum lined creeks. I was surprised to find it common at Lake Broadwater, where it breeds in abundant seasons. In 1966, almost every knot-hole had a pair of birds in attendance, and many clutches of eggs were noted between July 9 and October 30. In 1967, only a few birds were present, and only one nesting pair was seen. Small flocks are seen throughout the year at Rockwood, and without doubt, it would extend some distance west

RED-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO*(Calyptorhynchus magnificus)*.

My only record is of a flock near Rockwood during December, 1960 and January, 1961. A shot bird from this flock was examined. There are skins in the Queensland Museum from Nangram, about 4 miles west of Rockwood. However, Cameron has no record from Rockwood, during a long residence.

GLOSSY BLACK COCKATOO*(Calyptorhynchus lathami)*.

Present in somewhat small numbers at Inverramsay, in the wet sclerophyll forests, where it was found breeding. I have recorded it at Kogan, and at Chinchilla where a flock of 23 birds was seen on May 5, 1962, and have seen family parties in the Lake Broadwater area in *Casuarina* forest. I have no record for the Bunya Range, nor for that matter, for any of the intervening country east of Jandowae. Cameron records the species as a resident and breeder for Rockwood.

There is apparently some confusion as to identity of the common red-tailed cockatoo in the south-eastern portion of the state.

The late E. A. R. Lord's listing of *magnificus* from Murphys Creek (Emu 56: 110) is undoubtedly *lathami*. Murphys Creek lies only a few miles east of Toowoomba, and is situated in wet sclerophyll forest, similar to that at Inverramsay, and Wallangarra, where, though occurring in small numbers, *lathami* is not uncommon and a breeding species.

YELLOW-TAILED BLACK COCKATOO
(Calyptorhynchus funereus).

Occurs in small numbers in the wet sclerophyll forests at Inverramsay, where it is a breeding species. I have records from Taroom, Chinchilla, Kogan and Rockwood, while at Jandowae, I have a single record of a pair flying over the large expanse of open plain, on January 8, 1963, in a south-westerly direction, during the late afternoon. Cameron records it as not as common as *lathami* at Rockwood, being usually found along the Condamine River a few miles to the north. He has a record of a large flock of approximately 120 birds feeding over an area of 200 acres of Ironbark (*Eucalyptus sp.*) forest.

WHITE COCKATOO *(Cacatua galerita)*.

Rather uncommon at Inverramsay although flocks sometimes feed on cultivation paddocks. A common species on the northern Darling Downs, where it breeds freely wherever suitable eucalypts are found. At Rockwood, with the spread of grain-growing, it is increasing rapidly.

PINK COCKATOO *(Cacatua leadbeateri)*.

A small flock feeding in company with White Cockatoos at Warra during May, 1962, constitutes my only record.

LITTLE CORELLA *(Cacatua sanguinea)*.

A pair appeared for a short while on a creek south of Jandowae on September 9, 1963, while on February 26, 1966, a flock of from 60 to 70 birds remained for a few days. A shot bird from this flock was subsequently brought to me, suffering a broken wing. It was released after several months whereupon it was not sighted again. A very severe drought prevailed in the western districts of Queensland during 1965.

I have a report from Kogan of a flock of nine birds arriving in the winter of 1958, and feeding on the remnants of a sorghum

crop for some time, again at a period when the west was suffering severe drought.

Cameron has a recent record of this species. A flock of approximately 20 birds was seen feeding in company with White Cockatoos on May 26, 1968, close to the town of Condamine. During 1968 the western districts have been experiencing an excellent season.

GALAH (*Cacatua roseicapilla*).

Numerous in the grain areas of the Darling Downs, breeding in the River Gums along the creeks, eggs appearing in the first week in August in normal seasons. At Inverramsay, it is uncommon.

COCKATIEL (*Nymphicus hollandicus*).

Abundant, and at times a pest when millet and sorghum are ripening. Increasing rapidly with the spread of grain-growing. Rather uncommon at Inverramsay, despite the fact that sorghum was grown freely. The species seems to favour open plain, whereas Inverramsay is situated in mountainous country, in the foothills of the Great Dividing Range.

RED-WINGED PARROT

(*Aprosmictus erythropterus*).

A common species in the dry sclerophyll about Chinchilla and Rockwood. Uncommon about Jandowae and very rare in the dry sclerophyll forest to the east of the town. It tends to avoid Poplar Box forests about Jandowae and Dalby, though few are left standing. At Lake Broadwater, it is a common species, there being large areas of dry sclerophyll similar to that about Chinchilla, still standing in the area. In this area of Queensland its distribution may be dependant on the distribution of a type of dry sclerophyll forest, Belar *Casuarina cristata*) being one of the dominant species, as distinct from Brigalow/Belar scrub.

KING PARROT (*Aprosmictus scapularis*).

Reasonable numbers on the Bunya Range and at Inverramsay. Odd pairs are scattered through small pockets of Spotted Gum (*Eucalyptus maculata*) forest to the east and north of Jandowae. In one of these pockets, three pairs were found breeding during October, 1967. Two females were seen entering one hollow, whereupon I cut a small inspection hole in the tree. Surprisingly, both birds had laid in the same depression,

which held seven eggs, three of a small type, and four of a large type. Several times when I inspected the hollow, both females emerged from the entrance. One of the females was paired with a male in immature plumage. A pair of birds—the mature plumaged male and his mate were in possession of the hollow as early as the latter part of July. The second pair did not appear until September, and over the next few weeks, the fully plumaged bird made a vain attempt to drive the second pair away. The floor of the nesting chamber was eight feet above outside ground level, with the entrance at approximately 35 feet through a large dead limb. Wheat harvesting commitments prevented further inspection of this interesting phenomenon.

A third pair was in possession of a hollow 120 yards off, and a small inspection hole was cut into this, mainly to gain some confirmation of the authenticity of the double clutch in the former hollow. It contained four well incubated eggs. The floor of this nesting cavity was three feet above outside ground level, and the entrance at approximately 40 feet through a hole in the trunk, from where a limb had broken. Both nests were in Spotted Gums.

I have other records for Kogan and Lake Broadwater, where, in the latter area at least, it is a rare visitor. Cameron has recorded it as far west as Condamine, and records it as breeding at Burncluth, north of Chinchilla. One or two are seen each year at Rockwood.

CRIMSON ROSELLA

(*Platycercus elegans*).

Confined to the ranges about Inverramsay, and the Bunya Range, and occurring commonly in the intervening highland areas. In December, 1962, Cameron recorded a bird at Rockwood which agreed in every way with *P. elegans flaveolus*. Soon afterwards it mated with a Pale-headed Rosella (*P. adsцитus*), and was often seen inspecting hollow limbs. However no nesting took place, and it disappeared about May, 1963, after being seen almost daily. Possibly this was an aviary escapee.

PALE-HEADED ROSELLA

(*Platycercus adsцитus*).

Abundant throughout most areas of the Darling Downs. I have found it to occur in

reasonable numbers, close to the range, to as far south as East Greenmount. Undoubtedly it extends through the western Darling Downs into New South Wales.

EASTERN ROSELLA (*Platycercus eximius*).

This is the common rosella at Inverramsay, from where *adscitus* was never recorded. There appears to be no overlap in range unless it occurs between East Greenmount and Inverramsay, a distance of 20 miles. However there was quite an amount of variation in *eximius* at Inverramsay when I was living there nine years ago, mainly in the coloration of the head, which varied from the normal red to different shades of yellow. This occurred to such an extent that pure red-headed birds were rare. A few miles south of Warwick, and at Stanthorpe, the flocks which came under my notice showed typical red heads.

I have never recorded variation in *adscitus*, which might be attributed to interbreeding with *eximius*, unless it occurred between Inverramsay and East Greenmount.

I have no record of *eximius* north of Inverramsay, nor west of the district. I would suspect that *adscitus* occurs in the drier country west of Allora. A single bird (*eximius*) has been recently reported to me from Lake Broadwater, but I am inclined to think this is an aviary escapee from the nearby town of Dalby where there are a large number of aviculturists.

Despite considerable time spent about the Toowoomba area, I have never seen the species there. The late E. A. R. Lord during a residence of about 50 years in the nearby district of Murphys Creek had no record. It seems likely that records from Toowoomba, and also Cameron's from Biddeston, roughly 15 miles west of the city, ("single birds seen a number of times"; over a long period), are attributable to aviary escapees.

The Toowoomba Field Naturalist Club has records of *eximius* from the Stanthorpe-Warwick districts, Beaudesert, and Toowoomba, and for *adscitus* from Heifer Creek, Millmerran, Cecil Plains, Helidon, and numerous localities on the north-eastern and western Darling Downs.

I have a record of a paired *eximius* and *elegans* from Inverramsay. Both were seen almost daily, flying together, for several

months, after which both birds disappeared. No attempt at nesting was seen.

RED-BACKED PARROT (*Psephotus haematonotus*).

A common species at Inverramsay and north to the East Greenmount area. North from there, numbers decline fairly rapidly. I have records from the Oakey and Toowoomba areas. In the Jandowae-Dalby areas, it is becoming more frequent, though by no means a common species. Small flocks are sometimes seen in the Coolibah (*Eucalyptus* sp.) ridge country east of Jimbour during the winter months. The only breeding noticed has been of several pairs on the outskirts of Dalby. It seems to be absent from other areas about Jandowae-Jimbour-Dalby in the spring and summer.

Further west Cameron has recorded it at Condamine and from there, southward through Meandarra, where it becomes more common. He has no record east of Condamine.

MULGA PARROT (*Psephotus varius*).

My only record is of several pairs 20 miles north-west of Eulo in south-western Queensland. Cameron has recorded it as far east as Westmar.

BLUE BONNET (*Northiella haematogaster*).

Cameron says of this species, "Appears to be expanding eastward, which is surprising. One pair is known one mile from Condamine, and it becomes progressively more numerous further west."

TURQUOISE PARROT (*Neophema pulchella*).

A pair and a single bird have been recorded at Rockwood, our only records from southern Queensland.

BOURKE PARROT (*Neophema bourkii*).

Recently, an aviculturist, and a specialist on the *Neophema* group, told me of an occurrence of a flock of probably a dozen birds at Dirranbandi, several years ago. The flock was seen only once during several months spent in the district.

SWIFT PARROT (*Lathamus discolor*).

Cameron has records of small flocks at Rockwood over a period of a few months in 1964.

BUDGERYGAIH (*Melopsittacus undulatus*).

Rare on the Darling Downs. I have records of four small flocks only, staying no more than a few days. During the early part of the winter of 1968, several sightings of small flocks have been reported to me,

while at Rockwood, there were more about than for many years. Some records at least, from the Darling Downs, coincide with abundant seasons in the west of the State rather than adverse conditions.