

RECENT RECORDS OF THE SCARLET-CHESTED PARROT

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In December 1974 and May 1975, the Scarlet-chested Parrot *Neophema splendida* was recorded on two occasions and probably a third, in the Murray Mallee region, as defined by Condon (1969), of South Australia. It is the purpose of this note to document these records and present a summary of recent records of the bird in the western parts of its range.

The first of the new sightings, the probable one, was that of a presumed female, approximately 15 km east of Mannum on 30 December 1974. The bird was observed by Jim Graham and myself in dense mallee with little undergrowth. (A description of the bird and other field notes are available from the Editor of this Journal on request.) As the colour of the lores of the bird could not be accurately described, this description could also apply to

a female Turquoise Parrot *Neophema pulchella*. But if it is assumed that this bird was not an aviary escapee, there is virtually no chance that a Turquoise Parrot would occur here naturally, as shown by consideration of the two species' habitat and distributional differences.

On 24 May 1975, Mr. R. H. Lake saw at least two male Scarlet-chested Parrots among a party of 12, one km east of Paruna. These birds were reportedly in "sparse grassland with mallee." The following day (25 May), Mr. Lake saw eight Scarlet-chested Parrots in flight, 11 km east of Swan Reach. One male was "clearly seen." (Details were given to the Bird Record Secretary of the SAOA, Mr. R. Attwood).

A summary of reliable records of the Scarlet-chested Parrot made between the late 1950's

and December 1974 in the easternmost parts of its range (i.e. east of Eyre Peninsula) is now presented.

- 1) There have been several reports of the species north of the River Murray, and mostly from the Canegrass-Gluepot area. They are treated together here as they may well refer to one or two irruptions of the bird and also as a specific month was not given with them.

Condon (1969) says that large flocks were recorded "north of the River Murray (? at Gluepot)" between 1961-1965 in "early autumn-winter." He also mentions records from Pudnooka and Nor-west Bend, River Murray, while Eckert (1972) refers to reports of the species from near Gluepot and tells me (pers. comm.) that these reports date from 1958 when Mr. F. Lewitzka saw the birds. Mr. Bill Radford of Canegrass saw a single bird on his property at this time. Mack (1970) says that there is no doubt that Scarlet-chested Parrots were trapped at Canegrass and Gluepot (1958-61) and on Calperum (1946-66). Lastly, Condon (1975) says, "large flocks recently north of Waikerie."

- 2) Glover (1968) gives a record from north of Monash in August 1966. (Monash is c. 5 km NE of Barmera.)
- 3) Glover (1973) lists a record of c. 10 birds NE of Renmark on August 30, 1970. Mrs. M. J. Opie who saw the birds tells me that the locality was near Calperum.
- 4) Smith (1973) records two males at Trinita, NW Victoria, on November 4, 1972. (Trinita is in the same latitude as Mannum and about 250 km to the east thereof).

- 5) There is a specimen in the South Australian Museum of a female Scarlet-chested Parrot taken 5 km south of Lyndhurst on 2 April 1974. No other Scarlet-chested Parrots were seen on that occasion.

Unfortunately, there are not enough records in this summary upon which one can base firm conclusions regarding the movements and status of the Scarlet-chested Parrot in the eastern parts of its range. However, analysis of the records shows that all the records from south of Morgan, Renmark and Mildura were made between November-May inclusive. This could suggest that Scarlet-chested Parrots may, in summer-autumn, range south and east into the Murray Mallee from more north-westerly areas when environmental conditions cause rapid increases in food reserves. That they can show rapid responses to such environmental stimuli has been demonstrated by records given by Jarman (1968).

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