

RANGE AND MOVEMENTS OF THE REGENT PARROT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Hitherto, the northernmost records of the Regent Parrot *Polytelis anthopeplus* in South Australia have been from Calperum, a large property shortly north of Renmark; and south of Gluepot, c. 75 km NW of Renmark (Mack 1970). It is therefore of interest to report recent northerly records of this species from in and near Dangali Conservation Park, some 70-105 km N of Renmark, and their significance with respect to the movements of the bird in South Australia.

Such recent records have been made by Mr. David Barrington (DB), the Ranger at Dangali CP; by Messrs John Hatch and David Close, (JH, DC); and by other members of the South Australian Ornithological Association (SAOA).

They are as follows:

1. Two at West Sandy Dam near Morganvale (c. 105 km N of Renmark), just before Easter, 16-19 April 1976 (DB).
2. 400 at Calperum in March 1977 (DB).

3. Two at c. 5 km E of Morganvale on 28 March 1978 (DB).
4. C. 120 at Canopus HS (c. 80 km N of Renmark), between February and mid-March 1978 (DB).
5. 29 at Little Oak Dam, c. 15 km NW of Canopus HS, on 5 March 1978 and c. 20 at same locality on 25 March 1978 (SAOA).
6. C. 30 at 20 km E of Canegrass HS (Canegrass is c. 90 km NW of Renmark) on 17 April 1976 (JH, DC).

Mr. John Eckert, who visited Dangali CP in late May, June and October 1977, did not record the species in the area (pers. comm.). Also, Messrs Hatch and Close did not see any Regent Parrots at the same locality as in 6 above over a period of two-three days in October 1976 (pers. comm.).

Forshaw (1969) says that along the fringes of this species' range in eastern Australia, there appear to be irregular fluctuations in numbers as well as unpredictable movements, which occasionally result in the birds being recorded well outside their normal range. However, the above sightings which are all from the period of late summer-mid autumn, coupled with the lack of records from later in the year, suggest that in South Australia in recent years, Regent Parrots have undergone a post-breeding dispersal of varying magnitude, northwards of their breeding areas along the River Murray. Presumably, birds of all ages have been involved, as flocks of birds seen in Dangali CP comprised individuals in adult male and female-phase plumages (pers. obs.).

Forshaw (op. cit.) notes similar movements of this species in the Western Australian wheat-belt although, in that case, the birds were absent from particular areas in the months December-March.

One other recent record of this species is worth reporting here. Mr. Athol Coleman saw a pair of Regent Parrots on April 24, 1978 at Rowland Flat, c. 5 km E of Lyndoch (Lyndoch being 45 km NE of Adelaide). He recorded

the birds as being "in good plumage, shy and not behaving like aviary escapees". If these birds were in fact wild, they would presumably have originated from the River Murray populations dealt with above. It is possible that this sighting represents part of a small westward dispersal of Regent Parrots from the River Murray, but the lack of other sightings rather suggests that such a dispersal has not occurred.

The Regent Parrot has not been recorded this close to Adelaide since the early days of settlement, from which there are two records:

1. Condon (1969) refers to a "doubtful record" which he attributes to S. A. White, but gives no further details of locality or date.
2. George Grey, in a letter to John Gould, recorded the species "in the dense scrub to the north-west of Adelaide" (Gould 1865). Grey, who was the Governor of South Australia from 1840-5, though he was only present in Adelaide from 1841-5 (Whitelock 1977), wrote to Gould in the years 1842-3 (Chisholm 1973), so his record(s) must date from between 1841-3 inclusive. As to the whereabouts of the scrub that Grey wrote of, Mr. Darrell Kraehenbuehl informs me (pers. comm.) that there existed until the early 1850s a tract of scrub known as Peachey's Belt between the Little Para River and what is now Roseworthy. Presumably, this could be where Grey made his observations.

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