

ALEXANDRA'S PARROTS IN THE GREAT VICTORIA DESERT

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On 10 September 1986, I observed four Alexandra's parrots *Polytelis alexandrae* in the unnamed Conservation Park in the far west of South Australia. The location was 24 km W of Vokes Hill Junction on the Anne Beadell Highway (28° 33' S, 130° 24' E). Other observers present were K. M. Allen, G. White and K. White.

I was driving east at approximately 1500 hours when four parrots flew up from the ground at the edge of the track, about 10 m in front of my vehicle. As they flew to a dead Mulga *Acacia aneura* tree about 30 m away, I was immediately able to see the bright yellow-green of the wing-coverts and the exceptionally long tails of the birds. I was able to observe the birds closely through 10 × 50 binoculars. I could plainly see the blue of the top and back of the head along with the pink of the throat and bill. Two of the birds appeared to be generally duller in overall appearance and I suspect that the group may have comprised two males and two females.

I then attempted to approach the birds with my camera. They flew into a live Mulga and I was able to approach to within 30 m and took several photographs using a 35 mm SLR camera fitted with a 200 mm lens. I believe that this is the first time this species has been photographed in the wild.

The vegetation of the location was dominated by Mulga and Black Oak *Casuarina cristata* with Marble Gum *Eucalyptus gongylocarpa* on the dune ridges. The understorey consisted mainly of *Cassia* species (*C. artemesioides* and *C. nemophila* var. *nemophila*) with *Eromophila latrobei* and *Triodia basedowii*. The birds appeared to be feeding on the seeds of *Stenopetalum anfractum*.

Investigation of the literature reveals only four previous recorded sightings of Alexandra's Parrots in South Australia, Wells 1904 (in Matthews 1910-1927), Wells 1904 (in North 1901-1914) McGilp (1933) and Cain (1934). The last was in 1933 and all sightings have been between latitudes 26° and 27° S. Other unpublished South Australian reports were made in 1961 in the Musgrave Ranges (F. Vickery, pers. comm.) and in 1968 in the Everard Ranges (D. Kraehenbuell *et al.*, pers. comm.).

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Accepted 22 December 1986