

NOTES ON NEOPHEMAS ON YORKE PENINSULA. Some recent observations of Rock Parrot *Neophema petrophila* and Elegant Parrot *N. elegans* on Yorke Peninsula (YP) are presented and the distribution of Neophemas in the region discussed.

Rock Parrots: Howard Jarman published a series of comprehensive accounts of the status and history of some Neophema species in the early volumes of *Australian Bird Watcher*. His account of the Rock Parrot (Jarman 1974) stated that the birds went only part-way along Spencer Gulf, giving northern limits as Arno Bay (c. 33°55'S, 136°34'E) on Eyre Peninsula (EP) and Moonta Bay on YP (c. 34°04'S, 137°34'E). Klau and Langdon have since shown the some Rock Parrots can travel almost to the head of Spencer Gulf, near Port Augusta. They sighted several with Blue-winged Parrots *N. chrysostoma* and one Orange-bellied Parrot *N. chrysogaster* in the Lower North (LN) at Chinamans Creek (c. 32°42'S, 137°34'E), 23 km SSE of Port Augusta, in August 1992 (Klau and Langdon 1994). Higgins (1999) also gives Fisherman Bay, LN (c. 33°36'S, 137°56'E), near Port Broughton, as an unreferenced locality, but A.M. Morgan (1918) did not record it there during a several day visit in October 1917.

On 30 March 1999, M. Ludewigs, A. Wohlfeil and I travelled to the vicinity of Bird Island (c. 33°59'S, 137°32'E) on the Spencer Gulf coast (western YP), about 10 km SW of Wallaroo. When about 2 km inland of the coast (c. 33°59'S, 137°35'E), a small group of Neophemas was flushed from agricultural land near the roadside. They flew ahead of the vehicle through cleared agricultural land with sparse roadside vegetation to some coastal scrub, before alighting on a fence where identification as Rock Parrots was made, the blue lores being clearly evident. Others were noticed resting in nearby scrub. After a time of observing, the parrots rose as a group, many more coming from other parts of the scrub until a flock of about 200 flew off in an easterly direction to a feeding site near to where the small group had first been flushed. This was in a paddock where it appeared that wireweed *Polygonum aviculare* may have been the attracting food source.

The presence of such a large flock at a site slightly above Jarman's old northerly limit (several kilometres) seemed significant. In addition, South Australian records of flocks

exceeding 100 Rock Parrots are few. D. Barnes (in Glover 1965) reported 500 on Rabbit Island (c. 34°36'S, 135°59'E), c. 18 km NE of Port Lincoln, EP, on 18 October 1964, possibly a nesting area. Pastor Ivan Wittwer (in Jarman 1974) recorded 400 coming in to drink at Port Kenny, EP (c. 33°10'S, 134°41'E), though not necessarily in one flock, while 200 were seen in tidal swampland south of Tumbby Bay, EP (c. 34°23'S, 136°06'E) in January 1972 (Eckert 1973).

We therefore decided to survey the coast north of Bird Island and this was undertaken on 24 April 1999. No Rock Parrots were present at the locality where they were seen on 30 March, but the former feeding site had since been cultivated. A group of eight Rock Parrots was located in coastal samphire 3 km S of Wallaroo. A thorough survey of all likely areas from Wallaroo (c. 33°56'S, 137°38'E) north to Port Broughton (c. 33°36'S, 137°56'E) failed to find any further Rock Parrots.

SAOA records suggest that the Rock Parrot may be mainly a post-breeding visitor to the mainland coast of YP usually in the period December to mid-April (G. Carpenter *in litt.*). However, Souter (1942) said that the species could always be seen in the Point Pearce area (c. 34°25'S, 137°30'E) and Jarman (1974) stated that those on inshore islands [presumably of EP and YP] moved freely between these and the mainland, especially when gathering food for the young. K. Treloar (pers. comm.) regards the species as resident along the western and southern YP coast from Port Victoria (c. 34°30'S, 137°29'E) around to at least Edithburgh (c. 35°05'S, 137°45'E). They are known to have nested on an island in Pondalowie Bay (c. 35°14'S, 136°50'E) (Parker and Cox 1978). Jarman (1974) stated that S.A. White (1916) saw them going into holes in cliffs on Althorpe Island. This appears to be a misquote of White (1916) who recorded Rock Parrots on the Althorpe Islands (c. 35°22'S, 136°51'E) and Sandy Island at Troubridge Lighthouse (c. 35°07'S, 137°50'E) but made no mention of birds going into holes in cliffs. Jarman may have gained that comment from conversation with White years afterwards. Additional ornithological study is recommended to further substantiate the breeding of the Rock Parrot on the inshore islands of YP.

Elegant Parrot: Little is known of the status of the Elegant Parrot in the country between its

two main breeding areas of the Flinders Ranges and southern Mount Lofty Ranges (e.g. the southern LN and northern YP). Dr A.M. Morgan took a female on the lower Broughton River, south-west of Port Pirie, LN (c. 33°17'S, 137°52'E) on 2 April 1925 (South Australian Museum – SAMA B4250). SAOA records for the southern LN and northern YP are shown in the Table. We saw a party of five adjacent to coastal scrub 2 km S of Port Broughton on 24 April 1999. They appeared to be a family party with two adults and three duller juveniles. The yellow lores and two-toned blue in the wings were used to confirm identity.

Similarly, over much of the central and southern YP the Elegant Parrot is unrecorded. Some of this may be due to the difficulty of making certain identification. On 2 May 1932, T.G. Souter submitted to the SAMA (B15340) a male from 10 km NE of Maitland (at c. 34°20'S, 137°43'E) (Sutton 1932). A friend had taken it from a flock of about 100 in that locality. Souter's (1942) major article noted the Elegant Parrot occurring as 'small flocks and pairs occasionally seen'.

E. Milne (pers. comm.) took two immature birds (SAMA B39869, B39918) at Honiton (c. 35°06'S, 137°39'E) on 10 December 1984 and saw up to 20 of the species each summer during 1982–1992. SAOA records for the region are shown in the Table.

Treloar (*in litt.*) states that since shifting in 1985 from a property 2 km SE of Minlaton to another 10 km SE of Minlaton, he now sees Elegant Parrots every summer at some stage during the period November to May. Every summer there has been at least one small flock, but sometimes numbers exceed 100. They favour sandy soils over clay, areas that grow common evening primrose *Oenothera stricta* and wireweed, and he regards these plants as the attracting food source.

Treloar also saw numbers of what he suspected to be Elegant Parrots at Marion Bay (c. 35°14'S, 136°59'E) in April 2001, where Rock Parrots were also present, but was unable to verify their identity. G. Carpenter has also seen the species there (see Table).

The Elegant Parrot has so far not been found

Table. SAOA records of Elegant Parrots for the Lower North and Yorke Peninsula. Note that latitude increases down the list (i.e. records become more southerly).

Date	Number of birds	Locality	Latitude, Longitude	Observer	Source
<i>Southern LN and northern YP</i>					
6/11/2003	8	Porcupine Range, LN	(c. 33°06'S, 139°09'E)	G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
9/6/1985	4	Weeroona Island, LN	(c. 33°06'S, 138°02'E)	D. Caldecott	SAOA database
1/5/1976	4 (Br?)*	Yacka, 9 km NW, LN	(c. 33°30'S, 138°23'E)	L. Pedler	SAOA database
30/4/1974	1	Koolunga, 7 km E, LN	(c. 33°35'S, 138°24'E)	L. Pedler	(Cox 1976)
12/9/1976	30	Port Broughton, LN	(c. 33°36'S, 137°56'E)	L. Pedler	SAOA database
8/5/1982	1	Port Broughton, LN	(c. 33°36'S, 137°56'E)	J. Paton	SAOA database
22/2/2002	2	Wallaroo, 2 km N, YP	(c. 33°55'S, 137°38'E)	G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
8/12/1985	c. 10	Tothill Range, LN	(c. 33°58'S, 138°58'E)	J. Smyth	(SAOA 1986)
2/11/2002	20	Lochiel area, LN	(c. 33°56'S, 138°10'E)	G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
27/4/1990	4	Moonta Bay, 3 km NW Moonta, YP	(c. 34°01'S, 137°33'E)	G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
23/1/1969	20	Port Wakefield, 16 km N, YP	(c. 34°03'S, 138°09'E)	P. Taylor	SAOA database
9/1/1998	10	Clinton CP, YP	(c. 34°08'S, 138°55'E)	G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
3/12/1993	50	Clinton CP, YP	(c. 34°08'S, 138°55'E)	G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
-/10/1969	2	Riverton, LN	(c. 34°10'S, 138°45'E)	L. Davey	SAOA database
<i>Central and southern YP</i>					
-/6/1924	not stated	Maitland area, YP	(c. 34°20'S, 137°43'E)	T.G. Souter	(Souter 1924)
22/3/1979	30+	Minlaton, 12 km E, YP	(c. 34°46'S, 137°43'E)	K. Treloar	(Bransbury 1984)
17/4/1979	100+	Minlaton, 12 km E, YP	(c. 34°46'S, 137°43'E)	K. Treloar	(Bransbury 1984)
6/5/1979	30+	Minlaton, 12 km E, YP	(c. 34°46'S, 137°43'E)	K. Treloar	(Bransbury 1984)
-/2/1985	50	Minlaton area, YP	(c. 34°46'S, 137°36'E)	L. Underwood, K. Treloar	(SAOA 1985)
7/2/1985	5	Carribie CP, YP	(c. 35°00'S, 137°03'E)	L. Underwood, G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
28/3/1986	6	Warrenben CP, NE of, YP	(c. 35°07'S, 137°03'E)	SAOA Campout	SAOA database
8/2/1985	2	Port Moorowie, YP	(c. 35°07'S, 137°32'E)	L. Underwood, G. Carpenter	pers. obs.
11/2/1988	1	Marion Bay, 6 km NNW, YP	(c. 35°11'S, 136°57'E)	G. Carpenter	pers. obs.

* breeding nearby? – an adult pair with two juveniles recorded.

or suspected of nesting on YP. Most sightings of this species on YP coincide with the period November to May, as suggested by Treloar.

Blue-winged Parrot: T.G. Souter (1930) reported seeing seven Blue-winged Parrots near Balgowan, YP (c. 34°20'S, 137°30'E) on 15 September 1929 and two at Point Pearce on 15 November 1929. However he mentioned only the Elegant Parrot in his major article (Souter 1942). Presumably his specimen of the Elegant Parrot mentioned above, taken from 10 km NE of Maitland (and within 35 km of Balgowan and Point Pearce) caused him to reconsider the identity of the birds first seen. D. Paton reported three from 16 km E of Marion Bay (c. 35°14'S, 137°08'E) on 22 October 1972 without details (SAOA 1972). There is no substantiated record of the species for YP, yet its occasional occurrence there would seem logical. It would be desirable to publish full details of future sightings to satisfactorily establish its presence there.

Orange-bellied Parrot: The only indication of this species' presence on YP comes from the diary of J.D. McDougall given in Jarman's (1965) account of the species, i.e. 'December 24, 1886. In the afternoon went to the lighthouse [Edithburgh, c. 35°05'S, 137°45'E]; shot *Euphemia aurantia*, plenty of which were to be seen – December 25, 1886. Drove to Troubridge Hill [c. 35°09'S, 137°36'E]. *Euphemia aurantia* plentiful at the beach.' McDougall was familiar with the species, having been with Edwin Ashby when two specimens were taken from a congregation of several thousand birds feeding behind coastal sandhills at The Grange (c. 34°54'S, 138°30'E) in November 1886 (Jarman 1965). The presence of one at Chinamans Creek in August 1992, mentioned above, suggests that a modern-day occurrence to the south on YP might not be impossible.

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John Eckert: Box 143, Langhorne Creek, South Australia 5255

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