

## Neophema splendida.

### SCARLET CHESTED GRASS PARROT.

By F. E. Parsons, R.A.O.U.

This beautiful little parrot is among the "rara avis" of Australian forms; in fact there has for some time past been a suggestion that this bird must be added to the painfully growing list of Australian extinct birds. It is therefore with much pleasure that I am able to record that although apparently very few in numbers, the birds have not altogether disappeared.

Under date September, 1919, I received a female of this species, sent by Mr. L. K. McGilp from Moolawatana Station, North of Lake Frome, South Australia. It was picked up by one of the station hands, having been killed by flying into a netting fence.

Mr. McGilp not being sure of the species forwarded it to me for identification. In further correspondence, Mr. McGilp informs me that the man had noticed a few of these birds (some with scarlet chests) feeding on the ground in the sand hill country, and that about twelve months previously, he, in company with his brother Niel, had seen four birds of this species, also in the sand hill country, three green chested birds and one beautifully coloured male with the scarlet chest.

I am very pleased to have this addition to my collection. As far as I can ascertain, there are only two other examples of this species in South Australian collections, each of them a male.

It is a difficult matter to understand why this species and its near ally, the Red-shouldered Grass Parrot, have been so reduced in numbers, as Mr. Mathews says, "It certainly cannot be due to the scientific bird collector."

Any data regarding the life history of this beautiful form would be very welcome and those coming in contact with the

bird should eagerly observe and publish all possible particulars regarding its habits before it is too late.

It is interesting to here give the statements of four authors of outstanding works on Australian ornithology:—

John Gould: "Birds of Australia," Fol., Vol. 5." "It is a source of much regret to me that I am unable to give more than a very slight notice of the beautiful bird that forms the subject of the present Plate. The single specimen from which my description was taken came into my possession in 1840, unfortunately without any other information accompanying it than that it was a native of Swan River."

Campbell: "Nests and Eggs of Australian Birds." The only "observations" read: "Gould much regreted he was unable to give more than a brief notice of this beautiful and truly "splendid" Grass Parrakeet. We are not much better off to-day. I suppose it is no wonder because this bird has been characterised as very shy in disposition and nowhere numerous."

North: "Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania." "As in Gould's time, so it is now, undoubtedly the rarest species of the genus '*Neophema* . . . ' The specimens in the Australian Museum Collection are from the Darling River, New South Wales, the Gawler Ranges, and other parts of South Australia."

Gregory Mathews: "Birds of Australia." "There appears little else to record about this species save that it appears to be absolutely extinct both East and West."

From the foregoing extracts it can be seen what a very little is known about this "little gem" and it is pleasing to think that is not yet too late to observe its life history, so that some information may be published for the benefit of future students in ornithology respecting this, "one of the most beautiful of all Australian birds."

Sept. 26, 1919.

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