
FINLAYSON—Two Strange Parrots in the Interior.

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By H. H. Finlayson.

I have just returned to the Musgrave Ranges from a ten-days' trip to Mount Connor and the Basedow Range, where I connected up with my last year's route, and again met my friend, W. H. Liddle, with whom you will remember there was some correspondence towards the end of last year about the occurrence of a Parrot which could not be readily identified. I have now questioned not only Mr. Liddle, but also another settler (W. L. Pearce) 20 miles east of Mount Connor, and several experienced bird-netters in the Musgraves, particularly A. Brumby and P. Connolly and their several independent accounts leave no doubt, I think, that two species of Parrots rare in this area have recently appeared in the south-western portion of the Centre.

Of the first species there are two distinct records spaced at an interval of three years. The account of the first observation was given me by Mr. Pearce, and is briefly as follows:—Late in an afternoon of May, 1930, while riding with L. O'Toole and P. Connolly over spinifex country three miles east of Mount Connor, three strange Parrots flew in amongst them, circled the party, and then took shelter in clumps of spinifex. It was too late to take note of coloration, but each was a large bird with noticeably long tail and rather slow flight, and gave Pearce an impression of "tameness" (curiosity?). All three agreed it was not a bird they had seen before. There had been no rain in the vicinity for eight months, but there was still good dry feed (grass) nearby.

The second occurrence is that of which you have already been advised, namely, that of October, 1932, but Mr. Liddle has now supplied some additional particulars. The birds arrived at

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his camp, 13 miles east of north of the eastern end of the Basedow Range after heavy falls of rain. They were in considerable numbers, and were in plain view in the Mulgas for some days feeding on the seeds, which were plentiful, with Bourkes (*Neophema bourki*), Alexandras (*Polytelis alexandrae*), Scarlet-breasted (*Neophema splendida*), and the second species to be noted presently. They were very tame, and the black children about the camp amused themselves by climbing into the Mulgas and attempting to take the birds by hand, in which venture they almost succeeded more than once. He (Liddle) was not at first particularly interested, and apparently made no attempt to take them, but he observed that the bird was a large one with long tail, and resembled the Alexandra somewhat in general build. The whole of the dorsum is a bright green, the head is a darker green, the chest and vent are bright yellow, and the under surface of the wing shows some yellow. Mr. Pearce also observed the bird at this time further south, and his description of it tallies well with Liddle's, except that he states the head is dark blue and not green. He appears to have no hesitation in ascribing it to the species first observed in 1930. The bird has not so far been observed in the Musgraves, but accounts of it have been brought down here by Wongapitcha blacks, who state that it lays its eggs in a burrow, and that it nested shortly after the October rain. Their accounts have created great interest here, and I have heard some amusing speculations as to the probable value of the first pair taken. There will be no lack of trying if they appear again.

The second species was a much smaller bird, about one-third as large again as a Shell-Parrot (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), with a short, broad tail, and heavily built. It was a brilliant green all over (a bronze green, Liddle calls it), and without any recognisable markings. In this connection, I would remind you of the verbal account I gave you on my return last year of a small stoutly-built Parrot which I observed at Wollara on 4th February, 1932. The bird was watering with scores of Shell Parrots at an open trough at noon, and my attention was drawn to it by its larger size and brilliant chlorous green colour, recalling that of the Eclectus Parrot (*Lorius pectoralis*) or the green on parts of the Red-winged Parrot (*Aprosmictus erythropterus*). My interest had only just awakened fully when the horses frightened the Shell-Parrots, and they departed and the stranger with them, but I believe that the beak was red or yellow, not black. This was two or three days before a very

heavy rain, and after the rain I observed at a distance what I believed to be a small flock of the same species. So far I have not been able to ascertain whether the blacks had previous cognisance of either bird, but I will continue to inquire.
