

NEMATODES (*ASCARIDIA* SPECIES) FROM SOME CAPTIVE AND FERAL PARROTS

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Free-ranging Australian parrots seem remarkably free from intestinal helminth parasites. Among 160 such birds from the Northern Territory and South Australia obtained as road-killed or Museum specimens, none had trematodes (flukes) or round worms in the gut and only five had tapeworms (pers. obs.). Mr. Ron Hastings (Myrning, Victoria) has informed me (*in litt.*) that he has found nematodes (ascaridids and *Capillaria*) in his cagebirds but that he has never found nematodes of any kind in the wild parrots he has examined. Australian parrots in zoos and private aviaries, on the other hand, are often infected with ascaridid nematodes, to judge by those that die in captivity and are examined by a veterinarian. In most of these, the infection is heavy and was held at post-mortem to have been the cause of death of the birds involved (notes on specimen labels, various collectors, unpublished).

Three species of nematode are found in the gut of these birds. One, *Capillaria* sp., is rarely found and apparently does not affect the host's health. Infections by the other two species are referred to as 'cause of death' above. *Ascaridia columbae* (Gmelin) is a common parasite of domestic pigeons *Columba livia* all over the world and is also found, to a lesser extent, in captive parrots. *Ascaridia platyceri*¹ Hartwich & Tscherner, 1979 (syn. *A. sprenti* Mines, 1979) was first described from cage parrots in a German zoo, and has since been identified from parrots in aviaries in New Zealand, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia (see Table 1;

¹ Although the type of *Ascaridia platyceri* was found in an Eastern Rosella *Platycercus eximius*, Hartwich & Tscherner (1979) used the spellings *Platycercus* and *platyceri* for the host and for the nematode, respectively.

Mines 1979; Weekes 1982; Mawson, Angel & Edmonds in press).

The only free-ranging parrot in Australia in which an ascaridid has been found is the Peach-faced Lovebird *Agapornis roseicollis*, a bird native to south-western Africa (Forshaw 1977) and often kept as a cagebird. *Ascaridia platyceri* was found (coll. E. Carmody, identified by author) in one individual from a small feral colony of these lovebirds on Eyre Peninsula (see Paton & Pollard 1985). Thus, at least one bird of this colony may have spread eggs of this parasite in a habitat of native parrots. The development of *Ascaridia* spp is direct, and one dropping from an infected bird might contain any number of eggs. It seems that Australian parrots are vulnerable to infection, and, if cage birds (native or exotic) are set free it will only be a matter of time before this parasite is widespread. A heavy infestation apparently kills the parrot.

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NEMATODE	RECORDED HOST	REFERENCE, SOURCE*
<i>Ascaridia columbae</i> (Gmelin)	<i>Eclectus roratus</i>	AHC
	<i>Polytelis alexandrae</i>	2, 3
	<i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	2
	<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	AHC
	<i>Barnardius barnardi</i>	AHC
	<i>Barnadius zonarius</i>	AHC
	<i>Neophema bourkii</i>	UQDP
<i>Ascaridia platyceri</i> Hartwich & Tscherner	<i>Callocephalon fimbriatum</i>	AHC
	<i>Alisterus scapularis</i>	UQDP, UMVS, AHC
	<i>Aprosmictus erythropterus</i>	2
	<i>Polytelis anthopeplus</i>	1, 2
	<i>Polytelis alexandrae</i>	AHC
	<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>	AHC
	<i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>	1, 2
	<i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	AHC
	<i>Lathamus discolor</i>	AHC
	<i>Platycercus elegans</i>	1, AHC
	<i>Platycercus eximius</i>	1, AHC
	<i>Platycercus</i> sp.	AHC
	<i>Barnardius zonarius</i>	AHC
	<i>Barnardius barnardi</i>	2, UQDP, AHC
	<i>Psephotus haematonotus</i>	1
	<i>Psephotus varius</i>	AHC, UMVS
	<i>Psephotus chrysopterygius</i>	AHC
	<i>Psephotus dissimilis</i>	AHC
	<i>Northiella haematogaster</i>	2, AHC
	<i>Neophema bourkii</i>	1, 2, AHC
	<i>Neophema elegans</i>	2
	<i>Neophema pulchella</i>	2
	<i>Neophema splendida</i>	2, UQDP
<i>Agapornis lilianae</i>	AHC	
<i>Agapornis roseicollis</i>	AHC (feral host)	
<i>Ascaridia</i> sp.	<i>Polytelis anthopeplus</i>	4
	<i>Nymphicus hollandicus</i>	4
	<i>Melopsittacus undulatus</i>	4
	<i>Platycercus</i> sp.	4
	<i>Cacatua roseicapilla</i>	4

TABLE 1. *Ascaridia* spp from parrots, captive and feral, in Australia and New Zealand.

* All of the birds listed, presumably including those listed from Weekes (1982 : 457), were from aviaries in Australia and New Zealand except *Agapornis roseicollis* (see text). Numbers and abbreviations used in the third column refer to the following literature references and collections: 1 - Hartwich & Tscherner (1979); 2 - Mines (1979); 3 - Johnston & Mawson (1941); 4 - Weekes (1982); AHC - Australian Helminthological Collection at present housed in the South Australian Museum; UMVS - University of Melbourne Veterinary School; UQDP - University of Queensland Department of Parasitology.

Mines, J.J. 1979. *Ascaridia sprengi*, a new species of nematode in Australian parrots. *Int. J. Parasitol.* 9 : 371-379. *South Australian Museum, North Terrace, Adelaide, S.A. 5000*

Paton, J.B. & Pollard, B.M. 1985. The Peach-faced Love-bird in South Australia. *S. Aust. Orn.* 29 :

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