

## Notes upon the Food of the Yellow Parrot (*Platycercus flaveolus*).

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THIS rather rare species is to be found inhabiting, during the whole year, the swampy areas along the Murray River, particularly from Echuca to Albury, and along the valleys of its tributaries on the Victorian side from 16 to 30 miles from the mother stream. At times odd birds are to be met with higher up, where the streams wend their course through valleys bordered upon either side by mountains; but they prefer the low-lying country subject to inundations and timbered with box and red gum eucalypt trees. Along the Ovens Valley, from Lower Everton to the Murray River, this bird may be termed rather common, a hollow spout in a tree growing in a swamp being a chosen site for its nesting-place.

Like the Rosella (*P. eximius*) and the Crimson Parrot (*P. elegans*), they are very fond of fruit, particularly apples and pears.

This species is easily approached, and lacks the timidity of the Rosella.

During the early summer months these birds search beneath the loose bark and in fissures upon the bole and main arms of the eucalypt trees for the cocoon of the cup moth, probably the painted species (*Limacodes longerans*). Breaking open the cocoon with their bill, the birds extract the pupating larva; generally a portion of the cocoon remains attached to the tree or bark.

My first experience of this species eating the pupating larva of this moth was during November, 1915, whilst fishing in the Murray River at Barnawartha, Victoria. Noticing several of the birds clinging to the bole and loose bark of a giant red gum tree beneath which I sat, and making a noise similar to cracking some hard seed, I shot a bird, and found upon examination that the crop contained the larvæ of the cup moth, much sought after by anglers for bait, the larva at this stage being yellow in colour, soft, and about to turn into its pupa form.

In the autumn Yellow Parrots are very fond of the ripening seeds of the water pepper plant (*Polygonum hydropiper*). It is a common sight to see from ten to a dozen of the birds clinging in a pendent position whilst securing the seed from the drooping seed-branches of this plant, which grows profusely upon land subject to floodings in the Wangaratta district.

Like the Crimson Parrot, this species is fond of ripening maize and broom corn seed.

The fully matured male is a handsome bird, and takes three years to get fully plumed and the rose-tinted feathers upon the fore-neck to become highly tinted.

The young, when secured from the nest, are easily taught to whistle.