



Pale-headed Rosella (*Platycercus adscitus*) Latham.

The Emu

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

"Birds of a Feather."

VOL. XXX.]

1st OCTOBER, 1930.

[PART 2

The Genus *Platycercus*

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This beautiful genus of Parrots is confined to Australia and some of the nearby islands of the Pacific, and constitutes the most brightly coloured examples of the whole Parrot family. The Rosellas are found throughout the whole of the Australian region and the distribution of the several species is fairly distinct, geographically. The Check List names eight distinct species, but we believe that the separation of the North Queensland bird, *P. amathusiae* Bp., from *P. adscitus* because of the greener plumage and bright blue cheeks, from which the local name of "Blue-cheeked" is derived, was quite justified, and in this we are supported by A. J. Campbell.

The next door neighbour of the "Pale-head" is the Rose-hill Parrakeet or Eastern Rosella (*P. eximius*), which is found in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. It is also recorded from Tasmania and Southern Queensland, but is rare in both these localities. Along the Murray River flats and adjacent country the Yellow Rosella (*P. flaveolus*) occurs, and it is apparently confined to that region. In the Adelaide Hills and Flinders Range one discovers the Adelaide Rosella or Pheasant Parrot (*P. adalaidae*)—at one time the range of this bird must have been much wider, as the type specimen was collected by John Gould in the streets of the city itself in 1838. The Green Rosella is recorded from the islands of Bass Strait and Tasmania, though how it comes to have the specific name of *P. caledonicus* is a mystery.

The Northern Rosella or Smutty Parrot (*P. venustus*), which occurs in north-west Australia and the Northern Territory, gets its name from the fact that many of the bird's feathers are fringed with black, and from its black

head. The Western Rosella (*P. icterotis*) is, as its name implies, a native of Western Australia, the southern parts, and its local name of Yellow-checked Parrot indicates the main distinction between it and other members of the genus. Last, but certainly not least in the list, is the beautiful Crimson Rosella or Pennant's Parrakeet (*P. elegans*). This beautiful bird has by far the widest range of any of the species, extending from Cape York to Victoria and the islands, and well inland towards the interior. It is found both in open forest country, and on the more thickly timbered ranges, and is perhaps the most popular of all our Parrots as a cage bird.

The Pale-headed Rosella (*P. adscitus*), the subject of the coloured plate in this issue, although it lacks the flaring red of its relations, the Eastern Rosella and the Crimson Rosella, is yet none the less beautiful, and is a wonderfully bright addition to the landscape where it abounds. The plumage of the "Pale-head" varies considerably, some birds being almost uniform pale cream with the exception of the wings, which retain the blue in the primaries. In the immature birds the feathers of the head are finely freckled with red. The yellow, blue and green of its plumage, fairly evenly distributed, with a touch of black on the mantle, and its undulating flight make it easily distinguishable to all observers, as it frequents open scrub land, and like other birds of the genus, apparently has a partiality for the roadside. On a recent trip over the new road from Canungra to the Lamington National Park we flushed pairs of these birds every dozen yards or so from where they were feeding on the seeds of the scotch thistle there growing in abundance.

Unfortunately for these birds they have developed, in company with others of the genus, a liking for fruit and grain, and the farmer takes heavy toll of them to protect his maize and other cereal and fodder crops. In the south some farmers have used poisoned grain with great effect, and have carted away barrow-loads of dead birds as a result. Whilst we sympathise with the man whose crops must be protected, we are sorry that these gorgeous birds must disappear from many districts in consequence. The "Pale-head" is distributed throughout southern and central Queensland and in northern New South Wales, and is found mostly in pairs, although sometimes in small flocks. In many places it is still fairly plentiful. It nests in the hollow limbs of dead trees in open forest country and occasionally in an upright hollow stump or tree, the nest consisting of a scoop from two to six feet from the entrance. The eggs, as with all Parrots, are white. There are from three to five in a clutch, and they are nearly round in shape.

The specimens figured are of birds in the Australian Museum, Sydney:—

Upper—Female, No. O.27607. Collected by the late F. C. Morse at Garah, north-west New South Wales.

Centre—Male, No. O.17869. Cape York, northern Queensland. In the "Dobroyde Collection."

Lower—Male, No. O.11218. Collected by J. Doherty, May, 1899.

Young Male Gang-gang with Scarlet Crest.—Although the Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*) is one of the most conspicuous, and admittedly one of the least timid of our Cockatoos, even the more recent ornithological works of reference echo Gould's lament on the "paucity of information" regarding their domestic economy.

At Mallacoota, on New Year's Day, 1930, Mr. V. H. Miller, R.A.O.U., found a Gang-gang Cockatoo, quite unable to fly, and which had the scarlet head and crest, although the body feathers had the yellowish tinge which characterises the immature plumage of this species. The bird allowed itself to be handled by the members of a large party without showing any fear, and the general impression was that, being an unusually robust bird, it had found its way to the entrance of the nesting hollow, and had fallen out. This conjecture was supported by the arrival of an adult male and female, presumably the parents, which gave unmistakable evidence of their concern for the hapless youngster.

It may be argued that it is a notable fact that, if one Gang-gang be shot, its companions immediately answer its calls by arriving on the spot. However, in the case under notice, the young Gang-gang had not uttered any sound. For over an hour this particular bird was under observation, and it made no effort whatever to leave the log on which it was placed by a member of the party.

It is a generally accepted fact that when the plumage of the adult male and female differs, the young males resemble the females until attaining maturity, but evidently exceptions to this rule occur. A. J. North records a family of Gang-gangs observed at Mount Victoria, and that "the female stopped now and again, to attend to the wants of a pair of fully-fledged young ones, the male of which had the scarlet crest." Kcartland also supports the writer by commenting that "some of the male birds acquire the scarlet on their heads at a very early age . . . even before they could feed themselves." The Mallacoota incident referred to is another example.—BLANCHE E. MILLER, R.A.O.U., St. Kilda, Vic.