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Parrots of the Genus *Polytelis*

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The coloured plate represents the Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsoni*) and the Regent Parrot (*P. anthopeplus*). The total length in the flesh of both species is 16 inches, the tail accounting for 9 inches, while the wing measures $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The former bird is known to the bushmen as the "Green Leek," and the latter is variously called "Smoker" or "Rock Pebbler."

Both forms are inhabitants of the interior of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, but the range of *P. anthopeplus* extends right across southern Australia to the Moore River, near the coast of Western Australia, where both Messrs. P. T. Sandland and C. L. E. Orton have observed the birds breeding.

The stronghold of *P. swainsoni* is undoubtedly the central-southern portion of New South Wales, where it shows a decided preference for lightly timbered country and areas in the vicinity of water, while *P. anthopeplus* is nowhere more plentiful than in the Mallee country of north-western Victoria, breeding freely in the Red-gum country near Lake Albacutya.

Both species have been observed by us in the Mallee, the former sparingly. This spring (September, 1929) the Regent Parrot was very plentiful, generally in flocks and showing no sign of nesting, owing, no doubt, to the droughty conditions prevailing. The species breed in the hollows of trees generally, but *P. anthopeplus* has also been observed to breed in holes in the cliffs bordering the Murray River. Both birds are very elegant in form and a flock on the wing make a picture not readily forgotten.



Upper, Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsoni*), male.

Lower, Regent-Parrot (*Polytelis anthopeplus*), male.

Over one hundred years ago, in 1821, Swainson described *P. swainsoni* under the title of *Psittacus barrabandi*. The specific name *swainsoni* was applied by Desmarest in 1826 and has been adopted, Swainson's name being untenable. *P. anthopeplus* was described by Lear in 1831 under the name of *Palæornis anthopeplus*. There is a third and even more beautiful member of the genus, *Polytelis alexandrae*, figured in *The Emu* of July 1928. This form was discovered in Central Australia in 1862 by the Stuart Exploratory Expedition and described and named by Gould in 1863, in honour of the then Princess of Wales.

Feeding Habits of Lyrebird.—During the winter and early spring this year (1929) most week-ends were spent among the Lyrebirds (*Menura novæ-hollandiæ*) in the fern gullies of the Dandenong Ranges close to Melbourne, and many opportunities were afforded for observing the home life of this unique ground bird. For part of the time I was in the company of Mr. Tom Tregellas, whose camp, "Menura," consisting of an "out-size" in logs, hollowed by fire, and boarded up at one end, with roomy sleeping space inside, made a comfortable week-end residence. Here, in the heart of the Lyrebird country, we were able to study the birds at leisure, and not only watch nest-building and feeding of young, but earlier in the season, witness and photograph the courtship performances of the males on their dancing mounds.

An observation of interest was made in regard to the feeding habits of a female bird which had a nest in an open space a few feet from a waterfall beyond Belgrave. The greater part of the food consumed by her and her nestling was obtained in the usual way from moist earth and vegetable mould beneath the scrub on the bank of the creek upstream from the nest. Frequently, however, the bird found food even nearer at hand, and at such times, it was not unusual for her to enter the deepest pools in the creek and pick food from the bottom. It was interesting to see her wading in the creek, which in parts was over six inches deep, and dipping her head beneath the surface, apparently for aquatic insects, which she transferred to her pouch. I was unable to determine the nature of the food so obtained. The bird occasionally waded at the foot of the waterfall where the creek was running swiftly, and sometimes the water splashed upon her back. This aquatic feeding habit was interesting because one does not associate the Lyrebird with water.—M. S. R. SHARLAND, R.A.O.U., Melbourne.