



GRASS-PARROTS.

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(Upper): Elegant Parrot. ♂ *Neophema elegans*.

(Lower): Rock-Parrot. ♂ *Neophema petrophila*.

# The Emu

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## The Elegant and Rock Parrots.

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(See Coloured Plate.)

THE recognized habitat of the charming little Elegant Parrot (*Neophema elegans*) was originally the southern portion of Australia. Of recent date G. M. Mathews' specimen came from Melton, Victoria. In the Mt. Compass district of South Australia, Edwin Ashby saw several small flocks. He says: "They are evidently resident in the district throughout most of the year." There are specimens in the "H. L. White Collection," from south-western Australia, to which Mathews has assigned sub-specific distinction (*N. e. carteri*).

Little information is available respecting the species. Indeed, some members of this beautiful genus, especially the females, are so much alike in the field that it is difficult to state with certainty to which species they belong. Therefore, except a specimen be procured, it is better not to record rare species merely from observations in the field. We recently had a bird restricted to eastern forested parts recorded for the dry Nullarbor Plain, Western Australia (*The Emu*, XXVII, p. 81), while one from the interior region was reported near the coast of New South Wales (*ante*, p. 14). It would be just as improbable to state that the Spinifex, or Night, Parrot (*Geopsittacus occidentalis*), was seen in Gippsland.\*

\* Mr. Campbell's Scotch caution does him credit, but it appears to have led him astray in the present case. Mr. J. H. Wright, of the Australian Museum, states definitely that he handled two male specimens of Turquoise Parrots (*Neophema pulchella*), near Ooldea, on the Nullarbor Plain, but neither was fit to be made into a skin. Mr. Campbell's second objection appears to be to Miss F. Irby's record of the Scarlet-chested Parrot (*N. splendida*), in eastern N.S.W. Miss Irby, however, is a keen observer as well as a painter of birds, and is not likely to have erred in regard to a bird which she had already seen in western N.S.W. Moreover, the period was a drouthy one, when many western birds approached the coast. The Scarlet-chested Parrot was also shot and identified last year not many miles due west of Miss Irby's locality. It is idle, therefore, to compare such records to the finding of the Night-Parrot in Gippsland—an impossibility.—EDITOR.



Why have some of the *Neophema* disappeared in parts, or are fast disappearing? Doubtless, chiefly caused by domestic cats gone wild. Over-sentimental people who talk much about "proper bird protection" and will not first face the "cat question," are not logical.

Dr. A. M. Morgan, Adelaide, in the region of Port Augusta observed two nests of this Parrot, each with five eggs. (Gilbert, in *Gould*, states the maximum is seven—?). Strange to say, with one of the clutches was an egg of the Owlet-Nightjar (*Egotheles cristata*), and stranger still the lot were sterile.

It may be mentioned as a general guide that the Elegant Parrot is the most yellowish member of the little group and good field characters are its two very distinct shades of blue, on both forehead and shoulders.

The Rock-Parrot is darker plumaged and is the least striking member of its beautiful genus. Its range, as the Check-List roughly indicates, extends from Shark Bay, Western Australia, to Cape York Peninsula, South Australia, preferably the rocky islets off the coast, where it nests.

I had the privilege of observing these small Parrots at home on certain islands off Western Australia. It is a rare picture to witness a pair of these lovable little creatures, in their golden-green plumage, perched on the face of a limestone crag, amid rugged and romantic surroundings. The birds make no nests, but simply deposit four or five eggs under slabs of indurated sand or limestone, where the eggs are sometimes difficult to reach, especially if a crevice on a steep side slopes to the water's edge.

During an expedition of the R.A.O.U. to Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, October, 1909, Rock-Parrots were noted nesting in numbers on a treeless islet in Mellidie Bay. (For further particulars see *The Emu*, Vol. IX, p. 131; also pp. 133-5, and Pl. 12.)

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**Birds Carrying Birds.**—Instances of birds carrying their young, or carrying other adult birds, are not common in Australia. Interest attaches, therefore, to the following note, sent me by Stanley Petersen, a lad living near Kingaroy, Queensland: "One day as I was walking past an old apple tree, which had four birds' nests of different kinds in it, I heard the sudden chirping of a flock of Babblers. As I looked up one of the birds fell, and all the rest swooped down and stood around the one that fell. They kept this position for a while; then two of them walked forward, one taking a grip by the neck on the bird that fell and the other by the tail. They then flew up to the tree, and stood the one that fell on a branch beside them. After a while all the birds flew away, and the one that fell was among the rest."—A. H. CHISHOLM, Sydney (December 12, 1927).