



Threatened Species of the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin

Regent Parrot (Eastern sub-species)

Polytelis anthopeplus monarchoides

Vulnerable



Description

The eastern sub-species of the Regent Parrot is found in an area overlapping the junction of the South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales borders.

They can be recognised by their distinctively bright colours. The males are a brilliant golden-yellow with a dark green back, blue-black flight feathers and a red band across the mid-wings. Female birds and juveniles are similarly patterned but are greener around the head and neck.

In Spring they nest in small colonies, of up to 30 pairs, along the River Murray. The female parrots incubates the eggs and sit with the newly hatched chicks while the males flock to search for food. These male feeding flocks can sometimes be seen heading to and from their nests along the river.

Regent Parrot or Yellow Rosella?

Yellow Rosellas can be easily confused with Regent Parrots, but they look and behave differently. Yellow Rosellas are not as brightly coloured, they have a red patch on their forehead, their bills are white not orange and they have a blue patch under the beak.

Yellow Rosellas are usually seen in pairs and have an undulating flight pattern compared to a Regent Parrot which has a very flat, and direct flight trajectory.

Where do they occur?

In South Australia they nest in River Red Gum woodlands along the River Murray, between Chowilla and Swan Reach. Outside the breeding season they disperse from the river corridor into the surrounding mallee. Sometimes they are recorded as far south as Ngarkat.

What do they need to survive?

During the breeding season Regent Parrots nest in the hollows that occur in mature and dead River Red Gums. From these trees they forage over large areas, up to 12km from their nests. They feed on the seeds, buds, flowers and sometimes on insect larvae.

Regent Parrots need flight corridors of native vegetation that link their nest colonies on the river with good feeding areas such as large intact areas of mallee woodlands.

Why are they threatened?

In the past this parrot was destroyed as an agricultural pest and many nesting and foraging areas were cleared. While destruction of this bird is no longer permitted and the clearance of native vegetation is regulated, the Regent Parrot is still in decline.

Today their continued survival may be threatened by other birds forcing them from their nest hollows, clearing of small areas of mallee that link nesting and foraging sites, long periods of drought, illegal destruction and human disturbance around nests. Sometimes they are accidentally killed by cars when flocks feed on grain spilt along roadsides. Currently there are thought to be only 400 pairs remaining in the South Australian River Murray corridor.



What we are doing to help?

A regional recovery plan for the Regent Parrot is already in place. Surveys of nesting colonies will locate important foraging areas and identify sites where competition from introduced birds has become a problem. Research of the Regent Parrot's habitat requirements and breeding biology will help us to better protect and manage this colourful parrot.

What can you do to help?

- Every sighting of these birds is valuable, as every record helps us to improve our understanding of this bird. You can report sightings to the Murraylands Regional Ecologist (08) 8595 2111.
- Slow down and be careful when driving near grain spills. Protect breeding sites by reducing activity near Regent Parrot nests during the breeding season.

Further information contact

Biodiversity Conservation Programs
Department for Environment and Heritage, Murraylands Region
Telephone (08) 8595 2111
www.environment.sa.gov.au

© Department for Environment and Heritage
Photos: © Graeme Chapman
FIS 2542.06/Regent Parrot 7/06



Department for Environment and Heritage
South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board

