

In addition to this large montane population, scattered sightings have been reported in 1973 from the piedmont and coastal plain of North Carolina. Donald T. Harke (pers. com.) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Raleigh informs us of records from Statesville, Winston-Salem, Fayetteville, Greensboro, and Bladenboro; in addition, a specimen has been collected at Edenton and sent to the North Carolina State Museum in Raleigh. The occurrence of the Monk Parakeet across the three major physiographic regions of North Carolina is strong evidence for its ability to survive in the United States under a wide variety of climatic conditions, adding further concern over its potential impact on agriculture and the native avifauna.—MARCUS B. SIMPSON, JR., *Department of Pathology, Yale University School of Medicine, 310 Cedar Street, New Haven, Connecticut 06510* and ROBERT C. RUIZ, *300 Wilson Ave., Swannanoa, North Carolina 28778*. Accepted 14 December 1973.

Use of native plants by Monk Parakeets in New Jersey.—The Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsittus monachus*) has been classed a potential agricultural pest in the United States. This status is based on reports from its native Argentina, where it is said to destroy two to 45 percent of the crops within its range, preferring corn, sunflower, millet, sorghum and a variety of cultivated fruits (U.S. Dept. of Interior, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife Leaflet, 496, 1971). In northeastern North America, where it is now considered a breeding bird, many have noted its dependence on the extensive network of winter bird feeders. The species also shows a fondness for cultivated grains and fruits at all seasons (Bull. Linnaean Soc. Newsletter, 25, 1971; Freeland, Wilson Bull., 85:332–334, 1973; Bull. Wilson Bull., 85:501–505, 1973; C. F. Leck pers. comm.); in one case, a single pair caused substantial damage in an apple orchard in Virginia.

The non-cultivated foods of the Monk Parakeet, in the U.S., are poorly known. Brief mention has been made of the species eating “berries,” acorns, and the seeds of conifers and grasses (Bull, op. cit.; U.S.D.I. op. cit.). In March 1973, we discovered a pair of Monk Parakeets nesting in a park in Middlesex County, New Jersey. At that time of the year the area lacks cultivated crops and active bird feeders, so we felt that observation of the birds’ food habits might be of interest. Consequently, we systematically observed the birds from 14 March until 28 April. They were not seen after the latter date, and we assume that they deserted the nesting area.

According to park employees, the birds had wintered in the area, when active feeders were available. When we found them, their activities were centered about a large stick nest. It had been built about 5 m from the ground in the characteristically-drooping lower branches of a large pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), located on a 600 m² island in a lake. The nest was large (about 0.125 m³) and constructed entirely of twigs, each about 50 cm long. Various plants were used in the nest, but they were mainly willows (*Salix* spp.) and oaks (*Quercus* spp.). A large portion of the birds’ day was spent in nest repair. During our attendance they moved the tunnel entrance from the bottom to the side of the nest. The parakeets occupied a roughly square home range of approximately 120 hectares, including wooded areas (about 47 percent of the total area), lawns (25 percent), the lake (14 percent), and miscellaneous developed areas (14 percent).

In order to determine food preferences, we calculated the percentage of the observed foraging time (11 hours) that the birds fed on specific parts of various plant species. Identification of food items was aided by the parakeets’ tameness, which al-

lowed very close observation. In order of descending preference, the food items were; buds of American elm, *Ulmus americanus*, (23 percent); berries of red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*, (14 percent); seeds of white pine, *Pinus strobus*, (12 percent); acorns of pin oak (8.8 percent); buds of willows (7 percent); flowers of American elm (5 percent); fruits of American elm (5 percent); acorns of white oak, *Quercus alba*, (4.5 percent); buds of sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, (3 percent); acorns of red oak, *Quercus rubra*, (2.3 percent); buds of red maple, *Acer rubrum*, (2 percent) and buds of fire cherry, *Prunus pensylvanica*, (2 percent). The remaining 11.4 percent consisted of unidentified food items.

Individual plants showed varied amounts of damage due to the parakeets' attention. Most individuals and species showed slight damage, but all the American elms in the area had the top one meter of their crowns completely stripped of buds, flowers, and fruits. Such trees presented a bizarre, scalped appearance when they leafed out. Most of the willows in the area also showed severe damage, probably the result of the birds' use of this group of plants as both food and nest material.

From our limited data, it seems likely that the Monk Parakeet deserves its current status as potential pest. If the pair we observed had not disappeared or had been part of the normal flock of 15-50 (U.S.D.I. op. cit.), damage to the park's vegetation would have been quite substantial.—WILLIAM M. SHIELDS, THOMAS C. GRUBB, JR. and ANTHONY TELIS, *Department of Biology, Livingston College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903 (Present address TCG, Jr.: Department of Zoology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210). Accepted 22 January 1974.*

Evidence of the breeding of Saw-whet Owls in western North Carolina.—Pearson, Brimley, and Brimley (Birds of North Carolina. Bynum Printing Co., Raleigh. 1959) regarded the Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) as a casual winter visitor to North Carolina, while the A. O. U. Checklist (Lord Baltimore Press, Baltimore, 1957) stated that the owl breeds "south [only] to central Ohio, West Virginia, and Maryland" in the eastern United States. Nevertheless, Stupka's (Migrant, 17:60-62, 1946) records of the Saw-whet Owl in the Great Smoky Mountains marked the beginning of a growing body of evidence, reviewed by Simpson (Chat, 32:83-89, 1968), that has established that the bird is regular in spring and summer in regions of suitable habitat in the mountains of western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee. Numerous records have been obtained there during the months of March through September, with reports coming from the Great Smoky, Roan, Pisgah Ridge, Black, Plott Balsam, and Great Balsam mountains. Within these ranges, records have been largely confined to elevations above 5,000 feet, in forests of Fraser fir (*Abies fraseri*) and red spruce (*Picea rubens*). These boreal forests reach their southern limit in the eastern United States at Tanasee Bald, Transylvania County, North Carolina, where frequent reports of Saw-whet Owls establish the species' presently known southern limit in the eastern United States during the breeding season.

Single Saw-whet Owls in the distinctive, chocolate-brown juvenal plumage have been reported in western North Carolina on four occasions, beginning in 1965. The first observation was by Peake (Chat, 29:110-111, 1965) on 10 July 1965, at 6,100 feet, on Richland Balsam in the Great Balsam Mountains, Jackson County. A. L. Schiffman (pers. com.) observed another on 1 September 1965, at 5,200 feet, on the southeast slope of Potato Knob in the Black Mountains, Buncombe County. Conley Moffett and Brad