

them despite prolonged efforts. It is unusual for Common Terns to bring to their young food items that they themselves could not swallow, although they occasionally bring fish that are too wide or spiny for the young to swallow (Boecker, Vogelwelt, 89:221-225, 1968).

There was some evidence of a food scarcity at Monomoy at the time of these events. The amount of food brought by parent terns to chicks in my study-plot was generally less in late July than in early July 1973, and some chicks that had started to grow well declined and died late in the month. Hence, it is possible that the parents picked up the swim-bladders because they were unable to obtain suitable food. This proved to be a waste of time and effort by the terns, although at least one parent repeated the same behavior several times.

I thank R. H. Backus for his perspicacity in identifying the specimens. This is contribution no. 118 from the Scientific Staff, Massachusetts Audubon Society, and is part of a study supported by a grant from the Frederick W. Beinecke Fund.—J. C. T. NISBET, *Massachusetts Audubon Society, Lincoln, Massachusetts 01773. Accepted 30 January 1974.*

Monk Parakeets breeding in Buncombe County, North Carolina.—A native of South America, the Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*) has been imported in large numbers to the United States during the past decade for sale as a cage bird. Following accidental escape and intentional release, wild populations have become established in scattered localities, initially in New York and adjacent states (Bull. Linnæan Newsletter. Vol. 25, 1971; Briggs and Haugh, Kingbird. 23:3-13, 1973). Recent observations from Buncombe County, North Carolina indicate that a breeding population of Monk Parakeets is present in one of the interior river valleys of the southern Appalachian mountains.

Monk Parakeets were first reported in Buncombe County in May 1972, when several pairs were seen in West Asheville (elev. 2,200 ft.). Subsequently, numerous individuals, pairs, and large flocks have been observed in Enka (elev. 2,000 ft.), Asheville (elev. 2,100 ft.), Leicester (elev. 2,000 ft.), and Barnardsville (elev. 2,200 ft.). Breeding pairs, with typical bulky nests located in silos and on utility or telephone poles, have been observed in Barnardsville, with two nests in 1972 and two in 1973, and in West Asheville, with two nests in 1972 and one in 1973. Young were successfully fledged by at least three of the seven pairs, and photos of nests and adults have been sent to the National Photoduplicate File in Laurel, Maryland.

The increasing frequency of reports and evidence of successful nesting indicate that the species is presently well established in Buncombe County. There, the population is currently distributed within a 15-mile radius of Asheville, in the French Broad River valley and adjacent plateau, at elevations of 2,000 to 2,200 feet. This interior river basin is essentially separated from the adjacent piedmont and Appalachian Valley by mountain ranges of 3,500 to 6,000 feet in elevation, thus possibly restricting the movement of certain species into the region. Local pet store managers (pers. com.) in the Asheville area report selling Monk Parakeets during the 1960's and informed us of several incidents of accidental escape from private owners. These reports of escapes in this relatively isolated region suggest that the population is local in origin and not the result of an influx of parakeets dispersing from previously established concentrations elsewhere.

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-