**Myiopsitta monachus**

**System:** Terrestrial

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<th>Kingdom</th>
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<td>Aves</td>
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**Common name**
munkparakit (Swedish), caturra-da-argentina (Portuguese), matto grasso (Portuguese), papo branco (Portuguese), cotorra argentina (Spanish), munkkiaratti (Finnish), quaker parakeet (English), quaker parrot (English), quaker conure (English), monniksparikiet (Dutch), monk parakeet (English), grey-breasted parakeet (English), grey-headed parakeet (English), perruche-souris (French), convue veuve (French), parrocchetto monaco (Italian), mniszka (Polish), mönchssittich (German), burátpapagáj (Hungarian), catita común (Spanish)

**Synonym**
Psittacus monachus, (Boddaert, 1783)

**Similar species**
Melopsittacus undulatus, Psittacula krameri, Brotogeris versicolorus

**Summary**
Myiopsitta monachus (monk parakeets) are popular in the pet trade business. Their distinction as the only nest-building parrot has allowed them to adapt to cold climates and urban areas, thus increasing their range when intentionally or unintentionally released. In Argentina, where Myiopsitta monachus are native, they are reported to cause one billion dollars worth of crop damage annually. They have, as yet, not significantly harmed any other invaded region.

**Species Description**
*Myiopsitta monachus* is a small, stocky parrot, measuring approximately 30 cm in total length (Campbell, 1998) with a wingspan of 53 cm and a mass of 90-120 g (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998). *M. monachus* is mostly green with a gray or off white face, cheeks, throat and breast. They have a bright yellow lower abdomen and vent area. The flight feathers are blue-black, and the tail feathers are long and green. They have a pale orange or dull yellow bill and gray legs (Campbell, 1998) and a dark brown iris (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998). Immature *M. monachus* are a brighter green with a greenish forehead. (Campbell, 2000) They do not exhibit sexual dimorphism (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998), with males and females having identical plumage. Males are generally slightly larger than females, except during breeding season when the body mass of females increases slightly (Newman *et al.*, 2004). They are usually found in loose flocks of 15-20 birds, although flocks of up to 100 are not uncommon. *M. monachus* are quite vocal with a wide vocabulary of screeches, squawks and chattering noises (Campbell, 2000).
Notes
Myiopsitta monachus (monk parakeet) is a CITES-listed species. Please follow this link CITES-Myiopsitta monachus for more details. Roughly 5,000 species of animals and 28,000 species of plants are protected by CITES against over-exploitation through international trade. Monk parakeets display several types of "helping behaviours" that may have contributed to their success as alien species. Included are communal nest building, delayed breeding, the presence of non-breeding mature adults, nest sentinel systems and reduced natal dispersal. After leaving the nest, young birds often remain close, building their own nests or adding on to an existing nest. Nests can be small, housing a single pair or up to one metre in diameter and weighing 200kg and house multiple pairs. Nests have roofs and entry holes, mainly on the underside and often multiple chambers for nesting pairs and small groups of non-breeding individuals. (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998). "Once the site of the nest structure is selected, individual monk parakeets construct a nest cavity, affixing it to the main nest structure." (Burger and Gochfeld, 2005). M. monachus are very social birds, having eleven or more different calls that each elicit a different response from others in the colony. (Campbell, 2000)

Lifecycle Stages
In the studied Punta Blanca population, Myiopsitta monachus (monk parakeet) eggs hatched asynchronously after 24 days. The hatch rate was just over 50%. The hatchlings are covered with yellow down and are fed by the parents via regurgitation (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998) for approximately 40 days, after which they leave the nest (Campbell, 2000). The nestlings reach a weight of approximately 106 grammes before fledging (Campbell, 2000).

Uses
Known for their beauty and intelligence, Myiopsitta monachus (monk parakeets) are a popular pet, especially in North America, since the 1960's (Campbell, 2000).

Habitat Description
Myiopsitta monachus prefer open habitats. In their native range they populate savannah woodlands, farmland, plantations, orchards and cultivated forests (Campbell, 2000), from low elevations up to 1600m above sea level (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998). They are the only parrot that builds its own nest instead of using existing cavities. They weave sticks and spiny branches together to create a sturdy nest used year round for roosting. The nests are almost always 10 metres or more above the ground, often in tall trees (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998). Studies of monk parakeet populations at Arroyito and Jesus Maria, Cordoba province, Argentina, showed that monk parakeets preferred Eucalyptus trees (Arroyito) and native trees (Jesus Naria) for breeding nests (Navarro, Martella, & Bucher, 1992). In its introduced range they live almost exclusively in urban areas, preferring open habitats, including parks, planted urban areas, golf courses, farms, gardens and orchards (Campbell, 2000).
Reproduction
In South America, gonadal development begins in August, peaks in November and declines rapidly thereafter. Testes enlarge to fifteen times their normal size and ovaries grow in similar proportion. This pattern supports the idea of a fixed annual cycle driven by a photoperiod. South American monk parakeets copulate in October while North American birds copulate in the spring months as the photoperiod increases. In a study of a Myiopsitta monachus population in Punta Blanca in the Buenos Aires province of Argentina, pairs produced the first eggs in mid-October. The average clutch size was 7 eggs (range 5-12) (Campbell 2000).

Nutrition
In their native range, M. monachus are generalist granivores and will eat maize, millet, sorghum, sunflowers and other seeds, as well as some fruits, nuts, berries and insects. Year round favorite foods include thistle (Asteraceae) and grass (Poaceae), and fruits of palm and other native trees, largely talca (Cellis spinosa). (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998). Monk parakeets are highly flexible in their food habits (Pruett-Jones et al, 2007). In their introduced range, they feed on the seeds and fruits of exotic ornamental plants and on bird seed provided year round by humans. (Hyman and Pruett-Jones, 1995). They use their large beak to consume seeds and take bites from large pieces of fruit. They have also been seen cracking pine cones to get to the seeds and snipping the heads off dandelions and eating the seeds. In winter, M. monachus often feeds in large flocks of several hundred while a few sentinels sit on high perches and search for predators. During the breeding season, flocks larger than 4 birds are rare. M. monachus generally feeds 3.2-8km from the nest site and may forage as far as 24km away during the non-breeding season. (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998).
General Impacts
In its native range, *M. monachus* is considered a significant agricultural pest, often causing damage to field crops and orchards. There have also been reports of transmission lines short-circuited by nesting birds. In its introduced range, impacts are mainly associated with nesting behaviours. Monk parakeets build large bulky nests on communication towers and electric utilities such as distribution poles and transmission towers. On communication towers they are simply a maintenance problem and do not affect communications. However nests on electric utilities can cause outages and fires, as the large nests can complete electric circuits. This problem is pronounced in wet weather. Monk parakeet nests can cause significant effects to electric utilities including decrease in electric reliability, equipment damage, and lost revenue from nest and bird caused power outages, increase in operation and maintenance costs associated with nest removal and repair of damaged structures as well as public safety concerns (Newman *et al*, 2004). Costs associated with monk parakeets can be quite considerable. For example, during a five-month period in 2001 in South Florida 198 outages related to monk parakeets were logged. Lost revenue from electric power sales was $24,000 and the cost for repair of outages was estimated at $221,000 (Newman *et al*, 2004). However in it's introduced range *M. monachus* has not caused the agricultural devastation predicted, nor has there been any solid evidence that native fauna are negatively affected by their establishment. There is also the possibility that monk parakeets will spread plant diseases by transporting infected planting material to uninfected trees. For example, in Florida citrus canker is a major concern (Newman *et al*, 2004). There has also been some speculation that growing urban populations of *M. monachus* could become source populations for surrounding areas. The birds are widely admired by city dwellers who see little other wildlife (Campbell, 2000). Fitzwater (1988) also states "In addition to being a fruit crop pest in South America, it has great potential for dissemination of Newcastle disease. It also cuts trigs and buds from ornamental trees. They are one of the most raucous of birds."

Management Info
Please follow this link for details on the management and control of the monk parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus*

Pathway
Nearly 65,000 monk parakeets were imported into the U.S. from 1968 to 1972 (Spreyer and Bucher, 1998).


Compiler: National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) & IUCN/SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group (ISSG)
Updates with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment


Publication date: 2010-10-04
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: Myiopsitta monachus

ALIEN RANGE

[3] AUSTRALIA
[1] BAHAMAS
[1] BERMUDA
[1] CAYMAN ISLANDS
[1] CZECH REPUBLIC
[1] GERMANY
[1] JAPAN
[1] NETHERLANDS
[3] SPAIN
[36] UNITED STATES

[1] AUSTRIA
[1] BELGIUM
[1] CANADA
[1] CHILE
[1] FRANCE
[1] ITALY
[1] KENYA
[1] PUERTO RICO
[2] UNITED KINGDOM

BIBLIOGRAPHY

44 references found for Myiopsitta monachus

Management information


Summary: The suggestion that the fishery in Lake Victoria would benefit if the Nile perch were introduced is based on ignorance of several fundamental biological concepts. Such an introduction is not only undesirable but would jeopardize the existing commercial fishery.


Summary: Describes the status of exotic vertebrates in Chile and measures taken to control them. After an introduction, the vertebrates are divided into categories for more specific discussion. Available from: http://www.scielo.cl/scielo.php?pid=S0716-078X2005000100010&script=sci_arttext&tlng=en [Accessed 18 October 2006]


Summary: This compilation of information sources can be sorted on keywords for example: Baits & Lures, Non Target Species, Eradication, Monitoring, Risk Assessment, Weeds, Herbicides etc. This compilation is at present in Excel format, this will be web-enabled as a searchable database shortly. This version of the database has been developed by the IUCN SSC ISSG as part of an Overseas Territories Environmental Programme funded project XOT603 in partnership with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment. The compilation is a work under progress, the ISSG will manage, maintain and enhance the database with current and newly published information, reports, journal articles etc.


Full account for: Myiopsitta monachus


Summary: Discusses the history, impacts, management and status of M. monachus in New York, US.


Summary: A population viability analysis (PVA) of Myiopsitta monachus in the United States and simulated effects to populations in response to control measures.


Russello, Michael A.; Avery, Michael L.; Wright, Timothy F., 2008. Genetic evidence links invasive monk parakeet populations in the United States to the international pet trade BMC Evolutionary Biology. 8 JUL 2008. Article No.: 217


Summary: A thorough online species account detailing biology, distribution, behavior, and management information.


Summary: This database compiles information on alien species from British Overseas Territories.

Available from: http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3660 [Accessed 10 November 2009]


Summary: The results of eighteen years research on the fisheries of Lake Victoria are presented. The introduction is followed by sections dealing successively with fish and fisheries, methodologies for sampling, gear and boats, methods for monitoring fish stocks,


Summary: A study assessing the effectiveness of the contraceptive DiazaCon on monk parakeet reproduction and potential usefulness as a control measure.


General information


Summary: A study of nestling behavior of monk parakeets in the Brazilian Pantanal.

Summary: A comprehensive account of the population biology of Psittacula krameri in the United Kingdom. It includes invaluable information about the range and spread of this invasive species. 


Summary: Information about monk parakeets in Oregon. Sightings, counties, and established nest information of monk parakeet. 

Available from: http://www.biology.uco.edu/PersonalPages/CButler/monk_parakeet.pdf [Accessed 8 December 2009]


Summary: Describes the history and status of feral parrots in the US and UK including parakeets. 


Summary: The species list sheet for the Mexican information system on invasive species currently provides information related to scientific names, family, group and common names, as well as habitat, status of invasion in Mexico, pathways of introduction and links to other specialized websites. Some of the higher risk species already have a direct link to the alert page. It is important to notice that these lists are constantly being updated, please refer to the main page (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), under the section Novedades for information on updates.


Spanish: 

La lista de especies del Sistema de información sobre especies invasoras de México cuenta actualmente con información acerca de nombre científico, familia, grupo y nombre común, así como de la distribución de la especie en México, rutas de introducción y enlaces a otros sitios especializados. Algunas de las especies de mayor riesgo ya tienen una página directa en la sección de alertas. Es importante resaltar que estas listas se encuentran en constante proceso de actualización, por favor consulte la página (http://www.conabio.gob.mx/invasoras/index.php/Portada), en la sección de novedades, para conocer los cambios.


Summary: Several populations of Nile perch have been used to stock the lakes of the Lake Victoria system. The taxonomic status of the introduced populations has been examined through enzyme analysis. Genetically, introduced Nile perch in Lakes Kivu and Kiboga.


Summary: A study of the breeding and feeding habits of a population of monk parakeets in Hyde Park, Illinois, US. 


Summary: An online database that provides taxonomic information, common names, synonyms and geographical jurisdiction of a species. In addition links are provided to retrieve biological records and collection information from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Data Portal and bioscience articles from BioOne journals. 


Summary: This study is one of the best studies on native monk parakeet populations and their breeding characteristics. 


Summary: Describes basic biology of the monk parakeet and its impacts in the United States; particularly the impacts caused by nesting in electrical structures. Also describes some basic information on management and control options.


Summary: Gives statistical information about breeding success in study of Punta Blanca, Argentina monk parakeet population.


Roll, Uri; Dayan, Tamar; Simberloff, Daniel., 2008. Non-indigenous terrestrial vertebrates in Israel and adjacent areas Biological Invasions. 10(5). JUN 2008. 659-672.


UNEP-WCMC. 18 October, 2006. UNEP-WCMC Species Database: CITES-Listed Species. Myiopsitta monachus

Summary: Roughly 5,000 species of animals and 28,000 species of plants are protected by CITES against over-exploitation through international trade. They are listed in the three CITES Appendices. The species are grouped in the Appendices according to how threatened they are by international trade. They include some whole groups, such as primates, cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises), sea turtles, parrots, corals, cacti and orchids. But in some cases only a subspecies or geographically separate population of a species (for example the population of just one country) is listed. To find more details of the CITES species, you can search the CITES-listed species database hosted by UNEP-WCMC.

CITES species database is available from: http://www.cites.org/