



## Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*) feeding on seeds of African tulip, *Spathodea campanulata*

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### KEYWORDS

The African tulip tree, *Spathodea campanulata* (Lamiaceae) is a large upright tree with glossy deep green pinnate leaves and glorious orange scarlet flowers (<http://www.flowersofindia.net/>). The generic name comes from the Ancient Greek words *spathe* and *oida* (Gledhill, 2008) referring to the spathe-like calyx (Quattrocchi, 2000). It was discovered in 1787 on the Gold Coast of Africa (<http://tropicalflowerguide.com/>). It is planted extensively as an ornamental tree throughout the tropics and appreciated for its very showy reddish-orange or crimson (rarely yellow), campanulate flowers. The flowers are followed by erect, brown, lance-shaped to boat-shaped, up to 10 inch (25 cm) long, woody seed capsules with papery, winged, wind-dispersed seeds (<http://wildlifeofhawaii.com/>). It is a fast-growing evergreen tree native to tropical Africa and its seed dispersal occurs by different means either spread by wind or spread by water when plants are found along waterways or via garden waste being dumped in bush land (<http://www.daff.qld.gov.au/>).

Variety of avian fauna has been reported to feed on the seeds and collect nectar from the flowers of *S. campanulata*, Black-throated Mango (*Anthracothorax nigricollis*), the Black Jacobin (*Florisuga fusca*), the Gilded Hummingbird (*Hylocharis chrysura*), Red-breasted Parakeet (*Psittacula alexandri*), Asian Glossy Starlings (*Aplonis panayensis*) and sunbirds, Javan Myna (*Acridotheres javanicus*), Yellow-vented Bulbul (*Pyronotus goiavier*) feed on the nectar and the wood of the tree is soft to use for nesting by many hole-building birds such as barbets ([www.besgroup.org](http://www.besgroup.org/); Baza and do, 2005).

The present observations are in and around Ivarakandapura village situated Bangalore north taluk of Bangalore Urban district. There are around ten trees of *S. campanulata* flowering during January and seeds borne during February onwards. The trees were anchoring flocks of the rose-ringed parakeet, *Psittacula krameri*, numbers in each tree ranged from 10-15. The flocks were found foraging all through the day especially in the morning. Each bird after alighting on to a branch close to the pod or sometimes on the pod started tearing its woody covering to forage the stack of seeds (Photo 1). The parakeet grabbed the seeds broad white, transparent wing using its foot (Photo 3) and stuffed them into its mouth. In most cases only 10% of each pick of seeds was devoured by the bird and the remaining landed on nearby substrata sailing for a while in air using their transparent wings. The seeds dropping on ground formed a white mat, some which were collected and examined closely. The central portion of the seeds was completely devoured leaving the transparent wing portion (Photo 3). The seeds are wind-dispersed and so do not depend on any animals to spread them. However the mechanical agitation rendered by the bird in the process of harvesting the seeds disperses them into the air. The quantum of seeds foraged was less despite the mass congregation by the birds and favored more dispersal. Both the sexes were found foraging

as they exhibit sexual dimorphism, adult male sports a black neck-ring and pink nape-band while the hen and immature birds of both sexes either show no neck rings, or display shadow-like pale to dark grey neck-rings and light nape-bands. In the wild, Rose-ringed Parakeets usually feed on buds, fruits, vegetables, nuts, berries and seeds. Wild flocks also fly several miles to forage in farmlands and orchards causing extensive damage (<http://www.pbbase.com/>). *P. krameri* is non-migrating species that has successfully adapted to living in 'disturbed habitats', and in that way withstood the onslaught of urbanisation and deforestation.



Photo 1. Two parakeets collecting seeds with beak



Photo 2. A parakeet using its feet to feed the seeds



Photo 3. A complete seed and a foraged seed with transparent wings

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