

RANGE OF THE BOURKE PARROT

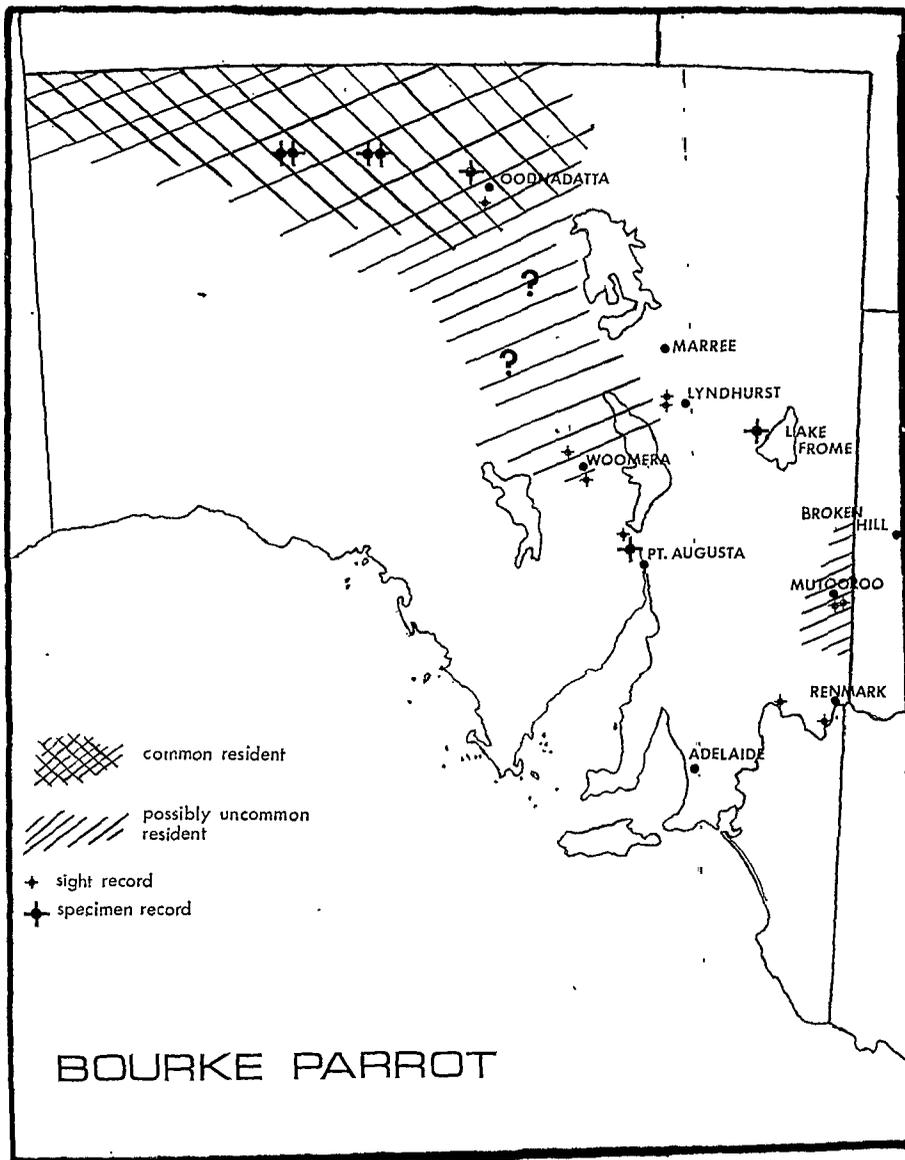
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From October 12-14, 1974, the Strathalbyn Naturalists' Club visited Kootaberra Station, about 64 km N of Port Augusta. On the 12th, R. Sim discovered a flock of about 12 Bourke Parrots *Neophema bourkii* in a patch of open mulga near a small temporary lake. They were feeding in sparse bluebush and speargrass beneath the mulgas, sometimes making short flights and occasionally perching in the trees, even though it was early afternoon. One specimen was taken. The following day a

further three pairs were seen scattered through denser mulga just south of Bookaloo (80 km NW of Port Augusta).

The range of the Bourke Parrot in South Australia is extremely ill-defined. H. T. Condon (1969, *Handlist of the Birds of South Australia*) says, "Common in the interior of Australia" but gives no indication of southerly limits in this State. Although there are 68 skins of the species in the South Australian Museum, most of these are of cage-birds and, until my collect-



ing, only five wild-taken specimens from this State were included. These came from three localities: near Oodnadatta; 209 km slightly NW of Oodnadatta; and 386 km W of Oodnadatta. The area north and west of the vicinity of Oodnadatta is certainly the stronghold of the species in this State. G. B. Ragless and I saw two small flocks of Bourke Parrots on Allandale Station just S of Oodnadatta on April 7-8, 1975; and G. Birchmore of Macumba Station (53 km N of Oodnadatta) told us that they come to drink in hundreds at some waterholes on the northern part of the property in the evening.

The Broken Hill area is another former stronghold of the species; and our State Museum has a fine series of 14 specimens taken there by Dr. Macgillivray. Presumably it ranged into the adjacent portions of this State; and two recent sightings from Mutooroo indicate that it still occurs there. D. B. Mack (1961, *S.A.O.* 23: 75) recorded it as an irregular visitor in small numbers to the Upper Murray; but the only subsequent record has been a single bird seen at Woolpunda on November 3, 1971, by M. P. Thorn. Whether Upper Murray occurrences are aviary escapees or wild birds is perhaps debatable. The only other record from east of the Flinders Ranges is of one bird seen and collected on Balcanoona, just west of Lake Frome on April 1, 1974, by G. B. Ragless, I. May and myself. It was the first that May had seen there despite a two-year residence in the general area, and McGilp also did not record

it from nearby Moolawatana: so apparently it is rare there.

West of the Flinders Ranges, G. B. Ragless has seen small groups near Lyndhurst on odd occasions. He has also seen the species near Woomera. Peter Langdon has also seen a flock not far north of Woomera. The Kootaberra sightings show that they can come further south; but at present any records from south and west of the Transcontinental railway would be important additions to our knowledge of the species' range, for no records are forthcoming from the West of the State so far.

In summary, I feel that only in the area north and west of the vicinity of Oodnadatta could the Bourke Parrot be regarded as common. It could be classed as resident there in the sense that it could probably always be found somewhere within the area. By the same criterion it could possibly be classed as an uncommon resident in the country between Oodnadatta and Lyndhurst and Woomera, as well as the small pocket near Broken Hill and Mutooroo. This assumes that the blank section between Oodnadatta and Woomera may be due to lack of observers. Records from other places are, for the present, best regarded as vagrant records resulting from irregular nomadic movements. The absence of records from the far N-E is surprising, considering Sturt's experience with the species at Fort Grey in nearby New South Wales, but serves to illustrate how much probably still remains to be discovered regarding the range of this species.