



The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)

(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)

PO Box 248, Panania NSW 2213, Australia

Searching for Bourke's Parrots in the Wild (*Neopsephotus bourkii*)

Bowra Station - Cunnamulla QLD

Presentation by Colin Morgan with Ian Ward

(ASNSW Meeting - August 2012)

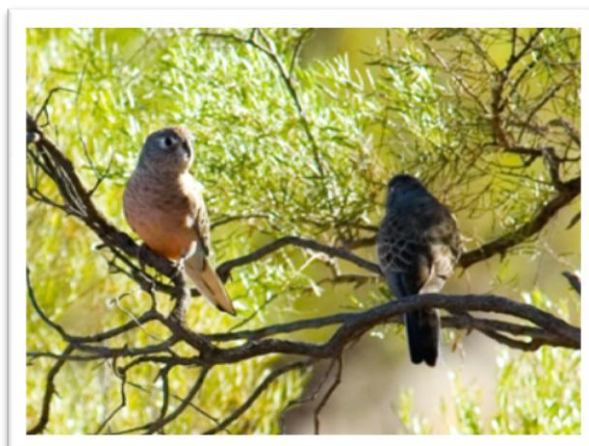
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You might recall a few months ago we had Shauna Chadlowe the Development Executive from the [Australian Wildlife Conservancy](#) here and that she spoke mostly about their property at [Mornington](#) up in the Northern Territory where the [Gouldians](#) are. The Australian Wildlife Conservancy also looks after a number of other properties and [Bowra Sanctuary](#) out near [Cunnamulla](#) is one of them. That's where Ian and I went after the recent Parrot Society Conference in Brisbane.



The reason for the trip was that [Peter Odekerken](#), who a lot of you would know, wanted to go there to video the [Bourke's Parrots](#) to round off his extensive set of images for all parrots. Peter had a New Zealand visitor who wanted to go and see [Major Mitchells](#) in particular. He decided to go out after the conference to Cunnamulla and Ian and I were able to tag along. Unfortunately we didn't find Bourke's, but we can tell you more about where they had been seen because while we were there some other bird watchers, did actually see a few Bourke's. I think it was the day we arrived, but we weren't that lucky.

This is what we didn't see...



Bourke's Parrots (*Neopsephotus bourkii*)

[Courtesy of Wikipedia Commons](#)

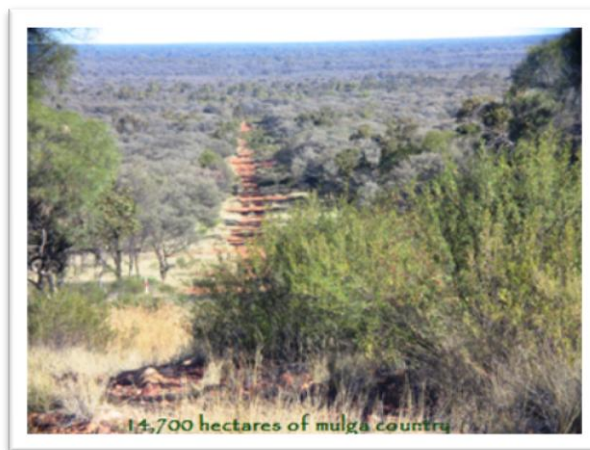
The above photo I just got from [Wikipedia](#) on the internet and it was apparently taken on Bowra Station not that long before we went there. So that's what they were seeing. That's maybe the cock on the right and hen on the left. We didn't see them but we had a good time looking for them.

Let's show you more about the place.



It's a large place - Bowra Station. It's a large property - it is nearly 15,000 hectares.

This is what it looks like from a distance...



The above photo was taken from a stony ridge within the property.

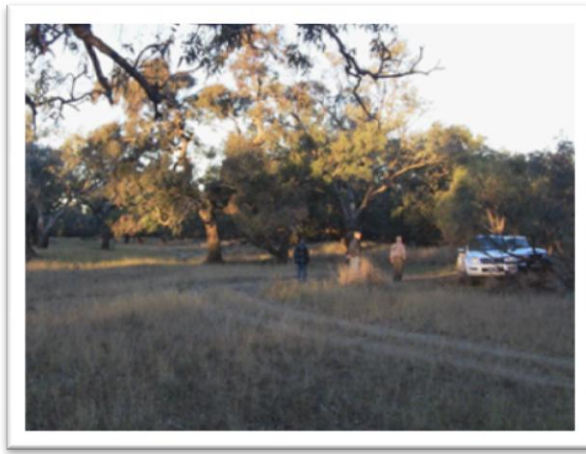
Most of the property is low lying and pretty sandy but it just had the one stone ridge.

Within the mulga country there are quite a few open cleared areas.

It's a former sheep and cattle property.

The people who owned it welcomed bird watchers who have been going there for quite a few years. It was pretty well known as a bit of haven for bird watchers but mostly twitchers who want to go and see how many species of birds they can find rather than for anything in particular. That's quite a different way of seeing birds in the wild to what we've been in touch with and what we've been interested in.

But one of the things about the property is it was only sold in about 1999, so it's only been in public hands for just over a decade. The people who sold it are still part of the volunteer group that help look after the visitors here. Anyone can go and stay - there's a camping ground, there's some shearers quarters accommodation - we shared an old cottage in there.



This is a shot of our New Zealand visitor, Ian and Peter Odekerken there. There's a lot of grass growth, but it's been killed off by the winter frosts.



That's Ian frozen up getting out of the car - he's all rugged up there, he was cold.

Ian: It was that cold there. It was minus two Celsius. It was cold.

It was minus two when we got up in the morning and it got up to around zero at about 10:30am or so. It was a bit cold.



You can see around the bottom of the photo above here there was a lot of water around. If you want to see birds in the wild the best time I guess is a drought, you go to the waterhole and they'll come to you, but in the sort of conditions we had there was surplus water everywhere and the birds were spread out. That's one logical explanation why we didn't see a real lot.

There are some large bodies of water on the place too.



Aboriginal meaning for Cunnamulla is "long stretch of water"

This is quite an extensive lagoon, probably from what we saw, 700-800 metres long and probably 50-60 metres wide. A lot of water there.

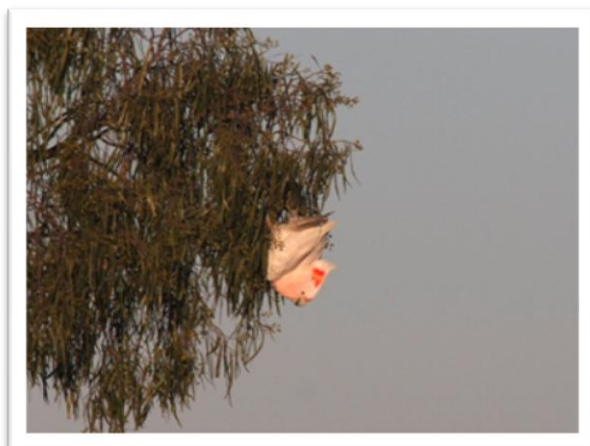
This is the typical sort of scrub here that we were wandering around looking for the Bourke's.



There was long grass, scrubby sort of trees and no real large tree growth on the property at all; and you can see from this photo that it's a sandy surface. It was in this area that some other bird watchers here did see, I think it was four Bourke's the day we arrived.

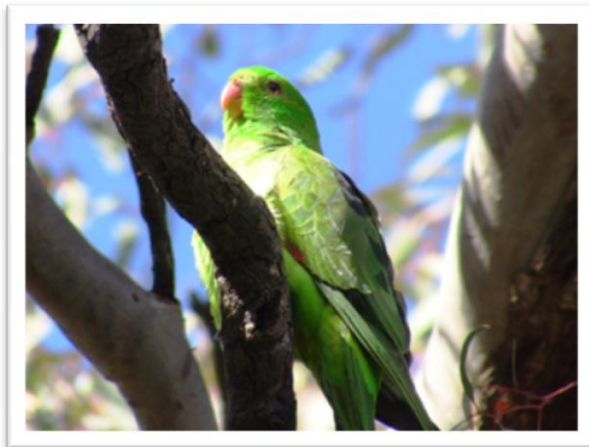
The sort of things that we did see, and that we had also been hoping to see, were [Mulga Parrots](#) (only glimpses) and there were quite a few Crimson Wing Parrots on the property. We did see some Ringnecks and we did see a few Major Mitchells.

That was the main thing our New Zealand visitor was looking for.



Major Mitchell's Cockatoo (*Lophochroa leadbeateri*)

This is a young Crimson Wing...



Crimson-winged Parrot (*Aprosmictus erythropterus*)

It's a bit hard to see on the back of him there but he's showing some black feathers on the back that have come through but there are no red wing fledges there yet.

Ian: It's good that you've got the sun on him there, all my videos were in the shade.

Yes, that bird was remarkably quiet. We could walk within 10 or so metres of him and he just sat there for quite a long time.

That's just a quick glimpse of where we went and what we were looking for.

Ian: And what we didn't see.

If you don't know where Cunnamulla is, it's about 800kms west of Brisbane and there's not a real lot around it.

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