

A Great Bowerbird near Alice Springs, Northern Territory

On 27 May 1987 we observed a Great Bowerbird *Chlamydera nuchalis* at Trepkina Gorge, 80 km east of Alice Springs. In hot and sunny weather at 1100 h we had excellent views of it for 10 minutes at a distance of 15 m, with the aid of binoculars. It was a large, plain greyish-brown bowerbird with a thick, curved bill. It had grey and dark brown scalloped feathers with white tips, producing a mottled appearance, on the top of its head and on its back. It had no colour on the nape. It was perched on a dead branch of a River Red Gum *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*, in a wooded watercourse (dry) through moderately thick scrub; there were waterholes in the gorge. The bird turned around to watch us, and called intermittently with a high-pitched, very loud harsh note. We had observed Great Bowerbirds farther north in the Northern Territory earlier in May, and Western Bowerbirds *C. guttata*, of which we saw several, were common at Trepkina Gorge. The ranger at Trepkina Gorge joined us to observe the Great Bowerbird, and agreed with our identification which we had checked by reference to field guides.

Trepkina Gorge is some hundreds of kilometres south of the normal range of the Great Bowerbird (Blakers et al. 1984). According to the ranger, this was the first one seen at Trepkina Gorge but some had been seen at Tennant Creek 600 km to the north after a recent cyclone. It is possible that the bird's presence at Trepkina Gorge was also associated with that cyclone, which apparently had blown other species south of their normal range in the Northern Territory at the time.

References

Blakers, M., Davies, S.J.J.F. & Reilly, P.N. (1984), *The Atlas of Australian Birds*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne.

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