

FORMER PASTORAL LEASE TO BE FAUNA SANCTUARY

Wanjarri Station.

A former pastoral lease of about 132,000 acres situated in the Kathleen Valley south of Wiluna, is being purchased by the Department of Fisheries and Fauna as a sanctuary for flora and fauna.

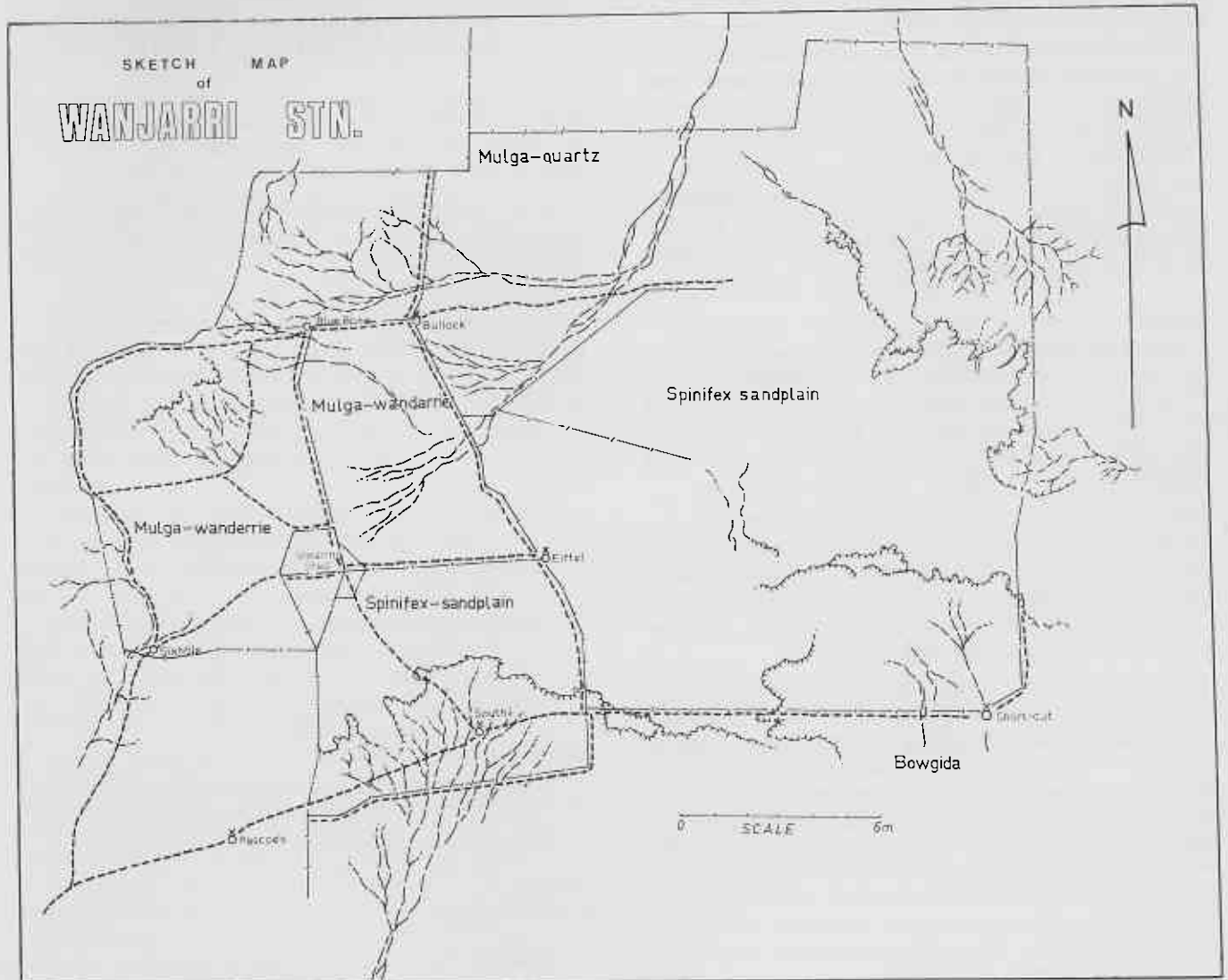
In announcing the purchase in December the Minister for Fisheries and Fauna, the Hon. G. C. MacKinnon said that negotiations had been in hand since 1967 when the leaseholder, Mr. T. K. Moriarty, first offered the property as a fauna sanctuary.

When negotiations for the sale are completed, application will be made to the Lands and Surveys Department to have the area declared as an "A" Class Reserve vested in the Western Australian Wildlife Authority. Mr. MacKinnon said that the area had been inspected on several occasions by scientists from the Museum, University of W.A., C.S.I.R.O., the U.S. Museum of Natural History and the Royal Australian Ornithologists' Union.

All were impressed with the quantity and quality of the fauna and flora in the area. Wanjarri has been the subject of separate reports by Dr. S. J. J. F. Davies, Officer in Charge of the W.A. Division of Wildlife Research, C.S.I.R.O., and Dr. A. A. Burbidge, Senior Research Officer, Fauna Branch, Department of Fisheries and Fauna. Extracts from these reports follow:

Landforms.

Wanjarri is made up of a series of peneplain scarps lying roughly in a NE/SW line. The laterite formations cover decomposed granite except in places where the granite is exposed as boulders or domes. Sandy soils predominate near the top of each scarp and grade into loamy soils at the base of the next. In the stony outwash plains fronting the breakaways, soils are generally shallow with textures ranging from gritty clay sands to small stones. Hard pan is common and where this occurs run-off conditions prevail.



Flora.

The scarps support a characteristic and rich vegetation which grows in sheltered indentations along the edge of the scarp. Notable plants are *Callitris*, *Calythrix*, *Dodonea* and *Scaevola*.

Spinifex (*Triodia*) associations cover the sand plains on the top of the scarps, sometimes with an overstorey of eucalypts and in some instances, a variety of Proteaceous shrubs (includes prickly-type shrubs e.g. *Banksia*) and *Acacias*. Marked short term changes can be induced in this type of vegetation by burning but fairly rapid regeneration does occur.

Mulga (*Acacia aneura*) dominates the loamy soils in association with wandarrie grass and/or bowgida (*Acacia linophylla*) on the sandier sites.

There are many dead mulgas and a variety of shrubs (*Eremophila* spp.) wherever quartzite pebble-plains occur. The deterioration of mulga stands should not be over emphasised since mulga appears to grow in even-age stands and if one tree dies it is likely that its neighbours are also dying. Extensive regeneration is likely after a good season, if seed is available.

Small areas of almost pure bowgida sand plain are found in the south east and north west area of Wanjarri. Large accumulations of seed found under shrubs in the north west patch illustrate the vigour of the shrubs.

Only one creek lined with *Eucalyptus camald-uelensis* occurs on Wanjarri, along the western boundary, but the trees are vigorous and apparently typical of the habitat.

Fauna

The area is rich in arid-zone fauna. Among the reptiles, lizards are well represented. The black, tree dwelling goanna (*varanus*) and the club-tailed gecko are notable. The range of available habitats suggests that Wanjarri contains a representative sample of arid-zone reptiles.

During the R.A.O.U. visit to Wanjarri between August 29 and September 5, 1970, 74 species of birds were recorded. Of these, 35 species were seen breeding, which illustrates the healthy state of the habitat and the relatively short nesting period in this environment.

Two particularly interesting species, the Mallee-Fowl and the Spotted Bower-bird, were the subject of special study during the excursion. In a systematic search of one area a mallee-fowl mound was located. Three bowers of the bower-bird were also located and birds were seen at four of the five mills, where a continuous watch was maintained. Bourke Parrots and Grey Honey-eaters, Central Australian species not known to be common anywhere, were frequent at Wanjarri, as were the interesting chat and wren-like birds of the family *Maluridae*.

Both Euros (*M. robustus*) and Red Kangaroos (*M. rufa*) occur at Wanjarri. Foxes, dingoes, rabbits, goats and camels have also been sighted or their presence inferred by fresh tracks. In the breakaways, stick nests of the type made by stick-nest rats (*Leporillus* sp.) have been found as well as echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) droppings. During the R.A.O.U. excursions some extensive warren systems were located in mallee scrub on the south of Wanjarri. Some of these were used by goannas (*Varanus*) but the possible existence of colonies of a middle-sized macropod or a bandicoot should not be excluded.

Fortunately, Wanjarri lies in a zone in which the range of bird species overlap and thus it has a richer avian fauna than most arid areas. Undoubtedly, the presence of spinifex sand plains is a significant factor in this richness and will probably enhance the number of species representing other groups of animals and plants.

CROCODILE TEARS

The poem "Plastic Autumn" which appeared in S.W.A.N.S. Vol. 1 No. 1 was written by Mrs. Jean R. Smith, a freelance journalist and conservationist from South Brighton, South Australia.

After seeing a photograph in the local newspaper Mrs. Smith was prompted into writing another poem entitled "Crocodile Tears" which she has kindly allowed us to reproduce.

The photograph pictured a group of young children with their noses pressed up against the window of a pet shop—they were staring longingly at a baby crocodile.

Crocodile Tears

When I outgrow aquariums
What will become of me?

A thousand dusty miles between
My tropic estuary,

Where warmer waters meet the sea
And crabs ascurrying
Dig their way to freedom,

While I peer through a glass
And hide my fears

Maybe some child, aweary of his toys
Will buy me. Take me home

And watch with merriment
His parents' horror.

They'll picnic by some rippling brook,
Then after barbecuing

Will gently place me in the stream.
Will they know what they're doing to me?