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## TALKING TURKEY



The Australian bustard is an icon of the outback and Australia's heaviest flying bird, yet remains poorly known to most Australians. It is a denizen of open country; of the broad open plains, shrub lands and woodlands that characterise vast expanses of the Australian continent. Having declined from much of southern Australia since European settlement, its contemporary strongholds are in the remote northern and central regions of the country. Travelling these parts and sighting a bustard as it walks imperiously across an outback road is an impressive spectacle and a highlight that makes it into most naturalists' travelogues. Less often witnessed, but even more majestic, are the spectacular display routines that males perform to court females during the breeding season.

One of the most striking physical features of the bustard is its size. It is an impressively large bird. Among the bustard family's greatest claims to fame is that it includes the heaviest of all flying birds. The heaviest recorded weight of a great bustard (at just under 21 kilograms) only marginally eclipses the heaviest Kori bustard ever recorded. By comparison, the