

## Psittacidae the PARROTS and ALLIES

### Carolina Parakeet *Conuropsis carolinensis*

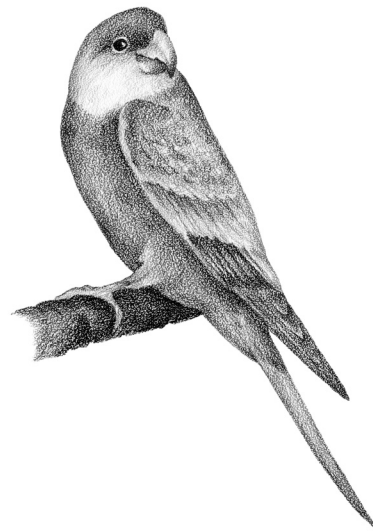
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**Folk Name:** Paroquet, Wild Parrot  
**Status:** Extinct

Imagine you are taking a walk in the woods somewhere in the Carolina Piedmont. You suddenly hear a raucous cacophony of screeches and strange calls ahead of you in the forest. Upon further investigation, you find hundreds of wildly colorful parakeets clamoring in the tree tops, feeding on maple seeds and beechnuts. Today, you'd be shocked by this find—your mind filled with awe at witnessing such an extraordinary natural wonder. But 300 years ago, this experience might not have surprised you, even here in the Piedmont of the Carolinas.

The Carolina Parakeet was a spectacularly colorful bird. It was the only kind of parakeet native to our country. In fact, it was one of a relatively small number of bird species endemic to the United States, birds found nowhere else in the world. Scientists believe this parakeet was once a widespread breeding resident throughout the South, Southeast, and Midwestern states. Today, the Carolina Parakeet is extinct. Both overhunting and loss of breeding habitat due to deforestation are believed to have decimated most of the population by the early 1800s. A few populations persisted through the nineteenth century, and in 1918, the species was formerly listed as extinct after the last known Carolina Parakeet died in captivity.

The authors of *Birds of North Carolina* (1919) state the “Carolina Paroquet” was “once found in great numbers in North Carolina,” and “it wandered over the State in flocks, feeding upon the cockle-burr, thistle, and other plants.” Early accounts indicate that it may have entirely



disappeared from North Carolina as early as 1782. Arthur T. Wayne, South Carolina's early ornithologist, wrote “the beautiful Carolina Paroquet was formerly exceedingly abundant in this state,” and Leverett Loomis wrote that the Carolina Paroquet disappeared from South Carolina as early as 1826, a half-century before he began his bird research in Chester County. Unfortunately, most of our historical accounts of this bird are anecdotal in nature, and the original status and abundance of the Carolina Parakeet in the Carolinas will forever remain unclear.

There are no specific written records of this charismatic bird known from this area. However, *Birds of North America* and other ornithological authorities, map the Carolina Parakeet as a former year-round resident throughout the Carolina Piedmont.