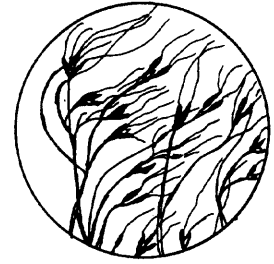




BUSH NEWS

from the Natural Areas of Kedron Brook & Environs



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GreenBrook Association

TAWNY FROGMOUTHS

The Tawny Frogmouth is probably the most common night bird along the brook. The following delightful story is by David Hollands, from his book Birds of the Night. It concerns a bird that was rescued and reared to maturity by Ray Venables. Although released to the wild, the bird remained in the vicinity of the house.

The first time that I met him, Fred was sunning himself. Twenty metres from Ray's house, he was lying in the leaf litter with spread wings, absorbing the winter sunshine. He ignored me as I walked right up to him and it was only when the daylight began to fade that he came to life.

Ray appeared and Fred flew to him, anticipating the fat larvae which had just been dug from the compost heap. He ran to each one with the waddling gait of an old man, and then pounced, as though fearing that the wingless grub would suddenly fly away from under his feet. Then he took more from Ray's hand, stretching up like a begging dog to take the larvae into his huge gape.

Finally we walked away but Fred wanted attention and set himself after me like a marauding goshawk. The others saw him coming but I didn't until he thumped into the back of my neck, a trifling blow but a considerable shock to the system when one is

struck out of the darkness without warning. Satisfied with his efforts, Fred retired to a tree. However it seemed that I was a special attraction since, when we next ventured outdoors, he again swooped out of the night to sink his claws into the back of my head.

We had other things to do and it was half an hour before we saw Fred again. He had caught a large green tree frog which he held by the abdomen while beating its head against a branch.



At first the frog was still alive but it could not survive that treatment for long. Maybe the frog was being tenderised but, finally, Fred swallowed it, head first, the two hind legs hanging ridiculously, one from each corner of the mouth, for minutes after the rest had gone.

The time was getting late. The others had already gone inside and I walked along the verandah to let myself in. As I opened the door, there was a rush of air and Fred swept over the top of my head and into the house. Negotiating the

laundry and hall, he passed from my sight and, by the time I reached the lounge, had already made himself comfortable on the back of the settee.

I did not see Fred again but Ray kept me up to date with developments. As spring approached, he became more and more possessive about 'his' garden and any night-time visitors were likely to collect a frogmouth on the back of the head.

Then he started putting sticks in a flowerpot inside the house. This caused permanent banishment but, undeterred, he moved to the verandah, assembled a few twigs in a hanging basket and laid two eggs there, confirming Ray's long-held suspicion that Fred should have been Freda.

There had never been any sign of another frogmouth in attendance but, from the way she postured to Ray, it seems likely that she thought he was her mate.

By now Freda had become so defensive of her territory that she had taken to flying in through the open windows of the house next door and terrorising the occupants.

The time had come for her to be deported and Ray removed her from her unfertilised eggs, drove her some distance away and released her into some promising looking frogmouth bush.

Editor

WHAT IS A FROGMOUTH?

Although birds of the night, frogmouths are not owls; they are quite different in many ways.

While frogmouths are definitely birds of prey, their legs and claws, so strong among owls, are quite weak. Food tends to be mainly arthodods - beetles, grasshoppers, bugs, spiders, centipedes, etc, and, because of this, the birds spend a lot of time on the ground.

Whereas most of our owls breed in tree hollows, the Tawny Frogmouth builds the flimsiest of nests - barely a few sticks thrown across a fork in a tree. A typical clutch comprises two, sometimes three, eggs.

As with all night hunters, the Tawny is subject to harassment by day birds. Owls hide in dense foliage or hollows while the Tawny pretends it is a stump, roosting usually on a very open branch and arching its head upwards when approached.

The most common night call along the brook, 'mopoke', originates from the Boobook Owl. The typical Tawny Frogmouth call is a deep, 'oom oom oom oom' which usually lasts for about 10 syllables, starting very soft and building in volume.

Frank Box

FROG HABITAT FOR GRINSTEAD PARK

Grinstead Park now has a number of spots designated as frog habitat areas. One site is the lower part of the drain which cuts across the eastern portion of the park. A bund wall has been placed across the mouth of the drain where it drops into Sandy Creek.

The dam was immediately



successful, with the rains over the Christmas period resulting in thousands of tadpoles in the ponds formed by the dam. The site is easily visible since bollards have been placed along the drain to stop mowing.

Nearby another section of the park has been roped off to provide a sheltered haven for adult frogs. Native frogs seen in the park in recent months include the Graceful Tree Frog, Green Tree Frog, Striped Marsh Frog, Ornate Burrowing Frog and Sedge Frog.

Source: *Kedron Brook News*, publ by the Kedron Brook Branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland

THE TURKEYS MARCH ON

You may have noticed this Editor's fascination with how Scrub Turkeys manage to persist in an obviously hostile environment. Recent sightings come from Kalinga (not bad) and Herston (2 birds - wow).

Source: Queensland Ornithological Society newsletter

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MILESTONES

Consultants for:

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ENJOY YOUR PARK

Everyone I come across seems to have too little time. It does not matter who you are, there is less time this year than last year, or so it seems.

So who would want to devote their precious time to working in the bush? Not many; in fact, less than one quarter of one percent of the people that receive *Bush News*.

Unfortunately, this does make a difference; bush in the city cannot survive without maintenance. If you like the idea of forest animals living in the city, they, and we, need your help. The next working bees start at 8.30am, Blandford St entrance to Grange Forest Park, on:

20 April / 18 May / 15 June

Bob Devine

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Randia fitzalanii

This is a north Qld rainforest tree which is limited to a 4m shrub in Brisbane because of the climate difference. The large, dark leaves are glossy and the small white flowers are beautifully perfumed. Retains its foliage to ground level.

Available from
Perrotts Nursery,
Elkhorn St, Enoggera

