

# Bush Buddies

Volume 1



BUSH HERITAGE  
AUSTRALIA



# Tawny Frogmouth

(*Podargus strigoides*)

When it's not mistaken for an owl, the Tawny Frogmouth can easily be confused with a tree branch! With narrowed eyelids and a stretched neck, this bark-coloured bird is a **master of camouflage**.

Tawny Frogmouths are between 34cm (females) and 53cm (males) long and can weigh up to 680g. Their plumage is mottled grey, white, black and rufous – the feather patterns help them **mimic dead tree branches**.

Their feathers are soft, like those of owls, allowing for stealthy, silent flight. They have stocky heads with big yellow eyes. Stiff bristles surround their beak; these 'whiskers' may help detect the movement of flying insects, and/or protect their faces from the bites or stings of distressed prey (this is not known for certain).

Their beak is large and wide, hence the name frogmouth.

Their genus name, *Podargus*, is from the Greek work for gout. Why? **Unlike owls they don't have curved talons on their feet; in fact, their feet are small, and they're said to walk like a gout-ridden man!** Their species name, *strigoides*, means owl-like.

**They're nocturnal and carnivorous, but Tawny Frogmouths aren't owls – they're more closely related to Nightjars.**

There are two other species of frogmouth in Australia – the **Papuan Frogmouth** (*Podargus papuensis*) lives in the Cape York Peninsula, and the **Marbled Frogmouth** (*P. ocellatus*) is found in two well-separated races: one in tropical rainforests in northern Cape York and the other in subtropical forests of southern Queensland and north-eastern New South Wales.



A Tawny Frogmouth disguised against the bark of a tree at Naree in NSW. Photo David and Sue Akers.

## Where do Tawny Frogmouths live?

Tawny Frogmouths are found throughout Australia, on the mainland and Tasmania. They prefer open woodlands, but are found in a wide variety of habitats – rainforest margins, alpine woodlands, parks and gardens. They're seldom found in arid regions or in dense rainforests.

A breeding pair **often stays in the same territory for more than 10 years**. Common where they occur, chances are you've picnicked under a tree concealing a Tawny Frogmouth or two!

The species is considered of Least Concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.



Tawny Frogmouths have powerful beaks and eyes. Photo Jasmin-mae Robinson.

## Tawny Frogmouth behaviour



Tawny Frogmouth in temperate rainforest, Liffey River Reserve, Tasmania. Photo Wayne Lawler/EcoPix.

Tawny Frogmouths sleep during the day. At dusk they shake their disguise and begin their nocturnal hunt. They catch prey in flight, or by sitting motionless in a tree and then swooping down on ground-dwelling prey.

Tawny Frogmouths eat insects and centipedes, worms, spiders, snails and slugs. Sometimes they eat larger prey like frogs, reptiles and small birds and mammals. It's thought that most of their water requirements are obtained from their prey, rainfall and dew.

Tawny Frogmouths **mate for life** and in the wild they can live up to 14 years. Females typically lay two to three eggs each breeding season (around August to December).

The nest is made of sticks and rests on a horizontal tree branch.

At night the breeding pair take turns incubating the eggs, but the father normally takes the day shift.

**After the chicks have hatched, the whole family can be seen roosting on the same branch, side-by-side.**

Their call is a low booming “**Oom-oom-oom-oom**” noise. When threatened they may hiss loudly and strike a defensive pose that makes them appear larger than life – eyes and beak wide open. But for Tawny Frogmouths, disguise is the best form of defence!



## Threats to Tawny Frogmouths

While roosting, Tawny Frogmouths can be taken by **Carpet Pythons**. When on the ground hunting their own prey, these birds can be killed by **feral cats**, **dogs** and **foxes**. However, **habitat loss**, whether through land clearing, forestry or intensive bushfires, is the most serious threat to the ongoing health of the species – they're reluctant to move to other areas if their habitat is destroyed.

Tawny Frogmouths need woodlands with mature trees to nest and roost in, and to serve as a backdrop for their clever disguise.

Organochlorine insecticides (used for termite control) and rat poison, when present in the prey of Tawny Frogmouths cause many deaths in urban areas.

Finally, being nocturnal, the species is vulnerable to vehicle collision – they're known to fly after headlight-illuminated insects.

## What's Bush Heritage doing?

We have Tawny Frogmouths on most of our reserves and partnership properties, from Tasmania to Queensland and across to the north west of Western Australia. We protect their habitat by conserving native vegetation, allowing trees to reach a mature age and conserving the ecosystem on which they depend. Our feral cat work also reduces the risk of predation.

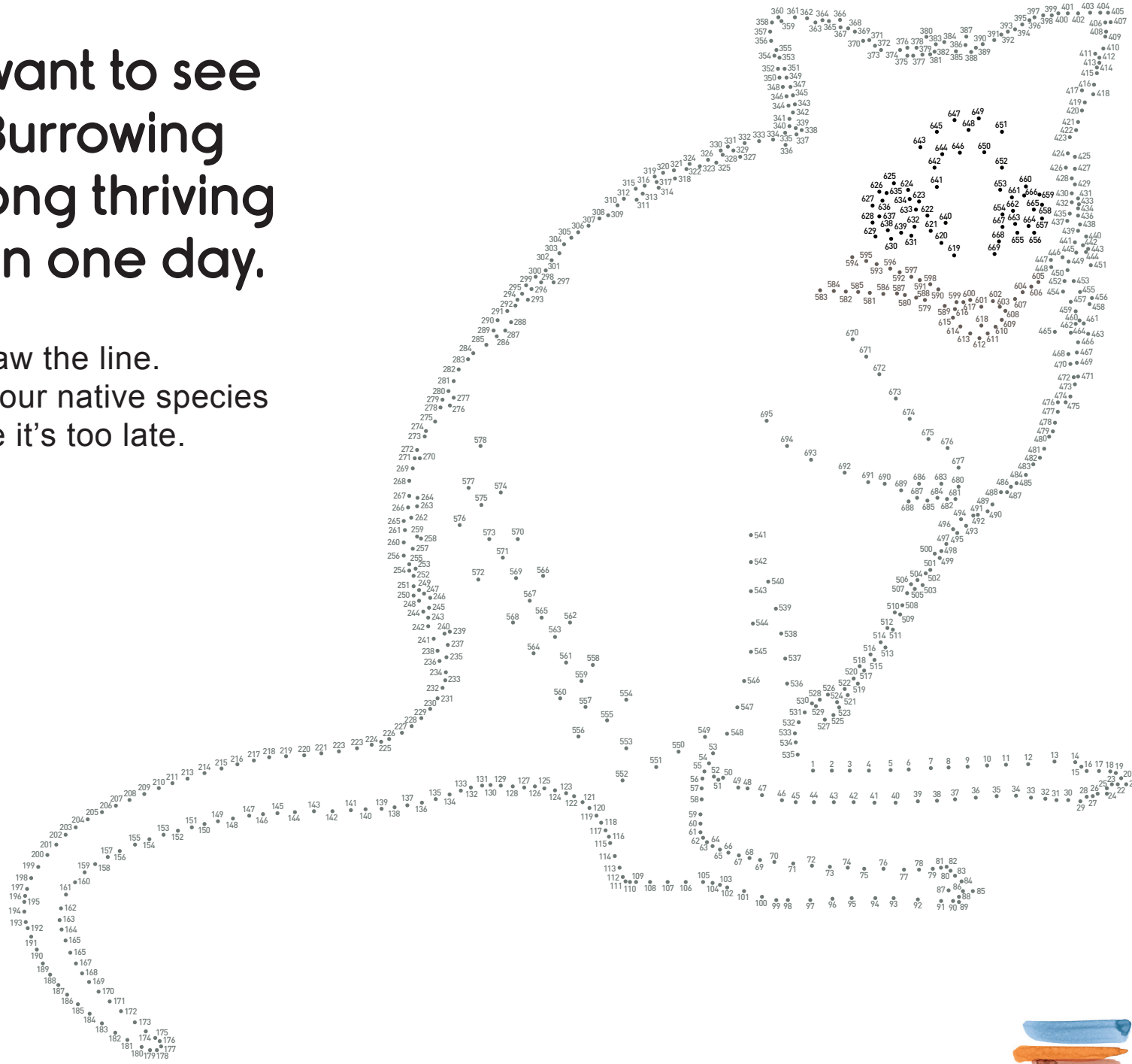


Tawny Frogmouths are masters of disguise.  
Photo by volunteer Tom Sjolund at Goonderoo Reserve.



# We want to see the Burrowing Bettong thriving again one day.

Help draw the line.  
Protect our native species – before it's too late.







“Alwal was created here from the rainbow, the gold and the blue.”

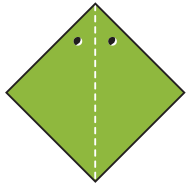
– MIKE ROSS,  
OLKOLA KNOWLEDGE HOLDER

The Golden-shouldered Parrot, or Alwal in Olkola language, is one of Australia’s most beautiful, precious birds.

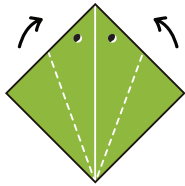
Cut off the fold-out template below so you can make your very own Alwal.

Ready? Follow the simple steps on the reverse of this page...





1. Start with the paper facing back side up – like this.



2. Fold the sheet in half to make a large triangle, making a crease, then unfold.



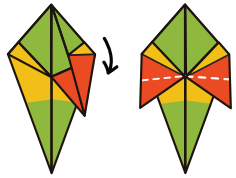
3. With the paper square again, fold two sides inwards to meet the crease you've just made, making a kite shape.



4. Now fold the top point of the kite backwards and down to make a triangle again.



5. Take each top corner of the triangle, fold in to the centre to make a crease.



6. Unfold and pull the inside corners down and across, bringing the dotted corners to flatten.



7. Fold the flaps upwards along the top guideline.



8. Now fold bottom corner and fold down again along the higher guideline. This will be Alwal's tail.



9. Fold Alwal in half as shown.



10. To make the beak, fold it back and then inwards, following the guidelines.



**Congratulations!**  
You've finished making Alwal.



# MATCH THAT SCAT!

Ecologists are always keeping an eye out for scat, or animal poo, because it can tell us a lot about the health of an animal's habitat and diet. Can you come on poo patrol with us and correctly answer all four questions?



## QUESTION 1:

This animal is a:

- a) Carnivore
- b) Herbivore
- c) Omnivore
- d) Insectivore

### HINT 1:

"Like my Grandmother always said, you can tell A LOT about an animal by the contents of its poo."



### HINT 2:

"Confused about square poo? Not me. It looks just like mine."

### HINT 4:

"The scats of some animals are especially useful for spreading the seeds of native plants. Which flightless native Australian has been here?"

### HINT 3:

"This scat smells just like the eucalyptus, careful this iconic Australian animal likes to poo while they sleep!"



## QUESTION 3:

Can you identify the animal that left this scat?

- a) Koala
- b) Green Ringtail Possum
- c) Greater Glider
- d) Common Wombat



## QUESTION 2:

Wombats proudly produce cubic poo. Scientists think that is because:

- a) Wombats are neat creatures that like to stack their poo in tidy piles.
- b) Wombats eat grass and live in places that are sometimes dry. Their intestines squeeze the digested grass to get all the water out of it, first from side-to-side and then from top to bottom. This makes the poo cubic.
- c) Wombats like to mark their territory by placing their poo on logs and rocks, and cubic poo is useful because it doesn't roll away.
- d) Wombats are kind of cube-shaped, so their poo is as well.



## QUESTION 4:

Nearly there, can you figure out which animal this scat belongs to?

- a) Emu
- b) Bettong
- c) Cassowary
- d) Currawong

## Answers

Question 1:



Question 2:



Question 3:



Question 4:

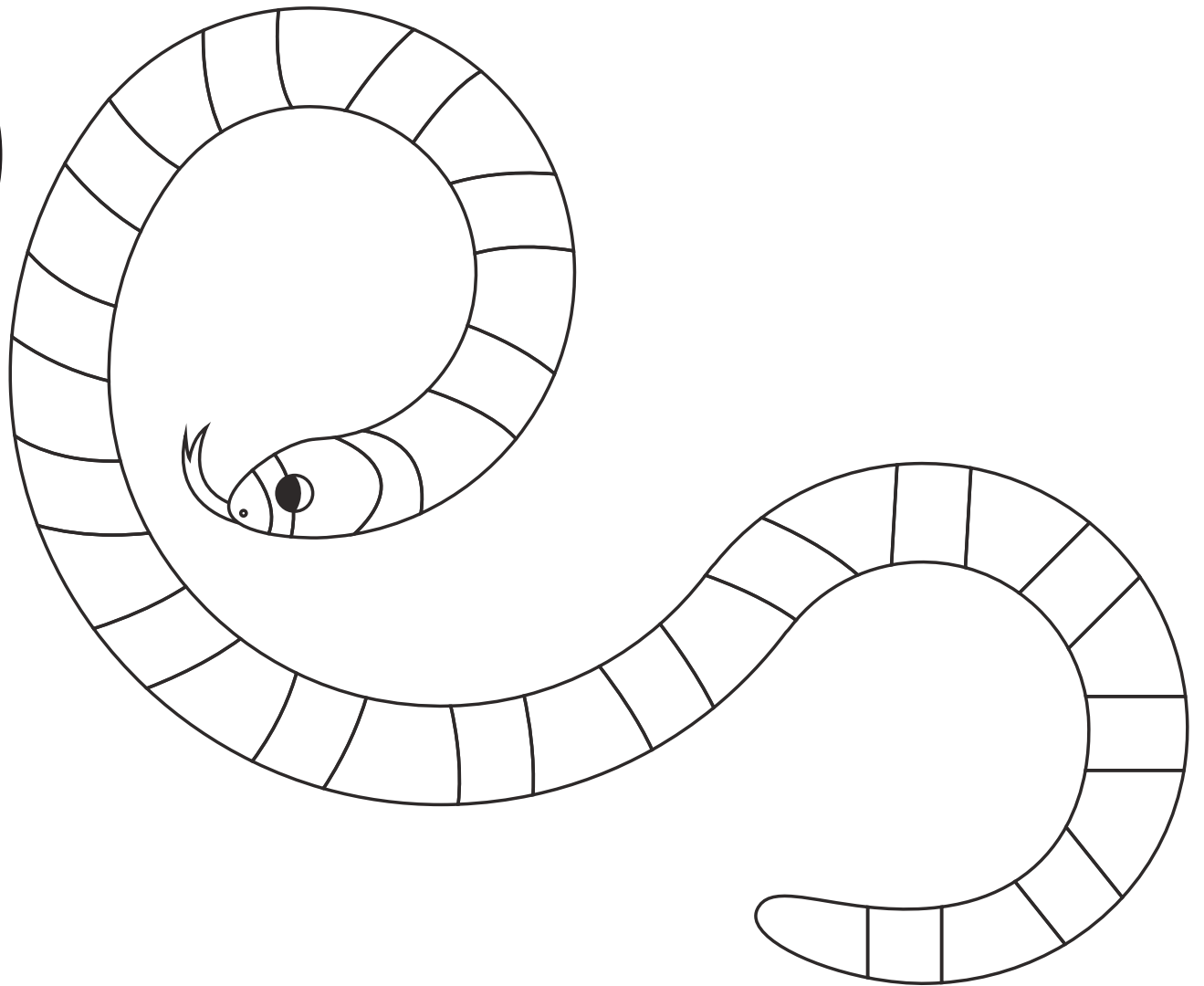


An Emu deposited this pile of seedy goodness at Charles Darwin Reserve in Western Australia. It's full of Sandlewood Tree seeds. Hundreds of different plant species benefit from having their seeds spread around by Emus. But all the species on this list are important seed spreaders.



Bb

is for  
Bandy Bandy  
Snake



H h

is for  
Hopping  
Mouse



A a

is for  
Apostlebird

