



Night birds of the Macedon Ranges

As fierce apex predators, Owls play an essential role in controlling key native animal populations. The forest habitats of the Macedon Ranges supports a range of Owl species.

Powerful Owl

Status: Vulnerable

Call: 'Hoo-Hooo'

The largest of the Owl species in Australia, the Powerful Owl can reach a height of 65cm. They have very large, hawk-like yellow eyes and a grey mottled V-shaped feather pattern. They hunt in the canopy feeding mostly on Ring-tailed Possums, Sugar Gliders and various birds. One sign that you may have a Powerful Owl in your area, is the remaining tails of Possums which are discarded during feeding.



Southern BooBook Owl

Status: Secure

Call: 'Boo-Book'

Perhaps the most common Owl in the local region, the Southern BooBook Owl can be heard at night calling. It is particularly common in areas such as Mount Macedon. This small owl which grows to 35cm, has a brown body, yellow-green eye, and a light coloured facial mask. They feed on small mice, insects and frogs.

Barking Owl

Status: Endangered

Call: Dog-like 'Wook wook'

Researchers predict that there may be less than 50 breeding pairs remaining in Victoria. Barking Owls are similar in appearance to Powerful Owls, however, the pattern on their belly appears as streaks of brown, rather than the V-shape of the Powerful Owl. Barking Owls have vibrant yellow eyes. They are agile and fly in complete silence when hunting for possums and birds.





Barn Owl

Status: Secure

Call: A loud screech

Barn Owls are the most widely distributed bird in the world. The Barn Owl feeds primarily on rodents such as mice and rats. They reach a size of 32cm. The Barn Owl has an obvious heart-shaped facial disc with dark eyes. They are sometimes seen near roadsides where they are searching for mice in the grass. During the day, Barn Owls sleep in hollows. If disturbed, they exit the hollow and will immediately be mobbed by small birds.



Tawny Frogmouth

Status: Secure

Call: 'Oom-oom'

The Tawny Frogmouth is a nocturnal bird. Unlike Owls, the Tawny Frogmouth does not have strong talons. Instead, it hunts frogs, small lizards, rodents and insects with its enormous beak. They often hunt in mid-air. This behaviour has unfortunately led to Frogmouths being hit by cars as they follow large moths attracted to car headlights.

Sources

The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds, 2000 edition.

Photo credits

Powerful Owl by Albert Golden, Southern Boobook Owl by David Jenkins, Barn Owl by Rex Boggs. All others by William Terry.