

# Night Birds of the Macedon Ranges transcript

Various night bird calls is played.

Welcome back to Nature pod. I'm William Terry. I am Macedon Ranges Shire Council environmental engagement officer. In this podcast, we are going to talk about five night birds that you might encounter in the Macedon Ranges.

One particularly rare species that occurs in our area is the Barking Owl.

In that recording, you could hear two Barking Owls calling to each other. Karl Just is a local ecologist who has been searching for Barking Owls for many years. Can you tell us a little bit about why you think Barking Owls are so special?

Barking Owls are a special owl for me. For many years, I have been trying to find them and have had one experience when I was sitting in the forest and terrified by the Barking Owl call which was like a woman being murdered. A terrifying kind of piercing scream. So yeah, it's very interesting call and also has a sound like a dog barking. They are quite an endangered bird and they are declining quite rapidly.

The species is known to feed on a variety of small and medium-sized animals things like sugar gliders, bats, cockatoos, ducks, rabbits and even rodents. And while this bird is quite rare in the local area, this species has been recorded around Lauriston, Barringo and around the Cobaw State Forest. The Victorian Action Plan for the Barking Owl suggests that there are only 50 breeding pairs left in Victoria.

This next species is the powerful owl, which like the Barking Owl is also a threatened species.

The Powerful Owl that you just heard there is the largest owl species in Australia. It grows to 65 cm and has a wingspan up to 1.3 m. Now this owl to escape mobbing birds, they roost in quite dense foliage. Things like Narrow-leaf Peppermints or Cherry Ballart are commonly used trees in our area.

If you ever come across one in the day, you may notice it clutching on to a prey item that it has caught the night before. Powerful Owls are incredible predators and will take a variety of prey items including Greater Gliders, Brushtail Possums, Common Ringtail Possums and Sugar Gliders.

Next up, we are going to hear from the Boobook Owl.

The Boobook Owl that you just heard there, is sometimes called the Mopoke. It is a very common species of owl that occurs in our area particularly can be heard around Mount Macedon and Newham District. While much smaller than the last two owls, they mostly prey on insects, but I've also been known to take small mammals like rodents and even microbats.

Next up, we're going to hear about barn owls.

Barn Owls are the most widespread owl species in Australia and are relatively common. During the day they sleep in tree hollows, caves or old buildings. They feed on rodents, small birds and insects, but by far their favourite food is mice, and that's why you often find them around farms.

Unfortunately barn owls can often fall victim to secondary poisoning from rodents that have been poisoned. Local ecologist and resident of the Macedon Ranges, Ian Temby recalls a personal

experience about this happening.

Two years ago, I heard a Barn Owl call but I've never seen one here. But within a week, my neighbour said he found this dead bird and it was a dead Barn Owl. I think it may well of been the same bird and had eaten a rodent that may have been poisoned. That really highlights that problem of putting out poison for rodents.

Next up, we're going to hear from the Tawny Frogmouth.

That was the unusual call of the Tawny Frogmouth which is not actually an owl like the other birds that we've talked about. And unlike the other birds which use their feet. Their talons to hunt their prey. The Tawny Frogmouth uses its great big mouth to catch its prey. Things like Moths, Rodents and anything else can fit inside its mouth. Unfortunately, Tawny frogmouths are often roadkill victims, as they chase moths attracted to the headlights of passing vehicles.

Listen to the following recordings and see if you can identify the night birds that we've discussed in this podcast.

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