



MALUBILLAI WILDLIFE CARERS NETWORK INC.

ABN 54 155 708 894

**Newsletter No: 52**

**December 2016**

## MOPOKE

Welcome to our final edition of Mopoke for 2016. I am sure you are all pretty much thinking where has this year gone!

For us at Malubillai it has been a fairly hectic one, there have been many challenges along the way when dealing with our native wildlife. The most pressing is the lack of carers who are able to commit to the long haul of home care for our wildlife. However the wonderful carers we do have excelled in their dedication of caring for wildlife. I would like to particularly thank Claudia, Tim and Monette who have been able to help out in many situations with caring for wildlife in our northern suburbs. At times it can be difficult to assist with the many phone calls we get regarding wildlife, but with the help of these and other carers we mostly are able to get our wildlife into the best care option. I would also like to welcome Ivan and Susan who have only recently joined Malubillai but have already put their hands up to help where ever they can.

Malubillai is very much like any other group which relies solely on volunteer help, at times it can be difficult to have enough help to service the needs but we seem to manage and we are always available via the phone to assist the public.

I have had the Malubillai mobile phone for some time now; it presents its own set of challenges as anyone involved in the service industry would appreciate. Mostly people are very nice and usually I can talk them thru their problem in regards to wildlife, but occasionally I am astounded at the lack of basic common courtesy. Example of this recently was a call from a young woman who had got the number from the council, she said she had a very sick bird at her front door, when I started to say it should be taken to the vet, she interrupted me and said, it's not actually sick, it's dead!! And that the council said I would come and collect it...I managed to say to her what do you think I can possibly do with a dead bird, she then raved at me saying it was my responsibility, not hers and I should come over immediately and remove it as she has a fear of dead birds. I controlled my anger to inform her that I would not and do not collect any dead animals, at that she slammed the phone down. A short time later I had another call, this time from a gentleman who was worried that a Raven was in his back yard and appeared it couldn't fly. I talked to him about where the bird was, turned out it was in a small area of a courtyard and did not have enough room to 'take off', I then explained how he could pick the bird up and take it to another area of the garden and it should be fine, he took all this in, thanked me and hung up. A short time later called back to thank me for being so patient and helpful as he hadn't a clue what he should do to help the bird out. Talk about chalk and cheese with these two calls.

Finally I would like to wish you all a very happy, safe and fabulous Xmas and New Year and look forward to sending you all 2017 editions of Mopoke.

***Heather Seear***

President – Malubillai Wildlife Carers Network Inc.

## A Tale of Two Tawnies

I wanted to call this a tale of two owls – but although Tawny Frogmouths superficially look like owls, they are members of the nightjar family, and as a result, a lot safer to handle than owls. True owls are raptors and like all raptors have locking talons that are capable of piercing unprotected skin with ease. Once 'locked' only a conscious effort from the raptor will release the object being grasped. Woe betide any carer unfortunate enough to be mistaken for prey - and that is one reason that caring for raptors is a specialist task which Malubillai members do not usually tackle!

As a newbie carer, I foolishly didn't know any of that when, having picked up my first tawny frogmouth and being safely inside a spare aviary, I gingerly began opening the lid of the cardboard box\*. So followed one of those rare moments that I know will stay with me forever. From the rather gloomy depths of the box, two bright, round, amber-coloured jewels fixed me with a searing gaze that in the cool reflection of hindsight, was probably terror, but to my inexperienced and timid mind was very clearly the look of an animal that had just sighted its next meal. But rather than being petrified, I was completely awestruck by the magnificent beauty formed by the contrast between the bright yellow of the iris and the black slits of its pupils. I really felt I was staring through the iris and into the depths of oblivion. Adding to the awe was the very prominent beak; not properly hooked like a raptor's, but still very, very wide and sharp looking. Overall this was far and away the largest wild bird I had ever been close to. I knew it should be eating mice, and that was about it, so I helped it out of the box and onto a perch, made my retreat and did the first sensible thing I'd done since picking the bird up – I got on the phone to my experience wildlife care mentor to get some advice on what to do next.

I came to realise these are really remarkable birds – although the 'snap' of the beak left me in no doubt that I didn't want it to catch a finger, I never felt threatened, and they, like many birds, are easy to pick up with a small towel over the head and body. The Tawny on the other hand, whenever it was confronted by something new in its view, would contract its feathers tightly, stretch its neck into its body and appear to all intents and purposes to be an old gum tree branch! It continued to peer out at the threat though just open eyelids, frozen to the spot in what would undoubtedly be a camouflage that even a dedicated observer could easily overlook.

I was very fond of this creature from the outset and did my best to tempt him with mice soaked in warm water, my mentor helpfully advising that rather than the rather distasteful task of dismembering the mouse, the easiest way to feed it was to dangle the mouse by the tail so it was just over the prominent hairs where the beak transitions into the head. Touching those was like springing a conventional mouse trap and sounded just the same too! It took strong nerves (and more than a few dropped mice) before I became confident the beak was after the mouse, not the fingers holding it. It would only take a couple of goes before the mouse would be snapped up and the Tawny adopted a satisfied posture with the tail hanging out the side of its beak, the morsel to be gobbled down at leisure.

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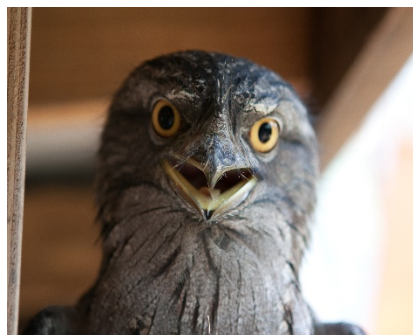
Although I got off to a good start, no wildlife will allow itself to be captured unless there is something very wrong with it. This Tawny was very emaciated and feed it up as I would, I could not get it to put on weight. The aviary was not ideal, being too big to move and located for a possible companion parrot, in too busy a thoroughfare to be a good long term rehabilitation facility, so I arranged to pass him on to another carer with a better setup. Sadly, whatever was ailing it proved insurmountable and it died a few weeks later, news which really saddened me. I consoled myself, as we all do, by remembering that it would have certainly died had it not been handed over to us and that we gave it the very best chance we could.

A few weeks later, I got another call from a different vet – this time a Tawny had been hit by a car in an urban area near a park. I picked it up, rather more confident this time. This creature was fully grown, equally impressive in demeanor and this time, in perfect condition. After keeping him overnight, he seemed to have got over his shock but apart from being clearly stressed by his captivity, seemed in tip top condition. He showed no sign at all of wanting to eat mice, but was found near a floodlit oval, and nocturnal insects can form a substantial part of a Tawny's diet. The weather was good so after it again refused food that afternoon, I resolved to take it back to the vicinity it was found and try a hard release. From observing it in the cage I knew it could perch and stretch both wings fine. Keeping it in captivity seemed likely to stress it and only damage its feathers which need to be in excellent condition to hunt silently. If it couldn't actually fly, I would recapture it and pass it on for long-term rehab.

After a short drive to the release site and well away from the car, I opened the cage door in a strand of mature eucalypts, with the floodlit oval in the distance. There was a moment's hesitation, then a black shape hopped onto the ground in front of the cage, stretched its magnificent wings in a full one meter span and with two silent wing beats disappeared into the darkness.

I headed back to the car knowing that after such a short time in captivity, he would still have all his flight muscles and may even now think twice about heading near the road. It's the 'wins' like that we like to remember and which keep us going through the inevitable bad outcomes. Still, I will never forget the first time a Tawny set eyes on me.

\* I wasn't being completely reckless, I knew we did care for Tawny's but that we didn't do any other owls or raptors and left those to the specialists. **Tim Green**



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Address.....

..... Post Code.....

Telephone: Home..... Mobile..... Email.....

Membership Costs: \$20.00 single      \$30.00 Family      \$15.00 Pensioner/Student/concession; Donation \$.....

Please make cheques/money orders payable to Malubillai Wildlife Carers Network.

I am interested in becoming an active voluntary member YES/NO (please circle), If yes please request and complete a volunteer application for. **Direct Credit: BSB: 016 263 A/c No: 109493371 ANZ A/c name: Malubillai Wildlife Carers Network Inc.**

**Please send membership application form to:** Malubillai Wildlife Carers Network Inc. PO Box 595 Victoria Park WA 6979

## SAUSAGE SIZZLE REPORT.

The recently held sausage sizzle held at Bunnings in Cannington was a success, we sold so many more Sausages in buns than previously we kept running out of goods and consequently kept the local businesses busy as we had to purchase more of everything as we went. This effected our profit margin however we made a profit of \$800, and have agreed to apply to hold a further two in 2017. So THANKYOU very much too all our helpers, you were all great and made the day fun and profitable, we look forward to your continued support next year.



## *For the Love of her Dove*

A pair of Laughing Turtle Doves (which I strongly suspect I had hand reared and released) decided to build a nest in some tall Grevillea's which grow down the side of our house. They built their nest on a branch which was very close to the window of our living room. The advantage of this for me anyway, was the fact that the windows are tinted, which meant I could see everything that went on and they couldn't see me!

They built their first nest and 2 eggs were produced, she sat there protecting them for 10 days and one morning stood up and must have decided these eggs were not viable, eggs were displaced, Mom and Dad left the site. Two or three days later they were back to the same spot and decided to have another go at successful nest and baby production. The second nest was built above the original nest, Mom then produced 2 more eggs and again sat on them to incubate and protect. During the 15 days she sat on the nest the weather was, as we all know, cold, wet and very windy, she protected her precious eggs, sometimes calling out to Dad to come back with some back up twigs to reinforce the quite flimsy nest. She braved all that nature could throw at her to keep those eggs going and finally her patience and dedication was rewarded when on the 15<sup>th</sup> day a tiny baby emerged from his/her egg. The love and care she showed to this baby was inspirational, feeding and tending to its every need, keeping it warm and safe and never leaving baby or nest for 9 days. On the 9<sup>th</sup> day I watched as she stood up and stretched her legs and wings, checked baby was ok and off she went for a much needed fly, food and water break. Baby is now 13 days old and almost as big as Mom, but she still comes back several times a day to feed and check that all is well with her offspring. I have watched baby stretch, perch on the edge of his nest, obviously watching and learning from Mom what he/she needs to know to survive once he/she fledges from the safety of Mom and nest. Mom comes back each night and carefully and gently gets her now large baby under her body to protect and keep him/her warm and safe during the night.

Watching this Dove produce, care and love her baby has been a very rewarding experience and one which I am grateful to have been privy to. Next time you see any birds nest stop and think how amazing they are to produce such a thing and see if you could replicate it. (No fingers allowed, only your mouth!)

**Heather**



**NEXT MEETING.**

Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday January 21<sup>st</sup> 2017 commencing at 1.00pm. New members/carers are always welcome. PLEASE come along join in and see how you feel about caring for wildlife or just supporting the group in general. We meet at 22 Garland Street Victoria Park, for any further details please call Heather: - 0410638882 or Ronda 0417092059



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2017 from all at MALUBILLAI WILDLIFE CARERS.

