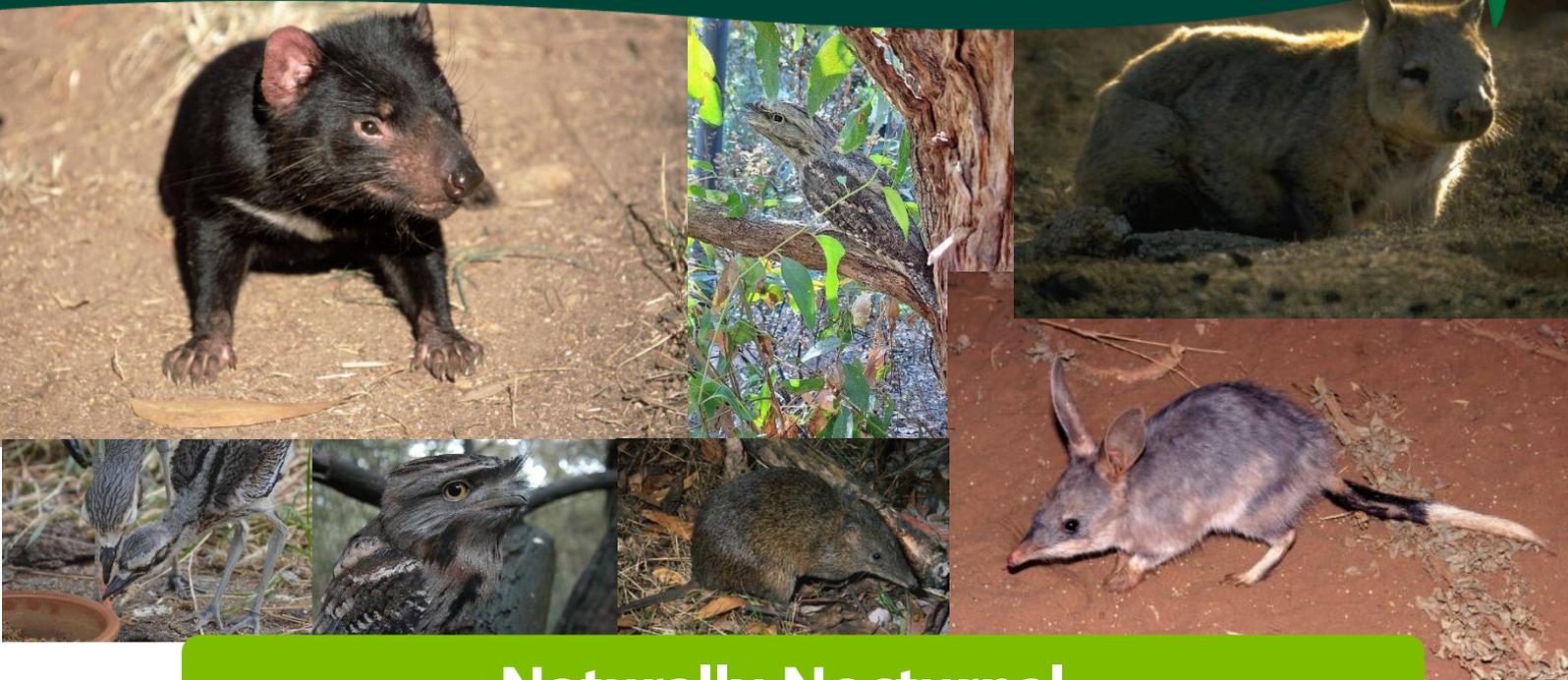


Gumnut Gazette

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Naturally Nocturnal

Tell me more...

Imagine sleeping during the day and waking up when the sun goes down, then going about your normal 'day'-playing with your friends and going to school.

Well, that's what a lot of our Australian animals do.



Images above: Credit to Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (2013) and Cleland Wildlife Park staff members (2026).

Nocturnal animals are active during the nighttime.

The reason for this is to avoid predators and often escape the heat of the day.

Keep reading to find more about nocturnal Australian animals.

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Acknowledgement to country

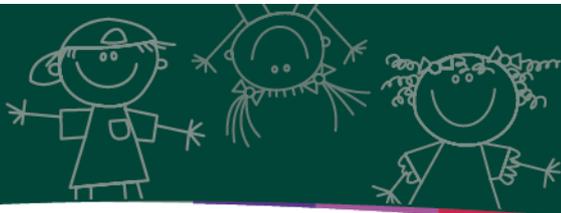
The Department for Environment and Water acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep

spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

The Department works in partnership with the First Peoples of South Australia and supports their Nations to take a leading role in caring for their Country.

FUN FACT

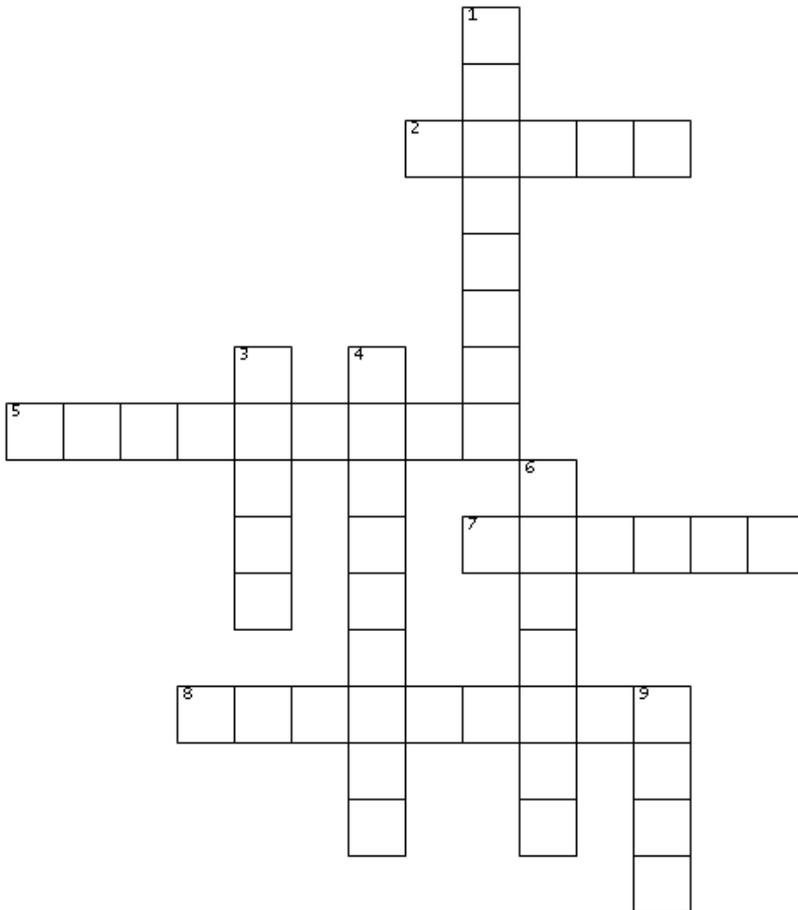
Owls can rotate (turn) their heads up to 270 degrees to view their surroundings.



Fun and games

Cross Word

Use the clues to fill in the words above



ACROSS:

2. An animal that has no legs
5. Only eats plants
7. A nocturnal mammal that lives in trees
8. Only eats meat

DOWN:

1. Eats both plants and meat
3. Nocturnal ground dwelling animal
4. Sleeps during the day and is awake/active at night.
6. Smallest Australian owl
9. Helps nocturnal animals see at night

Jumble Word

ATWNY /RTOO
GHMFU

----- /

What type of
possum is this?



Missing Letter

D _ _ R N A L

Nocturnal Mammals

Can you tell the difference?

Have you ever heard a soft 'boop-boop-chirping' sound or a 'high pitch growling' sound high in the trees? This could be a possum. Possums are nocturnal tree dwelling mammals.

The **common brushtail possum** is roughly the size of a cat and has a large black bushy tail. They need tree hollows to nest and stay safe in during the day. Brushtails are omnivores, eating mostly flowers, leaves, fruits, seeds and sometimes small insects.

The **common ringtail possum** is smaller in size and have a long thin tail. Their tail is prehensile (can hold things) and has a white tip. They use their tail as an extra limb for collecting things and balancing. They can build a nest called a 'drey' to nest and stay safe in during the day. Ringtails are herbivores, eating eucalyptus leaves, plant shoots, fruits and flowers.



Ringtail possum



Brushtail possum

Photo Credit: Australian Common Ringtail Possum credit to Karen.H.Black (iStock, 2016) and Brushtail possum credit to Neil Bowman (iStock, 2023).

Possums like to have their own space. To show that an area belongs to them, they leave special smells there. They might pee a little or rub their bodies on things to spread their scent. This helps other possums know, "Hey, this is my spot!"

Did you know?

Arboreal means living in the trees. Possums are arboreal.

Ground Dwellers

The **greater bilby** and **southern brown bandicoot** are both native nocturnal mammals found in South Australia.

These two species of animals have long snouts and are very good at digging. They are often called 'eco-engineers' because when they dig around looking for food (mushrooms, insects, bulbs and seeds) they dig small cone-shaped or deep hole-like pits in the ground. These holes help mix up the soil, making it healthier and better for plants to grow.

Did you know?

Tasmanian devils, wombats and bettongs are nocturnal ground dwelling mammals too.



Bilby



Bandicoot

Photo credit to Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (2013).

Ultimate Nighttime Camouflage

Can hear me....

The **tawny frogmouth** is not an owl as many often think. It is actually more closely related to the 'nightjar family.' Tawny frogmouths can often be mistaken as tree a branch! They are the ultimate masters of disguise.

These birds are carnivores and have stiff bristles around their beak; these 'whiskers' can help detect the movement of flying insects! These cool birds are found throughout Australia.

Something to listen out for at night is their call which is a low booming "Oom-oom-oom-oom" noise.

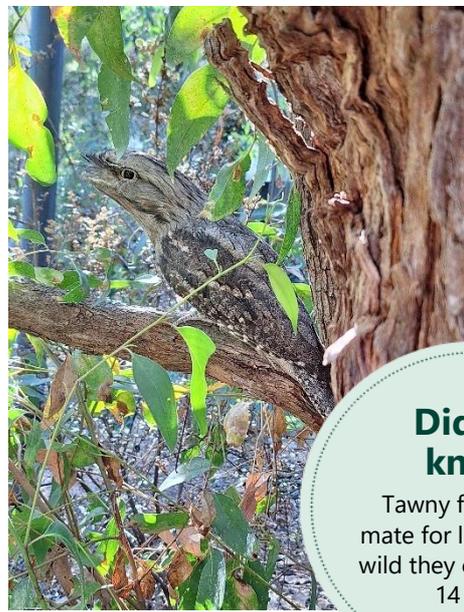


Photo credit to Cleland Wildlife Park Staff.

Did you know?

Tawny frogmouths mate for life and in the wild they can live up to 14 years!

All of these carnivorous birds will eat mostly insects, and a variety of different invertebrates, sometimes small lizards, small mammals, frogs and even small birds.



The southern boobook

I bet you've heard one of these birds at nighttime, it sounds like a receptive hoot which consists of two notes 'boobook.' Often you will hear it and not see it due to its amazing camouflage skills.

This is the smallest and most common owl in Australia and is often called a 'boobook owl, or 'mopoke.'

This is yet another Australian species the requires tree hollows to nest.



Photo credit to Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.



Did you know?

Carnivores only eat meat

Bush stone-curlew

This bird is amazing; it lives on the ground and is often mistaken for a log or branch on the ground. Its call is a ghost like eerie noise, it sounds like a drawn-out, mournful (sad) 'wer-loooo.'

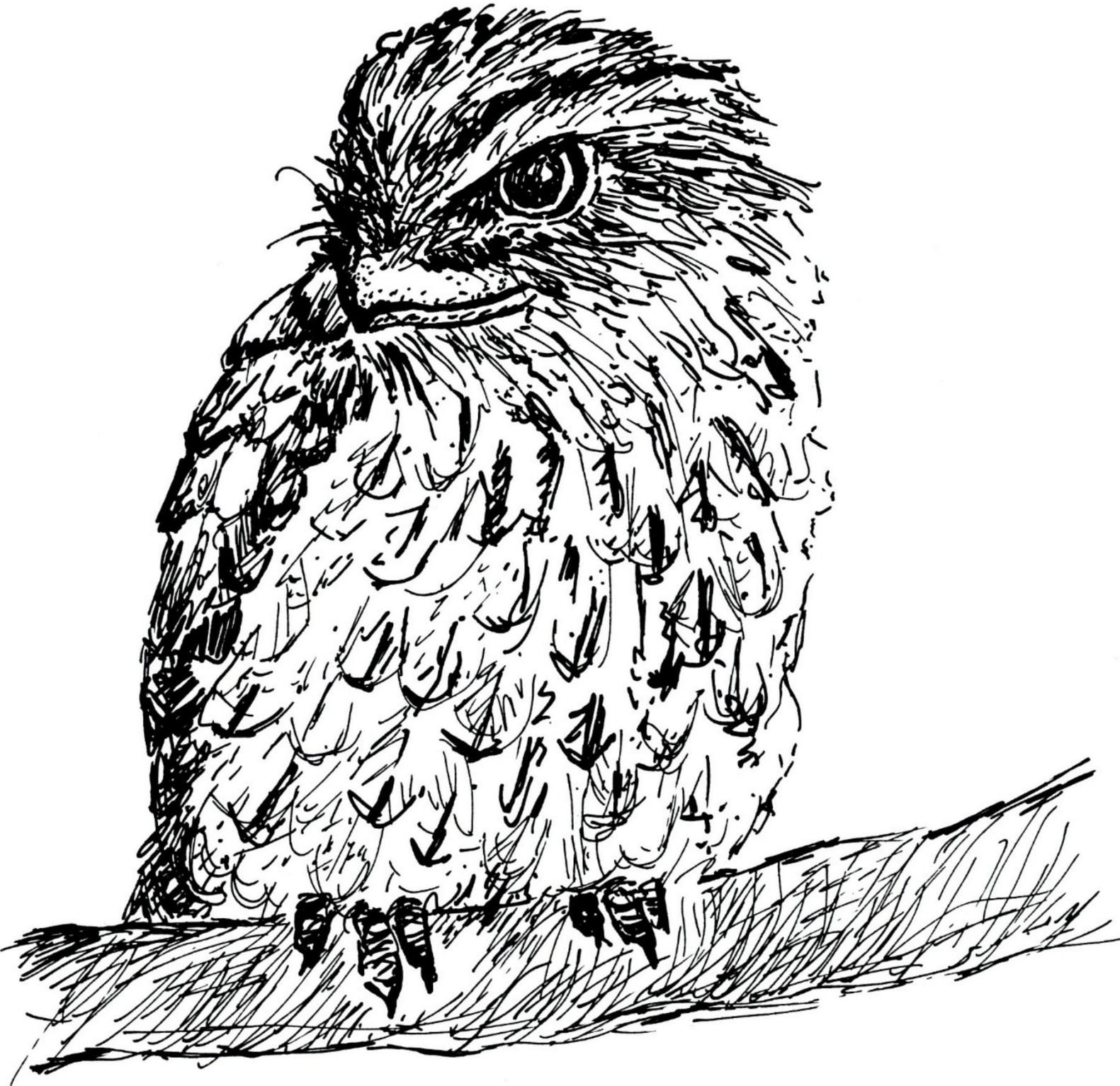
These nocturnal birds have an unusual courtship dance. Firstly, they stand tall with their wings spread out, tails up, and necks stretched forward. Then they will stamp their feet like a soldier marching. They can keep dancing and calling loudly for over an hour to impress a mate!



Photo credit to Cleland Wildlife Park Staff.



Colour in this tawny frogmouth



Colour in image credit to Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.



Did you know?

Crepuscular means active at dawn and dusk (*as the sun is coming up and going down*).

Diurnal means active during the day and sleeps at night. **We are diurnal.**

More creatures of the night...

Garden orb weaver: This is a common spider found in backyards in Australia. These nocturnal spiders hide really well during the day and by night weave amazing webs to catch their food mostly flying insects.



Photo credit to Brett Hondow (Pixabay)

Junior Conservation Club

Dates in 2026:
SUNDAY

- March 15th
- April 19th
- May CWP Blitz (tbc)
- June 21st
- July 19th
- August 16th
- September 20th
- October 17th - Night Walk (Saturday)
- November 15th

The Flinders Ranges Scorpion will glow a brilliant blue green under UV light and like all scorpions they have a very slow metabolism and may only need to eat once a month depending on the season.



Photo credit to Jodi Rowley

Eastern Banjo Frog (*Limnodynastes dumerilii*): also known as the 'pobblebonk,' is a ground-dwelling frog that calls during winter nights in south and eastern Australia. They are most active at night and after rain.

Remember

If you ever see nocturnal animals at night **ONLY** observe, avoid loud noises and do not shine your light source in their eyes.

Scorpions: Scorpions are mainly active at night, but they can sometimes be seen during the day, particularly when there has been a lot of rain. The **Flinders Ranges Scorpion** (*Urodacus elongatus*) hunt for food by night and stay in their burrows during the day.



Photo credit to Nick Volpe