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TAWNY FROGMOUTH

SCIENTIFIC NAME: Podargus strigoides

IDENTIFICATION: The general plumage of the Tawny Frogmouth is silver-grey, slightly paler below, streaked and mottled with black and rufous. A second plumage phase also occurs, with birds being russet-red. The eye is yellow in both forms, and the wide, heavy bill is olive-grey to blackish. The body length ranges from 35 - 50 cm. With their nocturnal habit and owl-like appearance, Tawny Frogmouths are often confused with owls, but are actually more closely related to the nightjars. Their feet are weak however, and lack the curved talons of owls. During the day, the Tawny Frogmouth perches on a tree branch, often low down, camouflaged as part of the tree.

HABITAT: The Tawny Frogmouth is found throughout Australia, including Tasmania. It can be seen in almost any habitat type except the denser rainforests and treeless deserts.

DIET: The bulk of the Tawny Frogmouth's diet is made up of nocturnal insects, worms, slugs and snails. Small mammals, reptiles, frogs and birds are also eaten. Most food is obtained by pouncing to the ground from a tree or other elevated perch. Some prey items, such as moths, are caught in flight, which has led to many unfortunate instances of birds being hit by cars while chasing insects illuminated in the beam of the headlights.

STATUS: The Tawny Frogmouth is one of the most common and widespread nocturnal birds of prey in Western Australia and Australia. It is present throughout the state in nearly all habitats and is currently secure.

INTERESTING FACTS:

- During the day the Tawny Frogmouth blends in very well, by stretching its head and neck upwards and remaining completely still, it is mistaken for a branch of the tree in which it is roosting.

