

BIRDS –

If you are taking a bird into care prior to finding a vet or a carer, please do not feed it or give it water unless you are positive of its identification and problem. Giving an animal food or water can make the health situation worse. You may feed a juvenile the wrong thing.

Q. There is a small bird sitting on the ground, with other birds flying around it, and it can't fly far. Should I leave there or pick it up?

A. Learning to fly is a tricky business, and fledglings need time to work out how to do it. Most fledglings do not fly on their first attempt. They start with short flights, usually downwards! Check if the other birds flying around are the parent birds. If the baby is being fed, leave well alone. The parents will guard the baby until it is able to follow them to a higher branch. If there is no other bird around, and they are in danger from cats, dogs or cars, pick the little one up and call a carer.

Q. The crows are flying around and attacking another bird. Should I take it into care?

A. Sometimes crows are not attacking, but actually feeding. Before you interfere by taking the bird, check if the crows are actually attacking or feeding it!! Cuckoos often lay their eggs in crow's nests, so that the crows do all the hard work of raising their young, before they come back and collect them. Cuckoos lay their eggs in many different bird nests, including peewees, and there has even been a case when a Chanel Bill Cuckoo laid eggs in a Willy Wagtail nest! Heck of a job for the Wagtails to feed such a huge baby!

Q. We had a windy day yesterday and now there is a baby bird on the ground. The parent birds are here, but I am worried for the baby with predators around. What can I do?

A. Is the baby big enough to fly? If so, pop it on a low branch and the parents will do the rest. If not, try to place it in a container or box in the tree where the nest was. Put holes in the bottom of plastic containers, and try to handle the baby as little as possible.

Q. There is an injured bird flying or hopping around in my yard – I can't catch it. Will someone come out and get it?

A. We cannot send carers out on calls if the bird is not a definite catch. If you can, put a box or a washing basket over the top of the bird to confine it. If you are able to catch it and it seems quite badly injured ie broken leg or wing, please take the bird to your local vet. The vet will ascertain if the bird needs a carer or euthanizing. Sometimes the second solution is the only sensible one to put the bird out of pain. Vets do not usually charge members of the public for doing this humane service.

Q. I have a little brown bird that looks like a little butter ball in my yard. There aren't any parents!!

A. What you most probably have is a brush turkey baby. These little guys are self feeders right from when they come out the nest. The parent birds do not look after them, which is probably why their survival rate is around 1 in 200. Check that no predators can get the little one, then leave him be. He will gain confidence and move on. Turkeys can fly within one hour of hatching. Turkeys are almost as good at predicting storms as arthritis is! Turkey chicks are often mistaken for quails.

Q. I have a brush turkey mound in my yard and the male bird is scratching up all my nicely laid mulch! Help! What can I do?

A. Enjoy having your own personal brush turkey! People have encroached so far into the habitat of our native wildlife, but they resent it when some of our natives try to take a little bit back!!

You can make your garden less attractive to turkeys by :

- Spreading 5 cm of river gravel over the top of mulch
- Compost heaps attract turkeys – place them away from gardens when possible
- Altering the state of the garden (rainforest gardens have a 80-95% chance of attracting turkeys)
- Destroying the mound has no effect whatsoever. The turkeys will rebuild them over, and over, and over, and over again (they have more time on their hands than we do!)

Apart from being against the law, it will do no good to remove a turkey who has moved in. Once a bird is taken from an area that is obviously suitable habitat for building, a second will move right in to the territory. So, make some adjustments, and make friends with your new tenant! They are interesting birds to watch.

Q. I have an owl lying in the garden. What should I do with it?

A. If you have an ‘owl’, check if it is a Tawny Frogmouth. Tawnies are not owls. They also have a tendency to lie down. The bird may just be resting. If it is injured then you will need a vet or a carer. If the injury appears severe, call the vet first.