

THE POWERFUL OWL IS A FREQUENT VISITOR TO THE BOTANIC GARDEN IN COFFS HARBOUR



Image: Graham Tupper

POWERFUL OWL (NINOX STRENUA)



Image: Cheryl Cooper

DESCRIPTION

The Powerful Owl is Australia's largest owl, up to 65 cm long with a wingspan of 110-140 cm and an adult weight of 1.25-1.45 kg. The head appears small for its size with large staring yellow eyes. They have a long tail with six bands of white and grey-brown across. Their feathered legs end in massive orange-yellow feet with the sharp killer talons used to catch prey. The adult is dark grey-brown above with whitish barring. Underneath they are off-white with the bold dark v-shaped chevrons that identify them from other owls.

The male and female look similar though the female is smaller with a narrower head and more rounded crown. Juveniles are downy white on the head and underparts with an obvious dark face mask. Their underparts are lightly streaked. After they fledge (leave the nest), their shorter tails begin to grow to the adult length and chevron markings start to develop.

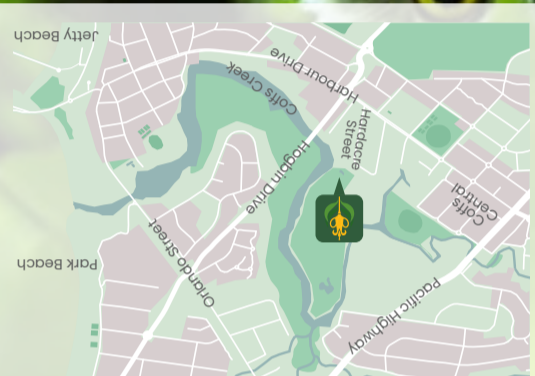
Powerful Owls are nocturnal apex (top) predators. Adults live in permanent breeding pairs and usually revisit the same nesting tree hollows. In daytime, they roost among dense leafy foliage, often holding half-eaten prey from the previous night.



Image: Karen Hutchings

WHERE TO FIND THE GARDEN

Hardacre St at the corner of Coffs St



Open 9am to 5pm daily - Free Entry

TO SUPPORT THE GARDEN

- Join the Friends of the Botanic Garden
- Volunteer at the garden

See the website for details.

TO FIND OUT MORE

Information Centre & Shop:
(02) 6648 4188

w: coffsbotanicgarden.com.au

e: coffsbotanicgarden@gmail.com

Find us 'Coffs Harbour Botanic Garden' on



Please observe restrictions for the safety of all.



Image: Paul Van Gaal

HABITAT AND FOOD

Powerful Owls are endemic (restricted) to forested areas of eastern Australia. They mainly hunt possums for food. Their home ranges vary from 400 to 4000 hectares, depending on how fragmented their habitat is. They can be found in open forests and woodlands, sheltered gullies in wet forests and sometimes in open farms, parks and remnant bushland patches.

Their nesting hollows need to be about the size of a wheelie bin for breeding to be successful and 10-15 meters off the ground. Such hollows take hundreds of years to develop so old-growth trees have to be preserved. And a healthy under-storey is needed to support prey species. The owls prefer to catch medium-size arboreal (tree dwelling) marsupials, especially greater glider, common ringtail possum and sugar glider. In some areas they also eat grey-headed flying fox. Sometimes they eat smaller birds or rodents to supplement their diet. In that case they may take in the poisons used for rat baits. The Powerful Owl hunts silently, flying under the tree canopy to swoop on their prey, grabbing it with sharp talons.

The Powerful Owls can often be seen at the North Coast Regional Botanic Gardens, roosting at the heart of the natural forest area amongst the old growth trees, especially in the cooler months from Autumn to Spring.

CALLS

The male has a deep, soft double hoot, whoo-hooo, that carries a long way, with each note lasting a few seconds, broken by brief silences. The female has a similar call but higher pitched. Duets are often heard at the start of breeding.

ABOUT BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA AND THEIR POWERFUL OWL PROJECT

Birdlife Australia is a national organisation that acts for conservation and protection of native birds and their habitats. They are scientifically based with many partnerships and membership of Birdlife International.

For more information go to: birdlife.org.au

They run a Powerful Owl program that welcomes involvement by citizen scientists. Any information or sightings are greatly appreciated. Report information by email to: powerfulowl@birdlife.org.au

Get involved in the Powerful Owl project: birdlife.org.au/projects/powerful-owl-project

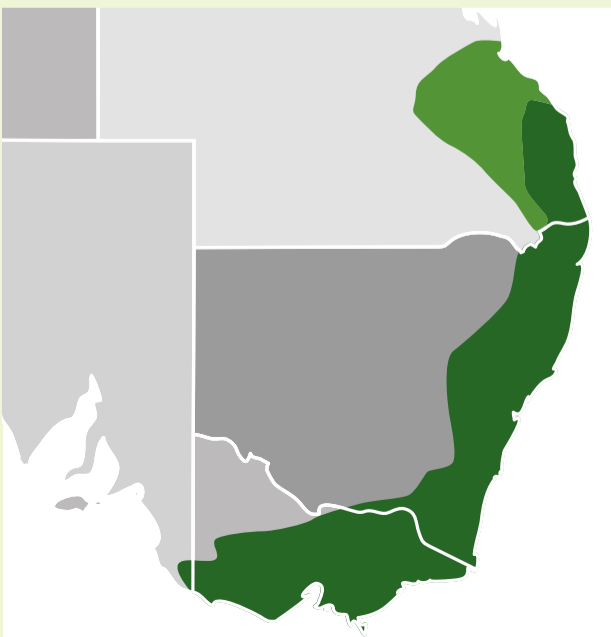
ABOUT THE GARDEN

Established in 1981 the Friends of the Botanic Garden raised funds and volunteered to help establish the garden which opened in 1988. The Friends continue to provide hundreds of volunteer hours each week.

With acknowledgement to the first botanists and traditional custodians of the land, the Gumbaynggirr people.



Image: Paul Van Gaal



THREATS TO THE POWERFUL OWL

Powerful Owls need old-growth trees with large hollows to nest in, to roost during the day among dense leaves and to hunt prey like possums at night. We can protect Powerful Owls by keeping large tracts of forest with old trees that have suitable hollows, and by avoiding using rodenticides. The same measures will also encourage healthy populations of their prey.

LAND CLEARING & HABITAT LOSS: the Powerful Owl is threatened by clearing of forests, especially

the loss of old trees but can live in fragmented habitats such as wooded farms or suburban areas.

VEHICLES AND URBAN HAZARDS: up to 12% of the Sydney population are killed by cars, trucks and buses each year. They are also at risk of being electrocuted on powerlines and crashing into windows.

PREDATORS: although the adults are apex predators, their young are sometimes killed by foxes, cats and dogs, or their eggs taken by a goanna, python or other bird. Adults react to Wedge-tailed Eagles as potential predators. They are sometimes mobbed by other birds or killed in territorial disputes with other owls.

RODENTICIDES: rat bait chemicals can enter the food chain and cause secondary poisoning to the Powerful Owl if they eat poisoned rodents. **Avoid** using baits, or use block forms of less harmful ones known as FGARs (first generation anticoagulant rodenticides) with the active poisons of sodium chloride, warfarin, coumatetralyl, or diphacinone. For example 'Ratsak Naturals' which is also a bait option that is safe for humans and pets.

For more information go to actforbirds.org or scan this QR code.

