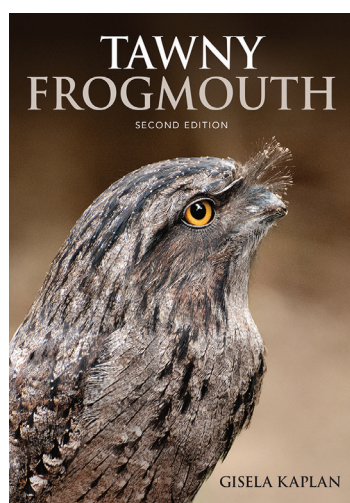


Book Review



Tawny Frogmouth, 2nd Edition

Gisela Kaplan 2018. CSIRO Publishing. Soft-cover. 160 pp, black and white photographs. ISBN: 9781486308163. RRP \$A 30.95

I must disclose at the very start that I am an enormous Tawny Frogmouth fan. Even after finishing a PhD on their ecology and behavior in 2016, my interest in them has never waned. So

naturally I was delighted to see a follow-up to the first edition of the publication *Tawny Frogmouth* and even more delighted that I was asked to review this 2nd edition.

In the field of ecological research, long-term studies are both immensely valuable but unfortunately quite rare. Here, Gisela Kaplan, one of Australia's leading authorities on animal behaviour and native birds, provides a study of a single species spanning 20 years. In *Tawny Frogmouth*, Professor Kaplan provides important information on the behaviour and ecology of one of Australia's most elusive and interesting nocturnal bird species. The first edition of *Tawny Frogmouth* was published in 2007 by CSIRO as part of its Australian Natural History Series. Based primarily on 20 years of systematic observations, scientific writings and information from bird surveys, it continues to hold enormous and wide appeal to readers.

Particularly appealing is the overall style of the book. Scientific facts and information are punctuated with Professor Kaplan's often affectionate comments and personal observations about Tawny Frogmouths. Whilst she received some criticism regarding her anthropomorphizing of the species e.g. attributing to them human qualities, such as emotions and loyalty, I think that this is one of the factors that have led to the book's wide appeal, readability and a second edition.

In this second edition, Professor Kaplan continues in a similar vein, integrating scientific research and her own long-term observations and knowledge to reveal many more interesting and appealing facts about one of Australia's most unusual birds. Whether you are a scientific researcher, have an interest in birds and avian behaviour or just enjoy observing and listening to birds, this book will have great appeal for you.

The second edition provides an excellent update of new knowledge gained since the first edition. Since the mid-2000's, research has provided new and interesting facts about the Tawny Frogmouth; particularly, it has yielded new information about breeding behavior, habitat use and the species' response to habitat fragmentation caused by urbanization. A welcome addition to the "what and where they are" chapter is a table showing nightjar and frogmouth family groups separated into geographical regions across the southern hemisphere. This table will be especially useful for avian researchers or to those who are curious about the evolutionary relationships between these two important groups.

The organization of this edition resembles that of the first edition in that facts and information are organized into the following chapters: what and where Tawny Frogmouths are, general anatomy, the brain and the senses, daily life and adaptations, feeding and territory, bonding and breeding, development and emotions, vocal behavior and communication. This allows the reader to easily and quickly navigate to the section of most interest. Another welcome addition is the inclusion of subheadings under these main headings, providing greater detail of what aspects will be covered. Whilst the photographs are of good quality and are well produced, I was disappointed that aside from the front and back covers, all the photographs are black and white. The first edition contained a substantial number of colour photographs which illustrated so well how Tawny Frogmouth plumage is one of the species' most important attributes for avoiding detection from predators.

One minor annoyance is the organization of references. Instead of the format used here where references occur at the end of the book for ease of reading, I would much prefer a reference section at the end of each chapter.

The threats that rapid and wide-scale urbanization pose to global biodiversity is acknowledged in the book's epilogue. Increasingly these days we read how more and more native species are adversely affected by, and are in decline because of, habitat loss and fragmentation by urbanization. Here we finish on a happier note. Professor Kaplan paints a more optimistic future for the Tawny Frogmouth, attributing its apparent resilience to urbanization to its generalist habitat requirements and behavioural adaptations to urban living. My final comment is to commend this book to readers, as in my opinion it makes an important contribution to our knowledge of, and appreciation for, a unique Australian bird species.

Marian Weaving