

SURVEYS OF THE BARKING OWL AND MASKED OWL ON THE NORTH-WEST SLOPES OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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Field surveys of the Barking Owl *Ninox connivens* and Masked Owl *Tyto novaehollandiae* were conducted at 49 sites (110 survey points) on the North-west Slopes and adjoining western parts of the Northern Tablelands of New South Wales, to investigate their status in remnant vegetation on public and private land. The surveys were conducted over three years, from 1995 to 1998, using playback of the owls' calls. The Barking Owl was recorded at four survey points (4%) and the Masked Owl at one or possibly two points (1-2%), with one additional, incidental record of each species. Both owl species occurred in large habitat remnants on public land, and the Barking Owl also occurred in two large, healthy woodland remnants on private land. One breeding pair of Barking Owls was monitored over three years, during which they reared first three, then one, fledglings before one adult died during the next (unsuccessful) breeding season. The pair was resident, and defended the nest area throughout the year. The pair's breeding diet, determined from analysis of pellets and prey remains, consisted of 12 per cent mammals, 26 per cent birds and 62 per cent insects by number, and 41 per cent mammals, 57 per cent birds and 1 per cent insects by biomass, and their non-breeding diet consisted of 12 per cent mammals, 12 per cent birds and 76 per cent insects by number, and 58 per cent mammals, 39 per cent birds and 3 per cent insects by biomass. Vertebrate prey were native arboreal species caught in woodland.