

Junior Explorer Activity



Activity Sheet 6.

Wildlife Diary – “NIGHT OWLS”

opportunity » growth » lifestyle



There are plenty of cool natural places to find nocturnal wildlife in Frankston. Some of them are featured in our booklet “Natural Reserves within Frankston City” which you can find on Council’s website. Find a Bush Reserve near your place and check out the night life with your family.

HEADING OUT



Before you start out, here are some tips for keeping you and your park safe:

Know before you go!

Dress for the weather. Take a rain jacket or hat and wear sturdy covered shoes. Keep a torch handy with a red cover.



Let someone know where you are and stay with an adult.

Keep Our Parks Wild

Respect animal homes by leaving rocks, logs and vegetation as you find them and stay on the tracks. Remember nature’s treasures belong in the bush, not in your pockets.

Leave No Trace

The best souvenirs are your memories and photographs or drawings. Leave only footprints and always take your rubbish home.



NOCTURNAL ANIMALS ARE:

Active after Sunset: At sunset the bush transforms as the night life stirs, ready to take over from the day animals. Check Sunset times on this website:

<https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/australia/melbourne?month=6>

Sensitive to Light: To see in the dark, nocturnal animals have large, sensitive eyes. We use red lights to view them without blinding them. Try covering your torch light with red cellophane.

Used to the Quiet: At night things are quieter because most humans are inside or getting ready for bed. Nocturnal animals take careful notice of the sounds around them.



Shy: Hiding among the shadows is a good way for nocturnal animals to stay safe and avoid predators.

Quick: Fleeting glimpses are often all you see of nocturnal wildlife as they prefer to avoid unusual sounds or movements in the bush.

“Nocturnal” means active at night

“Diurnal” means active during the day

“Crepuscular” means active at dawn and dusk

A GLIDER'S DIARY PAGE



Tonight; PM

This afternoon I was woken by the sound of leaves rustling as my family started to stir in our nest.

Must remember to get some fresh gum leaves to line the nest with.

Opening my eyes, I could see the light outside our tree hollow was starting to fade and the Kookaburras were calling to each other, preparing to settle in for the night.

We always wait for the last Kookaburra call before leaving the hollow, they can be dangerous and would like to catch and eat us if they get the chance.

From the hollow, I have a great view of the bush around so I can make sure it's safe before climbing higher into the tree.

I climb as high as I can so I can glide further, taking aim for a tree trunk about 50 metres away.

Using my tail I can steer through the air and change body shape to slow down so I don't crash land, a bit like a parachute.

Now to find some food. I wake up feeling pretty hungry, so I usually go straight to the nearest wattle tree, make a cut in the trunk and lick up the sap as it flows out. It's great energy food to start my night.



Tonight; PM

Wow, that sap was good!! There's usually a few tasty insects in the top of the gums and I often find a few hiding under the bark.

I have to watch out for owls as I move around in the trees. Just as well I can glide from tree to tree without going down onto the ground. Too many cats and foxes around for my liking.

If we see any danger about we call out to warn each other. It's like a high pitched "yap yap" sound

My family has its own territory and Dad marks the trees and all the family members with his own smell to let other sugar gliders know they are entering our space.

At the moment there are seven of us sharing the nest in our hollow, but when my brothers get a bit older they will have to go find a new home to start a family of their own.

I'm glad winter is over. In the very cold weather we stay in the nest and slow our heart rate down to save energy. A bit like hibernating.

Speaking of which, the sun will be up soon. Time for bed.

Before I forget, must gather some fresh gum leaves for the nesting hollow.



NIGHT WALKS

The bush is a different world at night. It's quiet, it's dark and it has animals you generally don't see during the day.

Equipment: Strong torch; Red cellophane; Sturdy footwear; Binoculars (optional); Insect repellent; Mobile phone; Warm clothing.



Instructions:

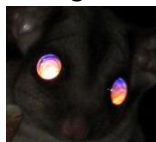
- Find out when the sun will set before you head out
- Download the free Field Guide to Victorian Fauna app onto your phone
<https://museums victoria.com.au/apps/field-guide-app-to-victorian-fauna/>
- Put several layers of red cellophane over the front of your torch held in place by a rubber band
- Check the track during the day to make sure you know the way and it is safe from hazards
- Invite an adult to join you
- As you wait for the sky to darken watch for micro bats flying overhead between the trees
- Walk slowly along your track and stop frequently to look and listen carefully, you often hear animals before you see them
- Use your torch to look for "eye shine" (torch light reflecting back at you from the animal's eyes)
- Keep as quiet as a mouse, you don't want to scare them away, and you can bet they saw you first.
- Keep an eye out for birds roosting in branches also



Tips:

Red light allows the wildlife to continue moving around without being blinded by your torch.

Keep to the tracks to remain safe and to keep animal homes intact.



Write down what you see on the diary pages.

Nocturnal Eyes: Night animals have large eyes to catch as much light as possible in the darkness. When they look at your torch, the light bounces off the back of the eyes and appears red as it reflects back to you. We call this "eye shine".



BATS AND MOTHS



There are a number of bat species in the Frankston area, mostly small micro bats, but also the larger Grey headed Flying fox, a fruit bat that hangs out upside down in trees during the day.

Have you heard the expression "blind as a bat"? Well, its not true. Bats can see, but many also rely on "echo location" to help them find their prey. They make high pitched sounds (beyond our hearing range) and "read" echoes from objects around them. They can detect flying insects such as mosquitos and moths that form their main diet.



Equipment: Some friends; a blindfold

Instructions:

- Set up a safe area in a room or in a circle of friends
- Select one person to be a bat and 2 or 3 to be moths
- Blindfold the bat
- The bat uses "echo-location" by calling out "bat bat"
- When the moths hear the bat they call out "moth moth" immediately
- The bat then follows the sounds to catch a moth by touching one
- The moths try to avoid the bat but can't leave the room or circle
- When all moths are caught, swap roles



Tips:

- Bats who call often catch more food
- Quiet bats go hungry
- If the bat can't catch the moths, make the circle smaller

The Bats of Frankston:

Micro bats: insect feeders (5cm to 9cm long)

Tardaria australis	White-striped Freetail Bat
Chalinolobus gouldii	Gould's Wattled Bat
Chalinolobus morio	Chocolate Wattled Bat
Nyctophylus geoffroyi	Lesser Long-eared Bat
Saccolaimus flaviventris	Yellow-bellied Sheath-tail Bat
Vesperdelus vulturnus	Little Forest Bat
Vespadelus darlingtoni	Large Forest Bat
Vespadelus regulus	Southern Forest Bat

Fruit Bat: (25cm long)

Pteropus poliocephalus	Grey-headed Flying Fox
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BIRDS OF THE NIGHT

Nocturnal birds can be mysterious because they are rarely seen. There are lots of stories about owls and witches or wizards.

The powerful owl is an occasional visitor to Frankston, usually young males searching for new territory. It is the largest owl in Australia, standing at about 66cm high. and it hunts mainly possums.

These large birds require big hollows in very old trees for their nests, and so are becoming rare because we are losing our old trees.

Owls hunt by stealth, with specially designed feathers to enable silent flight (watch the videos on this page).

<https://asknature.org/strategy/wing-feathers-enable-near-silent-flight/>

Frankston's Nocturnal Birds

Hawk Owls

Ninox novaeseelandiae	Southern Boobook Owl
Ninox connivens	Barking Owl
Ninox strenua	Powerful Owl

Barn Owls

Tyto alba	Barn Owl
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Nightjars

Podargus strigoides	Tawny Frogmouth
Aegotheles cristatus	Australian Owlet-nightjar

Others

Nycticorax caledonicus	Nankeen Night Heron
Botaurus poiciloptilus	Australasian Bittern
Numenius minutus	Little Curlew
Numenius madagascariensis	Eastern Curlew

Listen to different wildlife calls on this website:

<https://wildambience.com/wildlife-sounds/>

Q. When is an owl not an owl?

A. When it's a Frogmouth

The Tawny Frogmouth is probably our most common nocturnal bird, and it looks and behaves like an owl, but it is actually a nightjar.

Frogmouths are masters of disguise, pretending to be part of a branch when disturbed.

Their wide mouth surrounded by whisker-like feathers helps them catch insects in flight. They can sometimes be seen hanging out near street lights that attract insects at night.



MAMMALS OF THE NIGHT

Most of our native mammals are nocturnal, or at least "crepuscular", meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk, with rest periods throughout the night.

The tree dwelling (arboreal) mammals are seen most because it is harder to hide up in the branches. The small ground dwelling mammals usually remain hidden in the thick undergrowth and we rarely see them.

Frankston's Nocturnal Mammals

Phascogale cinereus	Koala
Trichosurus vulpecula	Brush-tail Possum
Pseudocheirus peregrinus	Ringtail Possum
Petaurus brevipes	Sugar Glider
Acrobates pygmaeus	Feathertail Glider
Macropus giganteus	Eastern Grey Kangaroo
Wallabia bicolor	Black-tailed Wallaby
Antechinus agilis	Agile Antechinus
Antechinus stuartii	Brown Antechinus
Isodon obesulus	Southern Brown Bandicoot
Hydromys chrysogaster	Water Rat
Rattus fuscipes	Bush Rat
Rattus lutreolus	Swamp Rat
Pseudomys fumeus	Smokey Mouse
Pseudomys novaehollandiae	New Holland Mouse
* Rattus rattus	Black Rat
* Rattus norvegicus	Brown Rat
* Mus musculus	House Mouse
* Vulpes vulpes	Fox
* Felis catus	Domestic Cat
* Oryctolagus cuniculus	European Rabbit

* denotes feral species

Of course, bats are native mammals also, but have not been included in this list.

The native Swamp Rat is quite common in our Bush reserves and spend a lot of time underground. You may notice a network of furrows and tunnels in damp soils under bushes. The tunnels provide a good refuge from predators like cats and foxes.



Wanted Dead or Alive: Mapping Frankston's Wildlife Friends. Frankston Council invites you to record your wildlife sightings onto our Wildlife Map. Or you can simply check the map to see what has been recorded in your area. <https://oursay.org/frankston-city-council-community-engagement/wildlife>

FANTASTIC FROGS



Australia has over 200 species of Frogs, Victoria 36 and Frankston has 11 species

Frogs can be very hard to find, being small and camouflaged. You are more likely to hear them calling during the evening, than to you are to see them. Each frog has a distinctive call (see table below) so if you listen carefully, you can tell what species you are listening to. To listen to Victorian frog calls go to: <https://frogs.org.au/frogs/of/Victoria/>

You can also record frogs on your mobile phone using the Melbourne Water Frog Census app <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-data-and-education/get-involved/be-citizen-scientist/frog-census>

While you are there, download the free “Beginners Guide to Frog Identification”.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Call	When
Crinia signifera	Common Froglet	Crick, crick, crik, crik, crick	All year
Limnodynastes dumerelii	Pobblebonk (Banjo frog)	Bonk...bonk...pobble-bonk	All year
Limnodynastes tasmaniensis	Spotted Marsh Frog	Click...Click...Click...Click	All year
Limnodynastes peronii	Striped Marsh Frog	Bok...bok...bok	All year
Geocrinia victoriana	Victorian Smooth Froglet	Grrraaawk pip pip pip pip	Sept - June
Littoria ewingi	Southern Brown Tree Frog	Cree-cree-cree-cree-cree	All year
Littoria raniformis	Growling Grass Frog	Grrruh-uh-uh-urk. Grrruh-uhuh-urk. Grrruuurk	Aug - April
Littoria verreauxii	Whistling Tree Frog	Weeep-weep-weep-weep-weep-weep-	All year
Paracrinia haswelli	Haswell's Froglet	“Gr-ank....Gr-ank...Gr-ank	All year
Pseudophryne semimarmorata	Southern Toadlet	Uhk...ahk...Uhk...ahk	Autumn
Neobatrachus sudelli	Common Spadefoot Toad	To-to-to-to-tik-tik-tik—tik—tik	All year



FURTHER READING:

- Australian Museum**
- Bat Factsheets <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/bats/>
 - Mammal Factsheets <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/mammals/>
 - Bird Factsheets <https://australian.museum/learn/animals/birds/>

Australian Museum - FrogID activity sheet

https://www.frogid.net.au/images/FrogID-activity_Sheet_A3v6_FINAL.pdf

Backyard Buddies animal factsheets <https://www.backyardbuddies.org.au/explore-backyard-buddies>

Frankston City website (downloadable booklets)

https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Environment_and_Waste/Environment/Biodiversity

- *Natural Reserves within Frankston City*
- *Indigenous Fauna Guide*
- *Indigenous Plant Guide*
- *Sustainable Gardening in Frankston City*

For more Junior Explorer Activity Sheets like this one go to:

https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Things_To_Do/School_Holiday_Activities_In_Frankston_City

Frogs of Australia <https://www.frogs.org.au/frogs/>



HAPPY NIGHTOWLING!!!

COLOUR ME IN: I'M A BRUSH-TAILED POSSUM



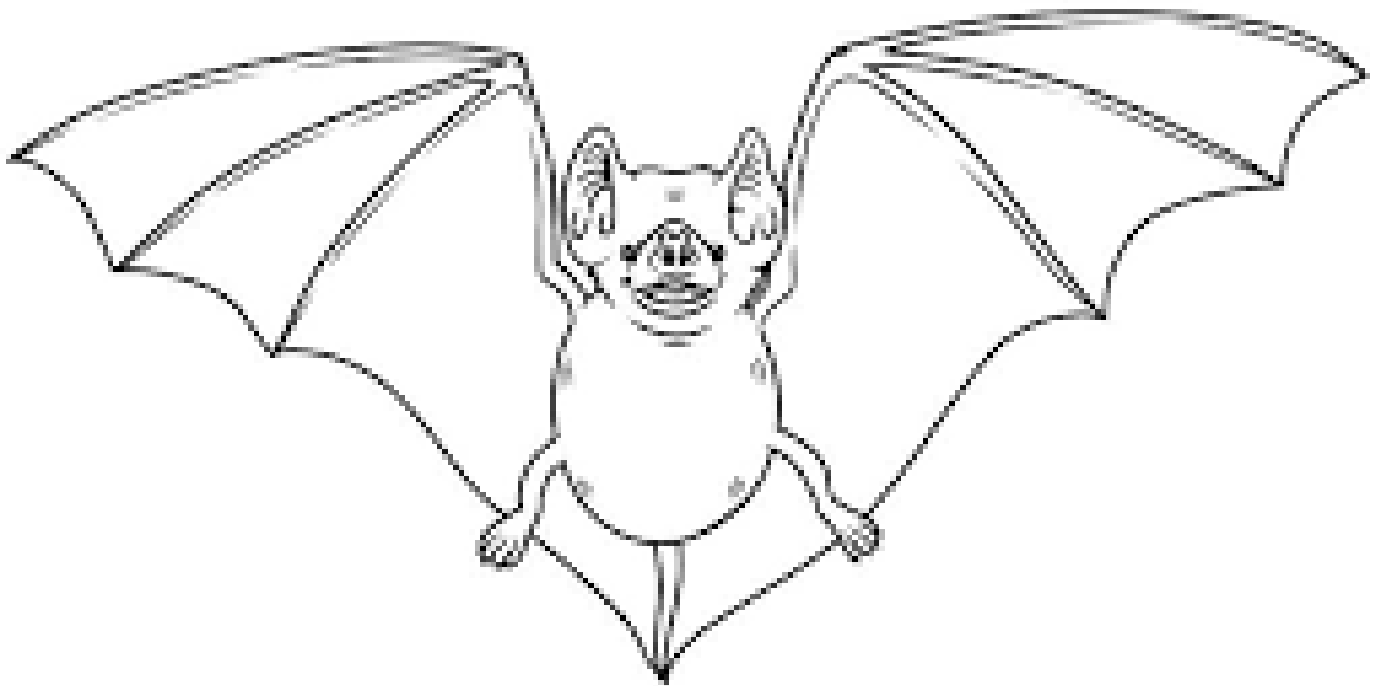
SUPER
COLORS

COLOUR ME IN: I'M A LEADBEATERS POSSUM

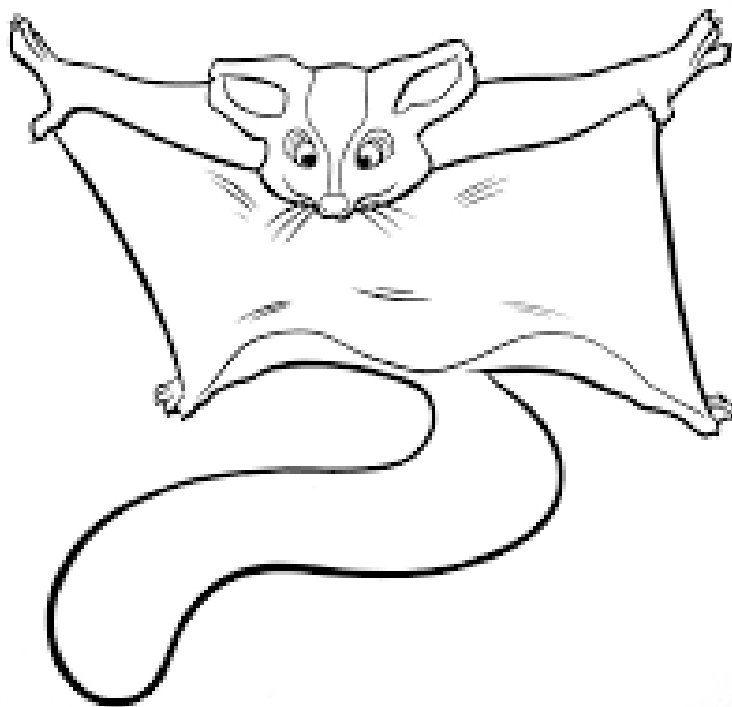


Leadbeater's Possum (or Fairy Possum) is Victoria's Faunal emblem and is an endangered species found in Victoria's Mountain Ash forests. It lives in old hollow trees and is under threat from forest logging.

COLOUR ME IN: I'M A MICRO BAT



COLOUR ME IN: I'M A SUGAR GLIDER



USE THIS PAGE TO RECORD THE WILDLIFE YOU SEE THIS WEEK

