

# **BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY ETHICS**

**(Adapted from BirdLife Australia photography guidelines)**

## **General**

**The welfare of birds, and their habitat, must always come before the capture of the photograph.**

It is important for bird photographers to act with the interests of birds in mind. This will require, at times, foregoing possible photographic opportunities in order to minimise impacts on birds.

Photographers should keep an appropriate distance from birds at all times, keep well back from sensitive areas, avoid harassing, flushing or pursuing birds in the pursuit of photographic opportunities, and should not alter the environment to clear the path for the photograph.

Bird photographers must at all times comply with applicable laws in the relevant State or Territory.

## **Nesting Bird Photography**

Nesting is a time of great risk and stress for birds. Photographers must take great care to avoid disturbing birds in, at or near nests. Photographers should also be aware that their presence risks drawing attention to the nest by predators, as well as other people who may be less concerned about their impact on the nesting birds.

## **Fledgling Bird Photography**

A fledgling is any young bird which has left the nest permanently. This includes birds which have already acquired structured feathers and are ready to attempt flight, but which remain dependent on their parents for a time. It also includes species which leave the nest very quickly after hatching, usually as downy chicks, whether or not in the company of their parents.

When photographing fledglings, great care must be taken to ensure that the fledglings are not exposed to the elements or predators, that parents are not driven off by the photographer's behaviour, and that the time to capture an image is brief.

## **Photography of birds that are nest building or carrying food**

If you've sighted a bird with nesting materials or food (which may be intended for young), Photos may be taken if you can ensure that the nest is not in the immediate vicinity and that every effort has been taken to ensure the presence of the photographer has no impact on the nesting behaviour of the birds in question.

## **Photographing birds at hollows**

A high proportion of Australian bird species use hollows for roosting, nesting or both. Some species such as parrots and cockatoos will inspect hollows outside the nesting period. If the photographer is aware that there is a chance that the birds have eggs or chicks, the photographer should vacate the area immediately without capturing a photograph. Photographs of parent birds feeding chicks in a hollow log, at the entrance of a hollow tree limb or artificial nest box, are have an unacceptably high risk of disturbing the nesting event.

## Other recommendations for photography of nesting birds

Photographers must **NOT**, in relation to nesting birds:

- handle the nest or the young birds (also, this is illegal in Victoria)
- damage, trample or otherwise modify vegetation that results in exposing a nest
- startle a bird as that may cause it to accidentally break or eject the eggs or cause the premature eruption of young from the nest
- be in the vicinity of nests in early mornings, dusk or inclement weather when any desertion by a parent may result in the eggs/young becoming cold
- use flash on a nesting bird, and
- show undue attention to an otherwise well-camouflaged nest (e.g. birds nesting on the beach or in dense foliage), which may attract predators or human interest.

## Call playback

The use of bird call and bird identification apps on mobile phones means that virtually every bird watcher and bird photographer now has a means of using call playback to attract birds. However, while the impact of call playback upon birds is contentious, it is agreed by all that the point of bird call playback is to disturb the normal behaviour of birds and call them out into the open.

As a precautionary approach, we are recommending that call playback is **NOT** used. That is, for the bioblitz, photographers should NOT:

- use bird call playback for attracting birds for observation or photography
- engage in photographing birds that have been attracted by a third-party using call playback, or
- encourage third parties to use call playback to attract birds on the photographer's behalf.

While playing pre-recorded calls can assist the observer in accurately identifying a bird (that is, to compare calls heard in the field with recorded calls), the pre-recorded call should only be played so that it is heard by the observer – and not the by the bird. We recommend that playing calls for this purpose is brief, undertaken at low volumes, and if possible takes place at a location where it will not impact on the bird in question. If convenient, earphones could be used in the field.

## Other

It is recommended that the use of flash photography is used sparingly, and stopped immediately if the bird shows signs of being startled or distressed.

Drones should not be used to capture photos of birds.

A substantial proportion of bird photography is undertaken in national parks and reserves. Commonwealth, State, and local government rules apply. Native birds are protected by law throughout Aust regardless of whether they occur in national parks, reserves, or local government administered areas or private land, unless otherwise stated by Commonwealth, State or Territory fauna/flora agencies. It is the responsibility of the photographer to ensure that he/she is aware of the laws and regulations which apply to the regions in which they undertake bird photography.