

## CALLING OF THE TAWNY FROGMOUTH

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In a previous article (*S.A. Orn.*, vol. 21, page 73) I outlined the method employed by a Frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*) when calling in trees adjacent to my home at Marion. For the past three years I have been able to follow this bird and have recently made further observations of interest.

The area in which the species has been heard is about 400 yards long, where a row of Red and Sugar gum trees grow. Several Aleppo pines are interplanted, and a few other ornamental trees are growing nearby. A boxthorn hedge is mostly growing under the trees and a good deal of rough grass grows along a creek parallel to them. The land nearby is occupied by various fruit trees or under vegetable production.

During the winter months the bird has been heard less frequently and always in the more weather-protected places. I have never been able to find more than one bird, and I doubt very much if there is a second one in the area. This is an important point for the matter now to be described.

On November 20, 1956, a bird was calling at 8.30 p.m., and continued when I walked

to the spot, and upon looking up could clearly observe the body moving as each note was produced.

Imagine my surprise next day when looking at this spot to find a kind of flat platform not unlike a nest upon which the bird had been sitting the previous night when calling. It was formed across a narrow fork of two green horizontal limbs at a distance of about 15 ft. from the ground. It will be remembered that this species makes a nest of dry sticks and twigs with leaves in a similar position. This platform (or nest?) was made of many pieces of coarse Rye grass stalks topped with a few gum leaves. It should be pointed out that plenty of small dry sticks, etc., were available on the ground under the trees. A few weeks later a similar platform in the same situation was located about 50 yards away from the first. I was away from home for some time, but on January 3, just after sunset I noted a bird sitting crosswise on this platform and a few hours later was calling from it. Ten days later, at 7.45 p.m. with half moon, the bird was calling from the first mentioned platform

and did not show any concern when I and the children walked underneath. A few days later, at 3 a.m., it was calling from the second one once again. On January 28 the bird was calling from a fresh location situated between the two platforms, but a good search made the following day failed to reveal any structure.

On several occasions I have heard the bird calling from the peach or lemon trees early in the evening and a few hours later from the gum trees. This would indicate that the bird

frequently spends the daylight hours in the rather denser foliage of the fruit trees rather than that of gum trees.

It is possible that these platforms have been in use as nests previously, as the rather thick growth of the trees would not make their discovery easy. The construction of these nest-like platforms may be an attempt to attract a mate. I am inclined to think it is, but if so it has been without success up to now. The sex of the bird under observation is unknown.