

## **BIRDWATCHER'S CODE OF ETHICS** **BirdLife Western Australia, 2016**

BirdLife WA seeks to ensure that all birding excursions and activities are conducted with minimal disturbance to the birds, their habitat, and other birdwatchers. Generally, much of this is common sense, but the following guidelines will assist in knowing what is acceptable. More detail is available in the BirdLife Australia references listed at the end of this article.

### **1. Call playback**

The use of call playback is not encouraged. Call playback should not be used as a routine method of attracting birds and should not be used at all during the nesting season when birds may be called off incubation duties, or even abandon the nest altogether. This is particularly important in areas of high visitation by birders where call playback by other birders may well have occurred in the recent past.

### **2. Photography**

While the use of high quality bird photography is one of the outstanding features of *Western Australian Bird Notes*, we do not wish to publish photographs where the welfare of the bird has been disregarded in the pursuit of the perfect shot. We ask that all photographic contributors take into consideration how their activities impact upon the birds they are trying to photograph. The aim should be to minimise any disturbance to the birds, including minimal use of call playback or flash photography.

Generally, it is fairly obvious when a bird is being pushed too hard or distressed by the activity of humans. However, much bird behaviour is quite nuanced, and it is only with experience that one can interpret what it means. The best thing you can do for the welfare of the birds you are photographing—and the more successful you will be in getting great shots—is to get to know their habits in their natural surrounds.

### **3. Nesting birds**

As a general rule, *Western Australian Bird Notes* will not publish photographs of nesting birds unless there is an important reason for doing so. Adult birds, eggs and dependant young are at their most vulnerable to disturbance and predation during the nesting process, so extra precaution must be taken.

*Western Australian Bird Notes* will publish nesting shots (or shots of chicks that haven't fledged) only when assurances are given that the birds were in no way jeopardised by the specific activity of the photographer in getting those images.

### **4. Vegetation damage**

No activity, whether it be an excursion or a photograph, is worth damaging the environment where a bird lives. Removing vegetation to better frame a shot, or trampling sensitive vegetation in order to get closer to a bird, is not acceptable.

### **5. Flushing birds**

While any interaction with birds runs the risk that they will occasionally startle and fly off, what is unacceptable is the deliberate flushing of birds in order to get a good shot of the underwing or other part of the bird not usually seen.

### **6. Permission to access property**

Please, always seek permission before entering property to view or to photograph birds. Disregarding this can jeopardise future access by yourself, BirdLife, or other legitimate researchers. On the upside, it is highly likely that the property owner will be able to provide information on the best places to find the birds.

### **References**

- Australian Birdlife Photographers' Code of Ethics.*  
Available at <http://www.birdlife.org.au/documents/MAGcodeofethics.pdf>
- BirdLife Australia (2012) Ethical birding guidelines.  
Available at <http://www.birdlife.org.au/documents/POL-Ethical-Birding-Guidelines.pdf>