

Birds of prey flocking to cities to escape drought, data shows

By [Shelley Lloyd](#)

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Eagles, hawks and other large birds of prey are flocking to cities and towns, with the drought forcing them out of the parched countryside, bird watchers say.

Data compiled by Birdlife Australia from citizen scientists has revealed large numbers of birds of prey are moving into urban areas.

Figures from past the four years of the Aussie Bird Count revealed 27 of Australia's 34 raptor species have been spotted in capital cities.

Birdlife Australia's Sean Dooley said nearly all raptor species are on the decline in rural area across most of Australia.



[Photo: Peregrine falcon eggs hatched recently on the rooftop of a Melbourne CBD building. \(Facebook: Ronan Reid\)](#)

"You wouldn't think of eagles, hawks and owls as being suburban birds but they certain do occur and they're being attracted into cities looking for food," he said.

"The cities can offer raptors rich pickings ... what we are seeing is more inland raptors, like barn owls and even black-shouldered kites coming towards coastal and city areas in search of water and food."

He said last year, a very rare forest owl decided to roost in the pulpit of a church in Toowoomba.

"Masked owls sometimes roost in caves and this owl had decided that the church pulpit looked very much like a cave and took up residence ... you just never know what will turn up," Mr Dooley said.

"Famously there are [the peregrine falcons that nest in the skyscrapers in Collins Street in Melbourne](#) and there are thousands of people around the world watching them on web cameras."

CITY LIFE BRINGS RISKS FOR BIRDS

Mr Dooley said warned there were dangers for the birds in cities.

"It's a fraught choice coming into the city for a raptor because there's potentially a lot of food but there's also a lot more danger for the birds from vehicle strike, collisions with buildings, overhead powerlines and poisoning from pesticides," he said.

"What people don't realise, if you put rat poison out, the rats eat the poison and go away to die but raptors will eat the rat and the toxins can kill the bird.

"This is having a disastrous effect on our native birds of prey."

And he does have a word of warning for city dwellers and their pets.

"There is a slight, very remote chance that your pets could be at risk, particularly if they're out at night," he said.

"The powerful owl, which is found in places like Sydney, Brisbane and even Melbourne, have been known to feed on cats, so people should keep their cats indoors at night because your moggie may go missing."

The fifth Aussie Backyard Bird Count will be held during National Bird Week from October 22-28.



[Photo: Brahminy kites are renowned for being scavengers which look for food at tips and roadsides. \(ABC News: Shelley Lloyd\)](#)