

# Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher,

Jim Butler

**FRIENDSHIPS WITH WILD BIRDS**



AT 4:30 am one recent winter morning, I was awakened to the call of a Powerful Owl. My consciousness woke me because I intimately know this particular bird. I know where his nest tree is, where he perches each evening to call the female from the nest hollow to feed her a flying fox he



has bought for her meal. What is the nature of my relationship to this wild apex predator of possums and flying foxes? In the accompanying Image a Kookaburra spontaneously landed on Ed's lens. What relationship is this wild bird initiating with Ed? We know birds readily respond to human desires for interaction and communication. What is the nature of these multi-species encounters? Are they important in the present biodiversity crisis which has consequences for us all?

Ecosystems are constantly shaped by the emergence of novel multispecies assemblages. Urban biodiversity is being transformed by introduced species and climate change. So, let's peer through the "wreckage" of urban living and search for hope. Let's not label new species "invasive" without deep analysis because the word is steeped in suppositions. Certain birds are finding emergent opportunities in these novel ecosystems. For example, urban landscapes within Brisbane are increasingly being used by Powerful Owls.

People desiring to spend more time with birds, or wanting to help birds persist in the urban landscape initiate feeding relationships. These actions of people who love wild birds lead to entanglement in reciprocal capture. Studies of interspecies friendships involving humans have shown that birds can actively negotiate expectations about sociality, proximity, politeness, and touch. Some encounters between birds and people can be wild and unruly, while other interactions involve quiet co-presence and mutual-patience.

While many bird species are in decline, the Powerful Owl and the Kookaburra have found emergent opportunities and are flourishing within the urban environment. Interspecies friendships formed between humans and birds are a sign of hope.

Make friends with our birds.

~ Jim

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