



Chick Workshop

WIRES Avian Management Team, 25 July 2021



Introduction

Welcome
Avian Team and Trainers
Agenda
Meeting guidelines
Definitions



Welcome

Bird Coordinators

Bird carers

Special thanks to Amanda Woods and
Kim Strong

Thanks to WIRES Training for facilitating



Avian Management Team

Melanie Barsony
Heather Milroy
Janet Court
Kerrie Jones
Deborah Martin



Avian Trainers 2021



Toni Burnham
June Tyrrell



Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Observation and research**
- **Stages of development**
- **Basic care principles**
- **Ducklings (Amanda Woods)**
- **Next steps**

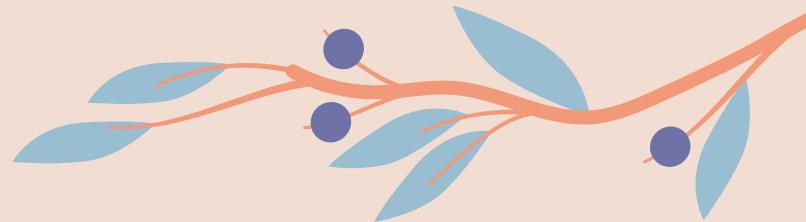


Meeting guidelines

Big group (100 people), so please:

- Mute yourself when not speaking
- Put questions and comments into Chat (we will follow up anything we can't answer during the workshop)
- Need to manage time, so we may cut discussion short
- Rename yourself to add your Branch to your name

Definitions



Precocial - hatch with eyes open, covered in down, mobile, self-feeding within a few days of hatching; still dependent on parents for warmth, protection from predators and learning survival skills

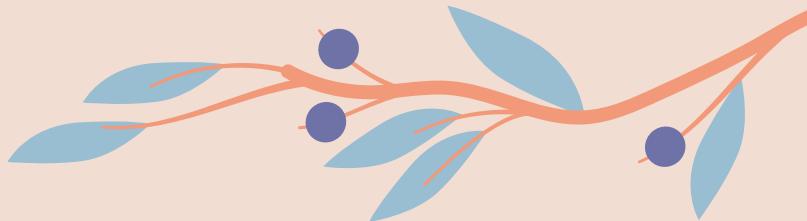
Altricial - hatch naked and helpless and fully dependent on parents for warmth, food and protection

[Precocial to Altricial is a range, not either/or]

FUN FACT: precocial chicks have longer incubation periods than altricial chicks



Definitions



Hatchling - altricial chick, 0 - 7 days, eyes closed

Nestling - altricial chick, still in nest/hollow, eyes open, feathers emerging

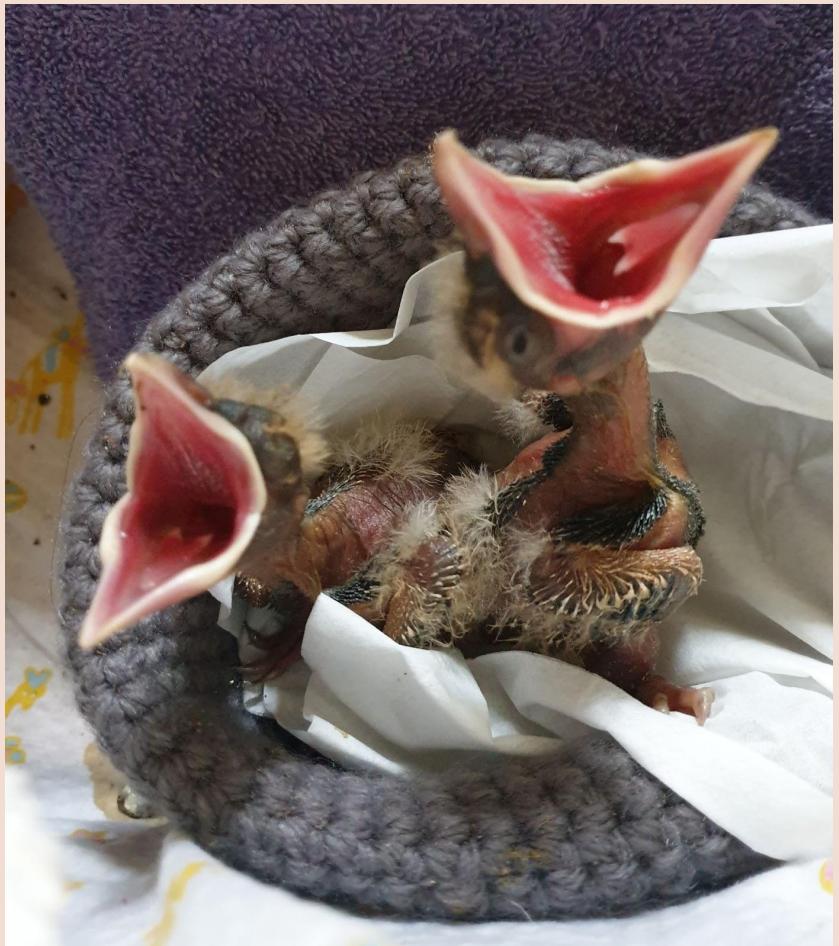
Branchling - altricial chick, left nest/hollow, perching but not flying

Fledgling - fully developed primary flight feathers, close to or able to fly



Altricial, hatchling







Observation & research

Observation
Research
Chick ID
Planning & Record keeping

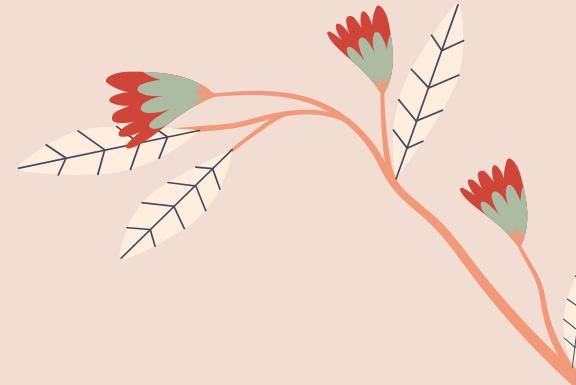


Observation

What does a normal, healthy chick look like?
How does it behave?

Observation starts at rescue, continues through initial assessment and throughout rehabilitation.

Sometimes issues don't emerge until later, e.g. metabolic bone disorder may be more apparent in branchling that is unable to perch than in nestling

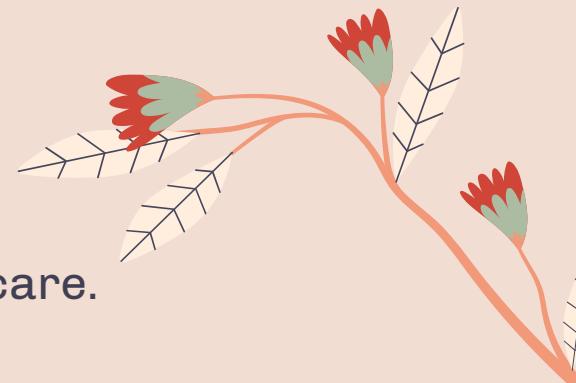


Research

This workshop explores general principles of chick care.

Each species is different, so you need to research each species you care for:

- species
- age
- distribution
- habitat
- diet and foraging
- breeding and nesting
- movement (sedentary or nomadic or migratory)
- development (precocial or altricial)
- social (territorial or flock or solitary)



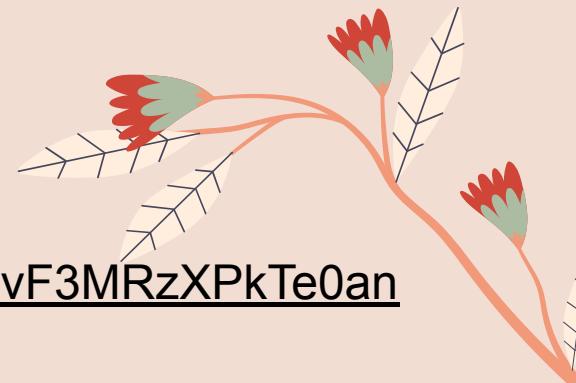
Resources for research

- Field guides (Michael Morcombe for nests and eggs)
- Readers Digest Complete Book of Australian Birds
- HANZAB (*Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*)
- Birds of the World, Cornell Bird Lab (subscription, online)
- Birdlife Australia
- Local birding groups
- Avian Management Team
- Avian Manual



Kim's research

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jCFJKBkttzshvF3MRzXPkTe0anhA3sfFG3-7xcqN3c/edit?usp=sharing>



Chick identification

Norma Henderson's book *Chicks, Nestlings and Fledglings of Australian Birds - Identification*

Send a photo to your Bird Coordinator

Ask for help on the Australian Bird Identification (ABID) Facebook group



Native or feral?



Melanie Barsony



Kim McCully



Spotted Dove

Whitish wrist feathers

Note: Bar-shouldered Doves (Northern NSW) also have white tail feathers but don't have the white wrist feathers and have different colouring



Common Myna
Long legs
Bright yellow gape
Exaggerated
flanges

Planning and record keeping

Have a husbandry plan that takes your chick through to release - buddying, housing, diet, learning survival skills, release

Code of Practice: “*preparations for release will start at the time of rescue and continue throughout the rehabilitation process*”

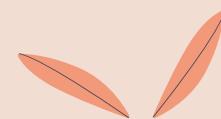
Who has the facilities to care for the chick as a nestling, branchling, ~~fledgling~~, pre-release? (ideally, no more than two different carers)

Keep a record of progress - CarerHQ plus progress chart

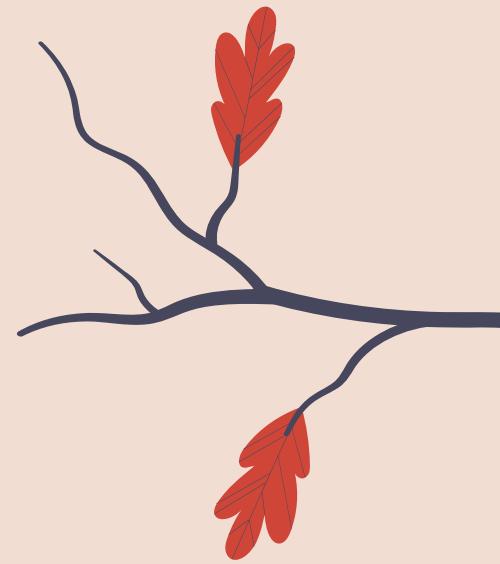


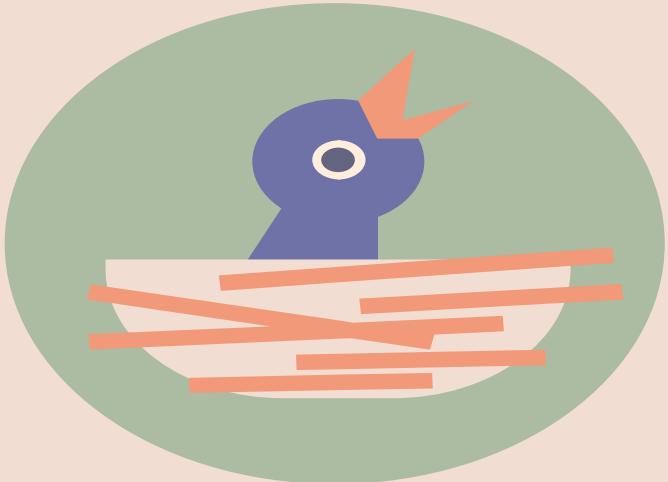
Progress Chart

Date	Age (days)	Weight (g)	Medication given	Comments



Questions?





Stages of development

Eggs
Nestlings
Branchlings
Fledglings
Kim's research

Eggs

Rescued eggs - candle the egg: if it is about to hatch, keep it; if not, discard

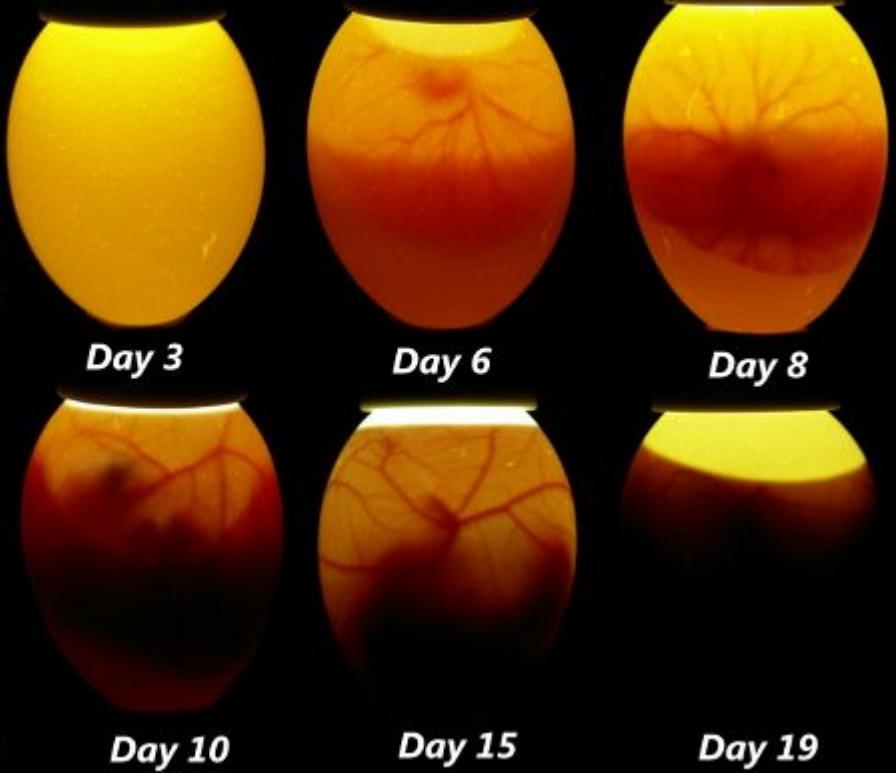
Eggs are hard work: temperature, humidity, turning, risk of imprinting and humanisation (chicks hear parents while they are still in egg)

Masked Lapwings - eggs can be relocated by moving, no more than 30 cm per day; or secure the area to prevent human access until the chicks have hatched

See Avian Manual chapter 26 on Egg rescue and incubation

*Egg
Candling
Embryo
Development
Summary*

*light provided by
The IncuBright™
Egg Candler*



*Copyright
Incubator Warehouse 2014*

Nestlings

Anticipate each stage of chick's development and provide a suitable environment so it can learn new skills.

Nestlings:

- Provide substitute nest of suitable size and shape
- Small twigs in the nest for them to grab, develop motor skills
- Buddies
- Perch in front of nest for when it is ready to leave nest
- Providing natural food for nestlings to observe and play with
 - enrichment



Nest size and shape

Field Guide to Australian Birds, Michael Morecombe - has nests and eggs

Nests:

- Right nest size allows chick to defecate over edge
- Wrong nest size can cause splay foot
- Cover nest with light cloth to simulate parent brooding chicks

Nest hollows:

- chicks should be in the dark with a small gap for light
- right size and depth for species
- chicks don't emerge until fledged and ready to fly



Precocial chick enclosure - Quail



Branchlings

Anticipate each stage of chick's development and provide a suitable environment so it can learn new skills.

Branchlings:

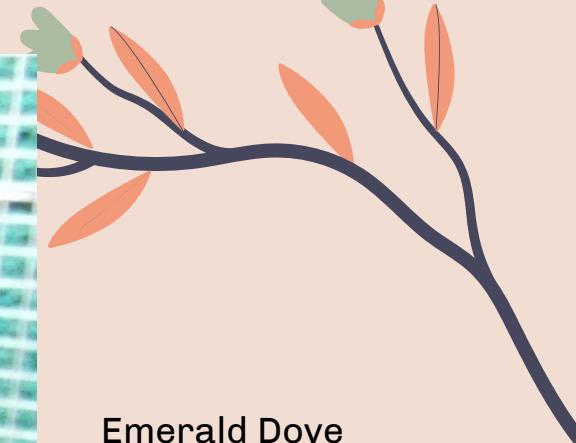
- nest in larger cage with branches
- exposure to sunlight, rain, outside noises
- can put chick out in aviary during the day and bring in at night

Depends on the species - nest hollow birds emerge when they are ready to fly





Emerald Dove





Owlet Nightjar





Fledglings

- Aviary to build up flight muscles, stamina, confidence
- Variety of natural perches with different diameters, including swinging perches (natural rough bark for grip)
- Enough open space to fly length of aviary
- Enrichment - fresh foliage, leaf litter, variety of twigs
- Natural foods - fresh flowers, moving insects
- Research the species
- Put food containers where they would naturally forage



Kerrie's aviary with turf

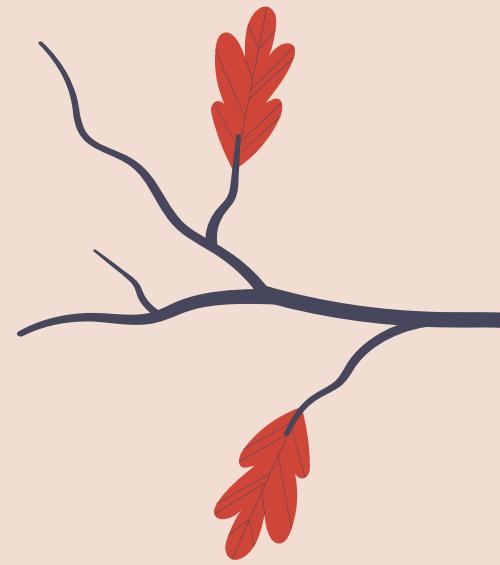


Tawny with foliage

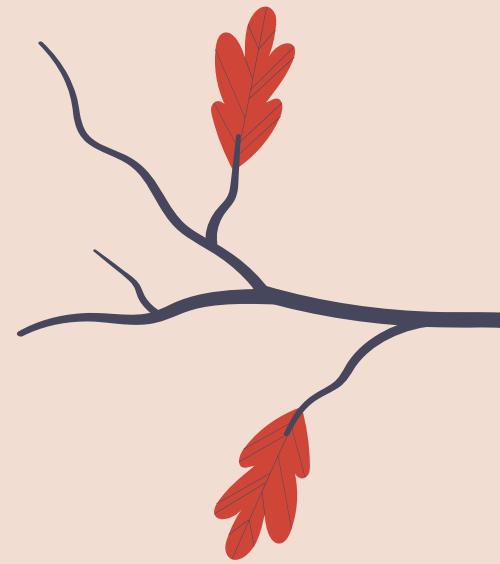




A variety of branches and foliage will enable fledgling chicks to learn how to navigate in a more natural environment



Questions?



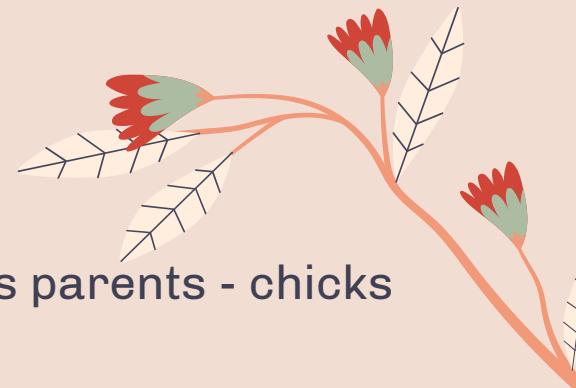


Reuniting

Principles
Success stories

Reuniting

- Always better for the chick to be raised by its parents - chicks raised by parents have better survival skills
- Trust the parents to look after their chicks - even if the nest site seems unsuitable to you, they chose it for a reason
- Worth trying more than once to reunite - don't give up after one go
- You can keep in care for a short period and then try again
- Timeframes for parents accepting chicks back vary with species - mostly anecdotal



Reuniting

- Put Tawny fledglings up in the tree they were found under; check the next morning whether the parents are present
- Some species will foster - Kookaburras
- When not to reunite:
 - Ibis in palm trees? (need to put back in the right nest)
 - Parents have rejected or attacked
 - Kicked out of nest by cuckoo chicks

See Reuniting section of Avian Manual



Reuniting stories

Tawny Frogmouth

Janet

Noisy Miner

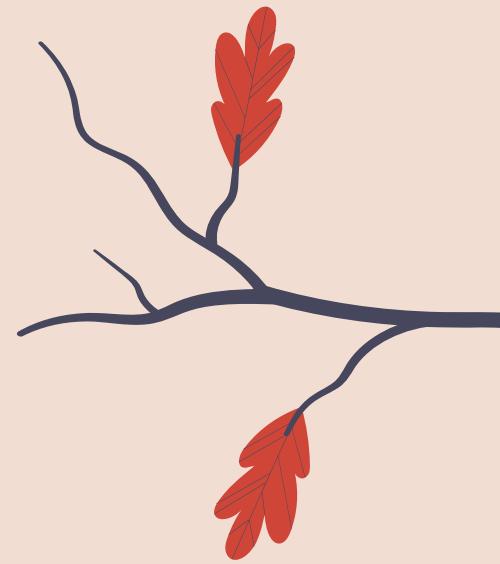
Toni

Galah

Heather



Questions?





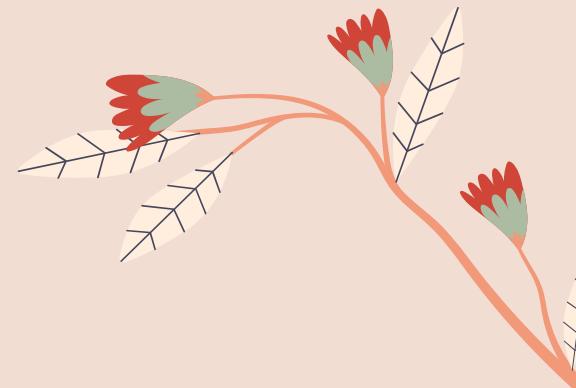
Basic care

Warmth and hydration
Faeces
Hygiene
Feeding
Humanisation



Warmth and hydration

- Warmth before hydration
- Hydration before food
- Gape feeding - Hydration with each feed until they can drink on their own (5% of body weight for maintenance)
- Crop feeding - extra fluids not required once rehydrated (but monitor faeces and seek advice if abnormal)



Faeces

Figbird chick



Faeces are a useful indicator of hydration and general health

Need to know what normal and healthy looks like



Tawny nestling



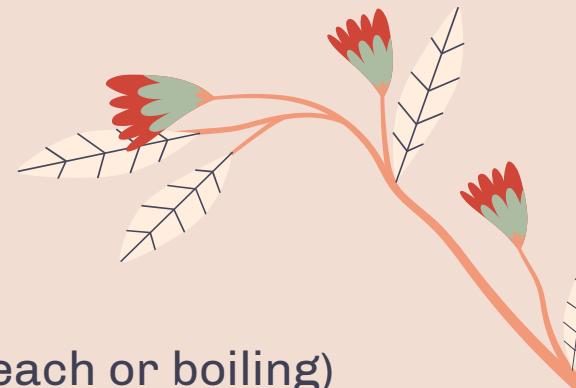
Hygiene

- Quarantine all chicks when they come into care and observe for signs of disease
- Wash hands before and after handling birds
- Clean chick after each feed
- Prepare small quantities of food, or freeze and thaw as needed



Hygiene

- Separate containers for animals and humans
- Sterilise containers and feeding implements (bleach or boiling)
- Right nest size allows chick to defecate over edge
- Replace nest materials and perches between chicks (or disinfect and rinse)
- Replace soiled flooring



Crop feeding

- Important to get the amount and frequency right as the chick can't tell you when it's had enough
- Wombaroo booklet for diets and quantities, based on age of chick
- Check the crop is empty before feeding
- Check the crop is full but not hard after feeding - don't overfill
- Keep checking weights - weight should be increasing every day until fledged
- Chick may lose weight during weaning
- Research the species - chicks are dependent on their parents for varying lengths of time, e.g. Crested Pigeons

Gape feeding

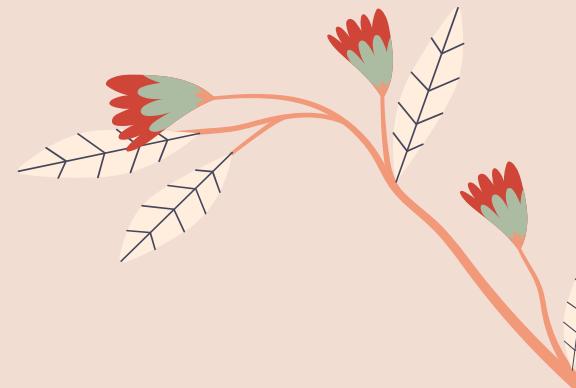
- Feed until they stop gaping (but some chicks don't stop begging - Figbirds)
- Keep checking weights - weight should be increasing every day
- Wombaroo booklet - some food quantities too low (Ibis, Cattle Egrets)



Humanisation

Humanisation is different from imprinting.

A humanised bird has imprinted on its own species (knows it's a bird), but feels safe around humans and may behave inappropriately.



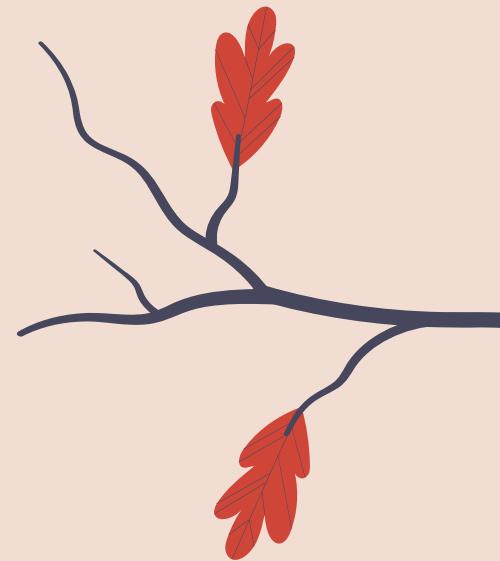
Keep them wild

- Buddy chicks with their own species
- Minimise contact (hearing, seeing) with domestic pets
- Minimise contact with other humans
- Don't talk to chicks while feeding
- House them outdoors as soon as possible
- Minimise handling

● Vary how food is presented – different places, different times, so they have to search for it to develop foraging skills

- Hand the chick over to a different carer if there's a problem

Questions?

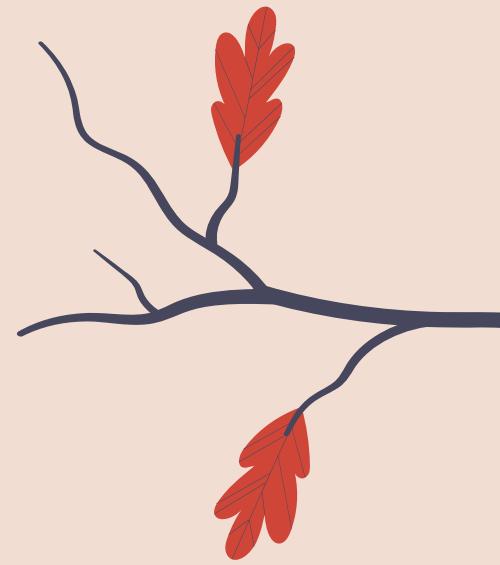




Ducklings

Amanda Woods, North Shore
Branch

Questions?





Next steps

Interest groups
Future workshops

Interest groups?

Connecting bird carers with a shared interest, e.g.

- Tawny Frogmouths
- Magpies and Currawongs and Butcherbirds
- Insectivores - monarchs including Magpie Larks, fly catchers
- Corvids - Ravens and Crows
- Magpie Larks
- Kookaburras
- Honeyeaters
- Insectivores
- Doves and Pigeons
- Waterbirds

Future workshops

What topics?

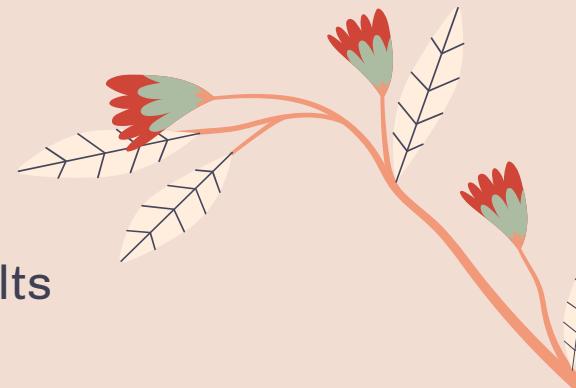
Please suggest using Chat.

- Release
- New Code of Practice for Birds (out soon!)



Zoom poll

Please answer questions and we will share the results





Thanks!

**Do you have any last
questions?**

avianmt@wires.org.au

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