

# Appendix B: Rehabilitating injured and orphaned owls

## Introduction

Too few people in Australia are trained to care for injured and orphaned owls. Stress, inadequate food, improper housing and premature release kill many rescued owls. Kept in sub-standard housing, they are disturbed by humans or domestic pets, thrash back and forth against wire walls, break feathers and damage ceres. A repeatedly broken feather stops growing; a damaged cere stops the beak from growing. Dogs, inquisitive children and looming faces all strike terror into owls, and inadequate food stops them from growing or healing. We want these owls back in the wild, but they often continue their run of bad luck even after they are released. They are returned to carers, or die because of broken feathers, beaks, weak muscles or bones and lack of hunting experience.

Injured and orphaned owls will survive captivity and release if the carer understands that owls are adapted to an environment where they have a balanced diet, a wide choice of perches, freedom from disturbance, and access to sun, water and breeze. These are discussed below. There is also useful information in books such as *Falconry: Care, Captive Breeding and Conservation* by Jemima Parry-Jones (1988) and *Caring for Birds of Prey* by J. Olsen (1990).

## Picking up injured or captive owls

Minimising stress to the owl is your first priority. Wild birds are often killed by shock rather than injuries they receive. If an adult owl allows you to approach it, it may be in shock or badly injured. Don't try to examine the bird by yourself, this may further stress it. Concentrate on how to secure the owl.