

## Why You Should Not Feed Wild Birds or Animals

Our native fauna, especially the birds and mammals, are particularly appealing to many people. Many animals can become habituated to the presence of people and soon learn to take advantage of food refuse and offerings. Though this is usually done with good intent most people are unaware that these actions can upset the balance of nature.



### **Unnatural increases in animal numbers**

Providing a regular artificial food source in this way can lead to greater than normal numbers of animals living in the area. This puts extra pressure on the natural food resources in the long term and can lead to the loss of natural features. Animals may also become increasingly dependent on the artificial food source.

### **Increased aggression**

Increasing the numbers of animals in the one area can lead to unnaturally high incidents of aggression between individuals of the same or different species. Sometimes one, or a few, species such can become so numerous that they drive other species away by aggressive behaviour or by preying on them or their young. The stress and injuries associated with aggression may lead to disease and failure to breed. Some aggression may even become directed at people.

### **Attracting predators**

Predators such as hawks and owls may be attracted by the increase in animals. Predator numbers may then become unnaturally high and this may lead to increased predation.

### **Nutritional imbalance**

The food that is offered is generally for human consumption and may be highly processed. Although animals may find the food to their liking it may not provide the balanced nutrition that they require. This may become detrimental to their health.

### **Increased risk of disease**

An unnatural concentration of animals can also provide the focal point for outbreaks of highly transmissible diseases that can kill large numbers of animals. Some diseases such as *Salmonella*, *Toxoplasmosis*, *Psitticosis* and *E. coli* infections are transmissible to humans through exposure to faeces and urine as well as direct contact with the animals themselves.

### **Poor water quality & algal bloom**

Artificially high numbers of waterbirds, as well as bread left to decompose can lead to high levels of nutrients in water bodies. High nutrients are the primary cause of toxic blue-green algae blooms, which can be harmful to humans and animals if ingested, cause skin irritation on contact and result in fish kills in the river.

**For further information contact the City's Parks and Environment Department on 9477 7257.**