



Carnaby's black-cockatoo

Calyptorhynchus latirostris



bands on their tails. They have strong short bills designed to cope with the hard nuts and seeds that form their diet. There is little difference between the male and female birds apart from bill and eye ring colour. Males have red eye rings and black bills whereas females have grey eye rings and a lighter grey or bone-coloured bills.

Where do they live?

Carnaby's black-cockatoos are found in southwest Australia from the Murchison River across to Esperance and inland to Coorow and Lake Cronin. They are commonly seen in some areas such as the coastal plain to the north of Perth and some areas of the northern Wheatbelt. Carnaby's black-cockatoos are locally extinct in others, such as in many parts of the central Wheatbelt.

In the Wheatbelt during the nesting season Carnaby's black-cockatoos occur in uncleared or remnant eucalypt woodlands, predominately salmon gum or white gum (wandoo). They feed in heathland called Kwongan heath, on different types of banksia, grevillea, hakea and dryandra species. They also feed on seeds of eucalyptus species, and introduced species such as wild radish and pines.

During the non-nesting season Carnaby's black-cockatoos predominantly occur in banksia woodlands, coastal and near-coastal scrub and forests and introduced pine trees of the coastal regions.

CONSERVATION STATUS

Australian Government:

ENDANGERED

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Western Australia:

ENDANGERED

Wildlife Conservation Act 1950

Introduction

Carnaby's black-cockatoos are found only in Western Australia and are one of only two species of white-tailed black-cockatoo found anywhere in the world. The other is Baudin's black-cockatoo. Both of these species are unique to southwest Australia.

Did you know?

Carnaby's black-cockatoo can live for 40 to 50 years in the wild and display strong bonds with their partners throughout their adult life.

What do they look like?

Carnaby's black-cockatoos are large, raucous black cockatoos with white patches on their cheeks and white

Image credit: www.hermonslade.org.au



1930*

Tasmanian tiger
EXTINCT



1950*

Pig footed bandicoot
EXTINCT



1970*

Carnaby's black cockatoo
ENDANGERED



1990*

Gilbert's potoroo
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



2000*

Flatback turtle
VULNERABLE



2008*

What's going to be
NEXT...?

Carnaby's black-cockatoo life history and ecology

Carnaby's black-cockatoos are a very mobile species with movements throughout the year determined by nesting and feeding needs. From early summer through autumn to winter the cockatoos live in higher rainfall coastal or near coastal areas in large flocks. July is the beginning of the move back out to the Wheatbelt in search of suitable nesting hollows. The nesting season lasts from late winter through spring and into early summer when the cycle begins again. The female cockatoo lays two eggs every year but usually only one chick is raised. During the incubation period and while the chick is very young the female only leaves the hollow for short periods during which time she is fed by the male. He must find enough food during this period to sustain them all. When the chick is older the female joins in the search for food.

Up to 12km is a reasonable distance for cockatoos to fly from the hollow in search of food and they are assisted in their navigation between sites by corridors or patches of vegetation. If feeding sites and nesting trees are too far apart the male cockatoo is unable to adequately feed the female and growing chick. In this case the breeding attempt may fail or the chick will be underweight when it leaves the nest and less likely to survive. Carnaby's black-cockatoo has been known to go locally extinct in areas where food sources are too far away from the nesting hollows.

Threats to Carnaby's black-cockatoo

There are a number of threats that have contributed to the decline in population numbers including habitat loss and competitive species. It is difficult to know how many are left, but it is known that their populations have declined by over 50 per cent in the past 45 years, and that they no longer breed in up to a third of their former breeding sites in the Wheatbelt.

Habitat loss

Extensive clearing of native bush in the Wheatbelt has led to a severe reduction in available nesting and feeding trees. In some cases, nesting and feeding areas are too far apart for the birds to successfully raise chicks. The original food sources for Carnaby's black-cockatoos on the Swan Coastal Plain have been largely replaced by urban development and introduced pine plantations that form a new food source for cockatoos. However these plantations will be removed in the future, posing additional conservation problems.

Habitat degradation

Remaining nesting and feeding areas are becoming degraded due to grazing, water logging, salinity, weed invasion, storm damage, firewood collection and changes in fire management. There is a lack of new eucalypt trees growing to replace dead trees in remaining nesting sites, and some existing nesting hollows are deteriorating.

Competitive species

Carnaby's black-cockatoos face competition for hollows from other hollow-nesting species, particularly the galah, western long-billed and little corellas. In addition, feral bees also occupy nesting hollows, to the exclusion of cockatoos.

Case Study

In 2003, Cockys for Landcare in the Western Australian Wheatbelt embarked on a project to protect critical habitat for their local flagship species, the Carnaby's black-cockatoo. The cockatoos are well known in the area and use the eucalypt woodlands for breeding during the nesting season. The community group wanted to protect and conserve remaining native habitat for the birds and were successful in obtaining a TSN community grant to do so. The project protected important feeding habitat in the area by fencing it to exclude stock, and improved degraded habitat through revegetation.

With help of local landowners, the community and school children, 40,000 seedlings were planted with an emphasis on cockatoo food species such as banksia, grevillea and hakea. The majority of plants established well, with many of the hakea seedlings flowering the following year providing a vital food source for the endangered cockatoos.

What you can do

- Protect and conserve known nesting and feeding habitat by fencing or excluding stock, protecting woodlands against firewood collection, leaving old or dead trees standing and ensuring appropriate fire management.
- Protect habitat by controlling weeds and preventing removal of vegetation and spread of diseases such as Phytophthora dieback.
- Revegetate around known feeding and nesting habitat with appropriate local species.
- Become a Birds Australia volunteer.
- Help control competitive species such as galahs and feral honeybees that compete with the cockatoos for the same nesting hollows by reporting sightings to the Department of Environment and Conservation.
- Help the Carnaby's black-cockatoo by reporting any activities that you see that are likely to harm them or their habitat to the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts – Compliance and Enforcement Branch. Visit www.environment.gov.au/epbc/compliance/index.html or freecall 1800 110 395 for more information.

Contacts

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References

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