

Australian Threatened Species

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo

Calyptorhynchus latirostris

Conservation Status

Commonwealth: Endangered (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

WA: 'Specially protected fauna' (*Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*)

What do they look like?

This large black cockatoo (also known as the Short-billed Black-Cockatoo) has white tail panels, white cheek patches and a short bill. It lives only in southwest Australia where large-scale clearing for farming has fragmented much of its habitat, particularly mature eucalypts such as salmon gum and wandoo that have suitable hollows for nesting.

Where do they live?

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo is endemic to southwest Western Australia, extending from the Murchison River to Esperance, and inland to Coroow, Kellerberrin and Lake Cronion.

Most breeding occurs in areas with an average annual rainfall of 300-750mm, typically in the Wheatbelt and Great Southern regions. For nesting, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos require eucalypt woodland, comprising principally of salmon gum or wandoo. Their food is found in shrubland, or kwongan heath.

The cockatoos require a close association between breeding and feeding sites during the breeding season. If these two very different habitats are not within a reasonable distance of each other, breeding attempts fail. After breeding, the cockatoos move to higher rainfall areas along the coast in search of food sources such as banksia and hakea heathlands.

What do they eat?

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos feed on the seeds of a variety of native and introduced plant species and on insect larvae. Plants include kwongan heath plants such as banksias, dryandra, hakea, grevillea and also marri seeds. They have also adapted to feeding on exotic species such as pines and cape lilac and some weeds such as wild radish and wild geranium.



How many are there?

It is difficult to know how many Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos are left, but it is known that their populations have declined by over 50% in the past 45 years, and that they no longer breed in up to a third of their former breeding sites in the Wheatbelt.

They are gregarious birds and live in pairs or small flocks during the breeding season. After fledging, the young move with their parents from breeding areas to feeding areas where other family groups join the flock.

The cockatoos live for 40-50 years in the wild. A large proportion of the remaining population is now past breeding age. When these older birds die, there will be very few younger birds to take their place.

What is threatening them?

There are a number of threats facing Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo:

- Habitat fragmentation, particularly in the northern and eastern areas of the Wheatbelt. Most habitat suitable for breeding and feeding in the Wheatbelt has been cleared entirely or fragmented. In addition, clearing of heathland surrounding breeding sites has reduced the survival rate of fledglings by decreasing the available food sources for the young
- Removal of nest hollows for use as firewood or just to make properties look 'tidy'. Much woodland lacks hollows, and it takes over 100 years for woodland seedlings to mature and form hollows suitable for nesting
- Competition for hollows from other species
- Loss of native food sources caused by urban development on the Swan coastal plain
- Poaching: illegal poaching is still a threat – trees are often cut down or the hollow severely damaged when young and eggs are taken, removing breeding sites
- Invasive species: other bird species such as the Galah and the Western Long-billed Corella are extending their range in the Wheatbelt and are competing with and excluding Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos from traditional nest hollows.

Conservation Action

Birds Australia (WA) is leading a recovery program that assists rural communities in the management of breeding populations of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo and implementing suitable recovery actions. These recovery actions include protection of existing breeding and feeding sites, revegetation, the development of corridors between breeding and feeding sites, repair of old and damaged hollows and control of competitor species, such as feral bees.

Much effort by local community groups and school children has been put into planting feeding and nesting trees. A community group named 'Men of the Trees' received a

Threatened Species Network Community Grant to help re-establish habitat for the cockatoo in the Northern Wheatbelt Region of WA. This project will also trial the effectiveness of nest boxes when hollows are not available for nesting.

Did you know...

- Male Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos feed the female at her nest during the incubation period and fly over 12km to ensure she gets the food she needs during nesting
- The cockatoos rarely use the same hollow to nest in if the breeding attempt the previous season was unsuccessful
- The birds display strong bonds with their partners throughout their adult life
- If two eggs are produced, the second egg is laid two to eight days after the first egg
- The cockatoos can live for 40 to 50 years in the wild.

How you can help

- Protect existing hollows
- Protect remnant vegetation and banksia heathlands that support cockatoos
- Revegetate habitats

For more information on how you can help the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, see Birds Australia's website at <http://birdswa.iinet.net.au/projects/carnaby/carnaby.htm>

Contacts and References

Birds Australia
To find out more about work Birds Australia is doing contact:
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project
Officer, Birds Australia
Ph: (08) 9287 2448
Visit: www.birdswa.iinet.net.au

Raquel Carter, WA Coordinator,
Threatened Species Network
Ph: (08) 9387 6444
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Visit: www.wwf.org.au

To obtain a copy of the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Plan, contact: Department of Conservation & Land Management (Western Australia)
Ph: (08) 9405 5100
Visit: www.calm.wa.gov.au

You can also find out more information about Australia's threatened species by calling the Department of the Environment and Heritage Community Information Unit on freecall 1800 803 772 or by visiting www.deh.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened.

Photo

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo
B & B Wells



The Threatened Species Network is a community-based program of the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust and WWF Australia.