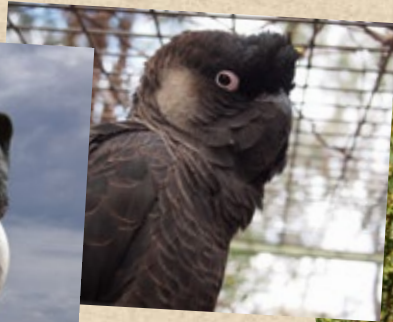




CARNABY'S COCKATOO

CALYPTORHYNCHUS (ZANDA) LATIROSTRIS



Synonyms

Carnaby's Black Cockatoo, Short-billed Black Cockatoo, Slender-billed Black-Cockatoo.

Taxonomic Classification

Animalia: Chordata: Vertebrata:
Aves (birds): Psittaciformes (parrots):
Cacatuidae (cockatoos).

Description

Carnaby's Cockatoos are large parrots (size: 57-60cm). They have black plumage, a small black erectable crest, greyish-white round ear-coverts, and white panels in the tail with a distinct white band towards the tip. Many feathers have pale fringes, creating a "scaly" appearance.

The male has a black/grey beak and orange/pink skin around his eyes, brightening when he is excited; the female has a white/grey eye-ring and lighter whitish/grey beak, and her ear coverts are more yellow/white.

Carnaby's Cockatoo is one of three black cockatoo species in southwest WA, the others being the Red-tailed Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus aterrimus*) and Baudin's Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*).

Carnaby's Cockatoo can be readily distinguished from the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, which has a red tail-band, black beak, and lacks ear-coverts. Carnaby's Cockatoo is very similar to Baudin's Cockatoo, but differs in having a shorter, broader beak with a less elongated point in the upper mandible; prolongs the second syllable of the contact call; and has a more widespread distribution, feeding in drier woodlands, especially those dominated by Wandoo or Salmon Gum (whereas Baudin's Cockatoo is confined to higher-rainfall areas of forests dominated by Marri, Jarrah and Karri).

Distribution

Endemic to southwest WA, occupying the extreme SW of WA.

Habitat

Carnaby's Cockatoo feed on Banksias and Hakeas in dryer woodland and scrub zones off the coastal belt in WA, as well as frequenting pine plantations.

Diet

Feeds mainly on seeds of both native and introduced plant species (especially Marri and Pine seeds), and occasionally eats nectar, fruit and insect larvae.

Conservation status

Endangered IUCN Red List of Threatened (species). Endangered (Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999).

Population size and trends

Total population size is ~40,000 individuals, with a declining population trend. Numbers have declined by at least 50% over the past 45 years. Numbers in the Swan River region declined by 37% in a single year between surveys conducted in 2011 and 2012. Fragmentation and clearing of habitat has led to a 40% range contraction since the 1940s.



Life history and reproduction

Cockatoos begin breeding when 4 years of age. They have a lifespan of up to 60 years. Survival for juveniles is only 15% in their first year of life, but annual survival of adults increases to ~60%. A male and female pair are monogamous: they mate for life, and remain together throughout the year. Pairs return to their traditional nesting areas year after year; some pairs may use even the same nesting hollow every breeding season. Clutches are laid July-November; birds in inland areas lay earlier than those on the coast. Carnaby's Cockatoo critically depends on large hollows for nesting, located 2-10m high. Nesting is more successful in deeper hollows (>100cm deep). Females typically lay two creamy-white eggs, yet only experienced females manage to fledge both chicks. Eggs are incubated solely by the female for 28-29 days. Hatchlings are brooded by the female only, but are fed by both parents. However, during the first week after hatching chicks are fed exclusively by the female, and the distance between the nest and abundant high-quality food trees is a major factor determining whether the chicks survive; habitat fragmentation therefore is a key threat and reduces breeding success. About 65% of nests fledge at least one chick, yet when habitat is fragmented, this drops to 35%. Young leave the nest at 10-12 weeks of age, and remain with their parents until the next breeding season.

Behaviour

Carnaby's Cockatoos are arboreal (dwell in trees) but tend to feed on the ground. They are resident (non-migratory) in high-rainfall areas that retain much native vegetation, but are breeding-migrants in drier or fragmented regions where much native vegetation has been cleared. They are gregarious (social): occurring in small parties of three or more birds, but will occasionally congregate in large flocks of hundreds, or even thousands of birds (numbering up to 2,000!), especially in resource-rich areas.

Threats

- Loss of nesting hollows owing to tree felling or fire.
- Competition for nesting hollows with other parrots, ducks, owls, and honey bees.
- Loss, degradation and fragmentation of habitat through land-clearing and other human-caused stressors.
- Loss of habitat due to *Phytophthora dieback*.
- Inappropriate fire regimes.

- Extreme weather events (severe storms, hailstorms, drought etc.).
- Climate change.
- Vehicle strikes.
- Being shot by farmers.

Support conservation of this species by:

- Objecting to and preventing land clearing of both native vegetation and pine plantations (where they also feed).
- Restoring and replanting native vegetation, especially in creating corridors linking habitat throughout the region and between breeding and foraging areas.
- Slowing down and looking-out for birds whilst driving in areas where they occur and in major fly-ways.
- Erecting suitable-sized nesting boxes high-up in native trees (where birds feel safe, and avoiding cat-predation).
- Planting critical native food and habitat plants: Slender Banksia (*Banksia attenuata*), Firewood Banksia (*Banksia menziesii*), Acorn Banksia (*Banksia prionotes*), Parrot Bush (*Banksia sessilis*), Urchin Dryandra (*Banksia undata*), Wavyleafed Hakea (*Hakea undulata*), Two Leaf Hakea (*Hakea trifurcata*), Honey Bush (*Hakea lissocarpha*), Fuchsia Grevillea (*Grevillea bipinnatifida*), Jarrah (*Eucalyptus marginata*), Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), Lesser Bottlebrush (*Callistemon phoeniceus*).
- Preserving old-growth hollow-bearing trees.
- Repairing and restoring tree-hollows for nesting.
- Providing fresh, cool water daily in bird baths, especially in summer.



Written by Kit Prendergast