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Carnaby's Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus latirostris* (Carnaby 1948)



Photo: Christine Groom/DEC

Subspecies

None recognised

Size

Head and body length

530-580 mm

Weight

0.54-0.79 kg

Description

Carnaby's Cockatoo (formerly called the short-billed form of the White-tailed Black Cockatoo) is a large, black-cockatoo with a white patch on its cheek, white bands on its tail, and a strong curved bill. In males, the bill is black and the eye-ring dark-pink. Females have a light grey bill, grey eye-ring, and the cheek patch is more distinctive.

Other Common Names

Short-billed black-cockatoo, Ngoolark (Noongar name)

Distribution

Carnaby's Cockatoo is endemic to the south-west of Western Australia, extending from the Murchison River to Esperance, and inland to Coorow, Kellerberrin and Lake Cronin. After breeding, Carnaby's Cockatoo moves to coastal areas in large flocks, in search of food.

For further information regarding the distribution of this species please refer to www.naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au

Habitat

Carnaby's Cockatoo occurs in uncleared or remnant areas of eucalypt woodland, principally Salmon Gum or Wandoo, and shrubland or kwongan heath dominated by *Hakea* and *Banksia* species. Following breeding, flocks move to the higher rainfall coastal areas with *Banksia* woodland and/or pine plantations, accessible water, and trees surrounding watercourses.

Carnaby's Cockatoo nests in the hollows of live or dead eucalypts, primarily the Salmon Gum and Wandoo. Hollows are at minimum located 2m above ground, with the depth of the hollow varying from 0.25 to 6.0 m.

Behaviour

Carnaby's Cockatoo are social birds, and live in pairs or small flocks during the breeding season. After fledging, the young move with their parents to their non-breeding feeding areas where other family groups join the flock. The cockatoos move in flocks of up to 5000 birds in search of food. Prior to the breeding season the flocks break up into smaller groups and return to their breeding areas.

Diet

The cockatoos feed on the seeds of a variety of native and introduced plants (*Banksia*, *Hakea*, *Grevillea*, *Allocasuarina*, *Eucalyptus*, *Pinus*), nectar from flowers of *Lambertia*, *Callistemon*, *Banksia* and *Eucalyptus*, and insect larvae.

Breeding

The cockatoos display strong pair bonds. Birds return to their breeding area from July to September. After a suitable nesting hollow has been found, the female lays one or two eggs. Incubation occurs for 28-29 days. If two eggs are laid, it is rare for the second nestling to fledge successfully. In 95% of two-egg clutches the second nestling dies within 48 hours after hatching. Initially, only the female broods and feeds the young. After two-to-three weeks, both parents are responsible for the feeding. The success of a fledgling reaching independence is believed to be related to the availability of sufficient native vegetation in areas adjacent to the nest sites.

The chicks fledge at around 10 or 11 weeks of age, but depend upon the parents for several months after they emerge. After fledging, the juvenile remains with its parents and disperses to the non-breeding areas but does not return to the breeding area for another 4 to 5 years. Females do not breed until four to five years of age.

Threatening processes

Much of its habitat in the wheat belt of Western Australia has been fragmented following agricultural practices. In addition, clearing of heathland near the breeding sites has reduced the availability of food for breeding pairs and their young. A lack of eucalypt regeneration, and therefore suitable hollows, has reduced the availability of nest sites following the deterioration of used hollows. Factors that are known to cause mortality include road deaths, drowning, and shooting. Invasive species of birds such as the Galah and Western long-billed Corella (northern subspecies), are more frequently competing with and excluding Carnaby's Cockatoos from traditional nest hollow in the wheat belt and therefore reducing reproductive viability of the species. Carnaby's Cockatoos are also at risk from illegal poaching of young or eggs from the wild

Conservation status

Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950

Schedule 1 – Fauna that is rare or is likely to become extinct
(Threatened ranked as Endangered)

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Endangered

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species

Endangered (Version 3.1)

Management

A recovery plan has been prepared for this species (see Cale, 2003).

Suggested management actions include:

- Selection of priority areas for habitat management of the species
- Retention of existing feeding habitat near breeding areas
- Retention of existing nesting hollows, promotion of eucalypt regeneration, and increasing availability of hollows
- Monitor existing populations
- Increase public awareness and community involvement in management projects for the species

Other interesting facts

- Carnaby's Cockatoos rarely use the same hollow to nest in if the breeding attempt the previous season was unsuccessful.
- The species competes for the use of hollows with Australian Shelduck, Australian Wood Duck, Grey Teal, Black Duck, Barn Owl, Boobook Owl, long-billed Corella, Galah, Australian Ringneck, Brush-tail Possums, and feral bees.
- If two eggs are produced, the second egg is laid approximately two-to-eight days after the first egg
- Adult birds are known to live for at least 34 years in the wild, and probably longer.

Selected references

Cale, B. (2003). Carnaby's Black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) Recovery Plan 2002-2012. Wildlife Management Program No. 36. Department of Conservation and Land Management.

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Saunders, D. A. (1974). Subspeciation in the White-tailed Black Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus baudinii*, in Western Australia. *Australian Wildlife Research* 1: 55-69.

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Saunders, D. A. and Ingram, J. A. (1987). Factors affecting survival of breeding populations of Carnaby's Black-cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus latirostris* in remnants of native vegetation. In: *Nature conservation: the role of remnants of native vegetation*. pp. 249-58. (Eds) D. A. Saunders, G. W. Arnold, A. A. Burbidge and A. J. M. Hopkins, Surrey Beatty & Sons, Chipping Norton.

Last updated 8 February 2012, for further enquiries please contact fauna@dec.wa.gov.au

Further information

Contact your local office of the Department of Environment and Conservation.

See the department's website for the latest information: www.dec.wa.gov.au.

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