

Cocky Notes

Newsletter for WA Black-Cockatoos



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Black-Cockatoo Breeding Season Update - A season of hope — and challenge

We are currently approaching the tail end of another black-cockatoo breeding season. Many chicks have already fledged from their hollows, while those that remain are getting closer to taking their first flight.

Over the past few months, BirdLife Australia staff have been busy visiting breeding grounds and monitoring black-cockatoo nest hollows throughout southwest WA, working alongside volunteers, conservation organisations and Traditional Owners.

The previous 2024–2025 breeding season was, for the most part, poorer than many others, with less breeding activity and a higher number of breeding failures recorded. This was thought to be due to the flow-on effects of the heatwave and drought-like conditions experienced beforehand, which reduced food availability across the southwest during both the non-breeding and breeding seasons.

Against that backdrop, it was encouraging to see Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos experience a better breeding season this spring and summer. Some of our breeding grounds recorded the highest number of active nests seen at those locations in several years. Although rain arrived a little later in the season in some areas, most breeding grounds across the southwest eventually received a decent amount. This resulted in a bumper harvest for farmers and, it seems, improved food availability to support breeding black-cockatoos.

One of the highlights of this year's monitoring was discovering four active artificial nest hollows in the

Gidgegannup area. These hollows were installed several years ago following the Wooroloo fire in early 2021, as part of a BirdLife initiative to replace hollows lost when many trees were destroyed by the bushfire. At least three additional hollows also showed evidence of use by Carnaby's in previous breeding seasons. It is heartening to see the birds returning to breed in the area, alongside the recovery of surrounding bushland to a point where it can once again support breeding Carnaby's.

Other highlights included discovering active Carnaby's nest hollows in Dryandra Woodland National Park (more on this later), working with the Badgebup Aboriginal Rangers and Yamatji Rangers to monitor hollows east of Katanning and near Three Springs respectively, and having the opportunity to meet and work with so many enthusiastic volunteers, landholders and organisations across the southwest.



Photographs provided by Merryn Pryor

Sadly, the positive news from this breeding season has been tempered by devastating wildfires that have burnt large areas of Cocanarup Timber Reserve and Fitzgerald River National Park. These areas are critically important breeding and foraging habitats for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos. A comprehensive assessment of the damage and its impacts on Carnaby's habitat will take place over the coming months, and recovery planning is already underway.

Fortunately, with the breeding season nearing its end, most chicks had already fledged before the fires occurred. We are also pleased to report that two chicks that had yet to fledge were later observed alive and well in their hollows, with their parents continuing to care for them. Their survival is a powerful reminder of the resilience of these threatened and iconic birds.

Author: Merryn Pryor, WA Black-Cockatoo Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

Kaarakin Black-Cockatoo update

The 2025 calendar year was sadly another record setting year for black cockatoos coming into care at Kaarakin. We finished the year with a staggering 327 rescues of threatened black cockatoos and travelled over 42,000km. Markedly up from the previous 2024 calendar year, in which we rescued 272 black cockatoos and travelled over 30,000km.

We had an overall decrease in Carnaby's coming into care, with 86 in 2025 down from 135 in 2024. Sadly however, we saw an almost double spike in Forest Red-tailed admissions, with 213 being admitted in 2025 up from 111 in 2024. Baudin's remained stable with exactly 25 being rescued in both 2025 and 2024. 3 Inland Red-tails were also rescued in the 2025 year with just 1 in 2024.

Collisions with motor vehicles remained the most common reason for admission across all three species. The second most common reason for admission changed between species and accounted for nearly 25% of their admissions. With Carnaby's it was Cockatoo Hindlimb Paralysis Syndrome (CHiPS), with Baudin's it was illegal shooting and with the Forest Red-tailed it was raven attacks.

Raven attacks sadly as a whole nearly doubled, with 32 in 2024 and 56 in 2025. Highlighting the need for better waste management, raven proofing and the

need for people to stop feeding them throughout our suburbs. This will hopefully assist in reducing their numbers to more natural levels. Raven attacks come with significant trauma and feather loss, which often takes several months to years to recover from.

Despite the influx of cockatoos our volunteers and staff remained positive and through hard work and dedication managed to successfully release 167 threatened black cockatoos back into the wild in 2025. These flock releases occurred all over the southwest from the Pinjar Pines all the way down to Witchcliffe.

All the cockatoos we release are microchipped and given a unique leg band, so they are all identifiable. The associated photos are all cockatoos from our 2025 releases that were spotted thriving back out in the wild where they belong.

A huge thanks to our volunteers, sponsors, donors and overall supporters who make this work happen, we could not do it without you! Kaarakin receives no government funding and relies heavily on an almost entirely volunteer run workforce and support from the general public.

Author: Sam Clarke, Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre



Photographs by Sam Clarke

Baudin's Artificial Hollow Breeding Feasibility Study

In July 2024 Carnaby's Crusaders embarked on the Baudin's Artificial Hollow Breeding Feasibility Study. Despite a failed WIRES grant application that would have seen a larger study over 6 known breeding areas, we were able to secure private funding to move forward with a single key location. We wanted to understand why there was no documented breeding in artificial tubes or hollows at that stage, despite hollows and tubes being highly successful with Carnaby's. Having our colleague, independent ecologist Clinton Conner based in Nannup, it made sense to focus on this location given his recent monitoring of several natural hollows hosting Baudin's breeding.

We were keen to understand how receptive the Baudin's Cockatoo would be to artificial hollows placed in this area given the high number of natural hollows documented by Clint. We set about installing a total of 5 artificial hollows, including 4 Jarrah and Form-ply constructed hollows and a single Artificial Tube. The artificial hollows had internal dimensions of 360mm x 340mm with a depth of around 1 - 1.2 meters. 2 hollows were open top entry while the remaining 2 hosted a top $\frac{3}{4}$ cover or patio design. All 5 installations were completed on the 11th & 12th of July 2024 along with a motion activated camera mounted on each hollow.

We were surprised to learn of many investigations over the next few months however no breeding attempts. The following September 2025 many

Baudin's pairs were recorded investigating 3 of the 4 Jarrah & Form-ply hollows almost daily, along with sporadic Red-tailed inspections. With hollow #CCDA00456 seeing daily visits and long stays in October we were confident of our first breeding attempt. Pole camera inspection on the 21st of November confirmed a 1-2 day old hatchling with what appeared to be the spent eggshell. The following inspection on 13th of December revealed a surprise second healthy nestling about 6-7 days behind the older.

On the 30th of January we again made the trek to Nannup to document the now 9-10 week-old nestlings. Ascending to the hollow to capture images, we were confident of both a male and younger female nestling going on the size and colour of cheek patches. On the 8th of February both nestlings were recorded being fed at the top of the hollow by both parents with neither having fledged.

Interestingly there was only a single investigation of the artificial tube by Baudin's since its installation, adding weight to the idea that the natural timber and form-ply construction is more appealing to the Baudin's Cockatoo. We hope to learn more about this species along with the critical habitat that supports it in coming seasons. The byproduct of this project has been discovering a critically endangered species, thriving in a habitat that remains healthy and largely intact.

Author: Dean Arthurell, Carnaby's Crusaders LTD



Photographs provided by Dean Arthurell

'Keep Carnaby's Flying – Ngoolarks Forever': Winner of the Premier's Award for Science Engagement Initiative of the Year

BirdLife Australia is thrilled to share that community engagement initiative Keep Carnaby's Flying – Ngoolarks Forever, led by Murdoch University and supported by Lotterywest with BirdLife Australia as a key partner, has won the Premier's Award for Science Engagement Initiative of the Year for 2025.

The Award recognises initiatives that have made a significant positive impact on community awareness, interest and participation in science in Western Australia.

The project's two-year ignition stage involved collaboration between Murdoch University's Harry Butler Institute, Ngangk Yira Institute for Change and School of Veterinary Medicine, and environmental and wildlife NGOs, Aboriginal organisations, universities and eight local governments to undertake community engagement for black cockatoo conservation. "The project raised awareness of the plight of Perth's threatened black cockatoos and empowered the community to protect them" said Project Lead Professor Kris Warren, whose Murdoch University team has studied black cockatoos for 18 years. The project's achievements include planting over 50,000 black cockatoo food-plants and installing a network of 'Cockitrough' bird drinking-stations across the Perth-Peel region.

The team also developed locality-specific Black Cockatoo Conservation Action Plans for eight local governments, informed by research data, to help councils identify how best to protect black cockatoo flocks in their area. Community partners are now working with councils to implement these Action Plans.

Professor Warren highlighted the value of university research teams working alongside NGOs and other community partners to undertake direct action for black cockatoos. "It's not often you have an opportunity to apply the findings of scientific research to on-ground conservation activities. It was a real privilege for our team to work alongside these organisations".

While the project's ignition stage and associated funding are now over, Professor Warren hopes the



Keep Carnaby's Flying – Ngoolarks Forever project representatives at the Premier's Awards Night. From L-R: Dr Cree Monaghan, Murdoch University; Brett Hill, Noongar Elder and Director Winjan Aboriginal Corporation; Dr Barb Hostalek and Professor Kris Warren, Murdoch University; Merryn Pryor, BirdLife Australia.

project will continue to engage the community to 'keep Carnaby's flying', including through ongoing collaborations among NGOs, local governments and Friends of Bushland groups to undertake revegetation to give black cockatoos more vital food and habitat.

"Our team at Murdoch also continues to seek funding to develop data-informed Black Cockatoo Conservation Action Plans for additional local governments across southwest WA" Professor Warren said. "The plans are blueprints that can inform local government black cockatoo conservation management activities."

The Premier's Science Award recognises the significance of the Keep Carnaby's Flying initiative and the need for efforts to continue. "It helps raise the profile of the project" says Professor Warren, "[and] the plight of the birds and the need for their conservation."

For information about how to keep Carnaby's flying, including ideas for individuals, local governments and schools, visit Website: keepcarnabysflying.org.au or contact Merryn Pryor, WA Black-Cockatoo Coordinator, BirdLife Australia email carnabys@birdlife.org.au.

For an earlier article about this community initiative, see Cocky Notes edition [Spring 2023](#).

Author: Bec Donaldson, Murdoch University

Carnaby's Breeding at Dryandra

5 Rivers NRM (formally Peel-Harvey Catchment Council), BirdLife WA and DBCA have recently confirmed Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo breeding for the first time in satellite bushland blocks surrounding Dryandra Woodland—helped, unexpectedly, by a lightning strike. While the importance of Dryandra Woodland as a foraging area for Black-Cockatoos has long been well documented, reports of suspected Carnaby's breeding in the area have circulated for several years, based on observations by local landholders and residents.

These suspicions were finally confirmed when DBCA staff discovered a deceased Carnaby's chick at the base of a wandoo tree that had been struck by lightning. The following breeding season, a survey team assembled to inspect the area surrounding the damaged tree. During the inspection, the team made a remarkable discovery: a Carnaby's hen was found incubating eggs in a hollow at the same location as the charred tree.

Encouraged by this finding, the survey area was expanded. A total of seven additional tree hollows actively being used by Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos for breeding were identified within or near the Montague block at Dryandra. This discovery confirmed the long-held belief that Carnaby's do, indeed, breed within the Woodland.

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos rely almost exclusively on large tree hollows found in mature eucalypts, particularly marri, salmon gum and wandoo. However, identifying suitable breeding hollows in wandoo can be especially challenging. Unlike marri—where large, older trees with suitable hollows are often conspicuous—wandoo trees can remain relatively narrow even at great age, making potential breeding sites much harder to detect in the landscape.

Given the level of Carnaby's activity already recorded in the Dryandra area, it is likely that additional breeding sites exist throughout the Woodland, particularly in areas with high-quality habitat. Further surveys and exploration are planned for the next breeding season, so stay tuned as we continue to uncover more about Carnaby's breeding in southwest Western Australia.



*BirdLife and PHCC monitoring hollows for breeding at Dryandra.
Insert: Carnaby's eggs in hollow at Dryandra.*

Finding new breeding sites is only the first step.

Protecting surrounding habitat, restoring food and water sources, and working closely with landholders are all critical to ensuring these sites remain viable in the long term. With an improved understanding of key breeding resources and coordinated conservation action, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos will have a far better chance of surviving into the future.

5 Rivers NRM are currently delivering the Moordidjabiny Project, focused on protecting Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos through targeted on-ground management that addresses key threats while providing essential resources for foraging, watering, nesting and roosting. See our website for more information: [Moordidjabiny-Project-Summary 2024 Final.pdf](#)

This project is funded by the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and delivered by 5 Rivers NRM, a member of the Commonwealth Regional Delivery Partners panel.

Author: Corrine Duncan, Coordinator Land Conservation, 5 Rivers NRM

Black Cockatoos and road strikes – South Coast Region

Since 2022 over 200 black cockatoos (Carnaby's, Baudin's and Forest Red-tails) have been recorded as road-strike victims by DBCA's South Coast Region (SCR), with most of these collected between the Stirling Range National Park, Manypeaks and Wellstead. This number is certainly an underestimate of the numbers of birds falling victim to road strike. Prior to 2022 high numbers of birds were also reported dead so the overall impact is certainly more significant.

Since 2022 birds collected by DBCA and those provided to the SCR office have had their crops necropsied and DNA collected. Nearly all of these birds have had canola dominate crop contents.

Main Roads have done a great job of improving signage around hotspots of activity on the south coast, and also in cleaning up major spills. However, trucks with poorly sealed trailers allow canola to slowly leak out, leaving trails of grain along the roads that are not detected as spills, but still provide an attractive food resource for cockatoos.

Sweeping has proven ineffective at removing the food source, as much of the grain becomes embedded in the cracks and crevices of the road surface. As a result, alternative techniques for cleanup will need to be explored. The SCR team has had success collecting grain using a vacuum cleaner, which also provides the added benefit of quantifying how much grain has been spilled over a given period.



Carnaby's Cockatoos on Chester Pass Rd in the Stirling Range National Park (Photo: Keith Lightbody).

Awareness of the challenges black cockatoos face on roads can certainly help with avoiding impacts to these long-lived birds, and the many other parrots that congregate on road verges.

DBCA's South Coast team will continue to log road strikes across the region and collect DNA and genetic material where birds can be safely collected. Continuing to document road strike and collate records is also important, and BirdLife's Birdata provides a simple option to record data that can be shared with all stakeholders.

Author: Sarah Comer, Mark Blythman and Deon Utber, DBCA

Photo: Nathan Watson

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