

Members' Page

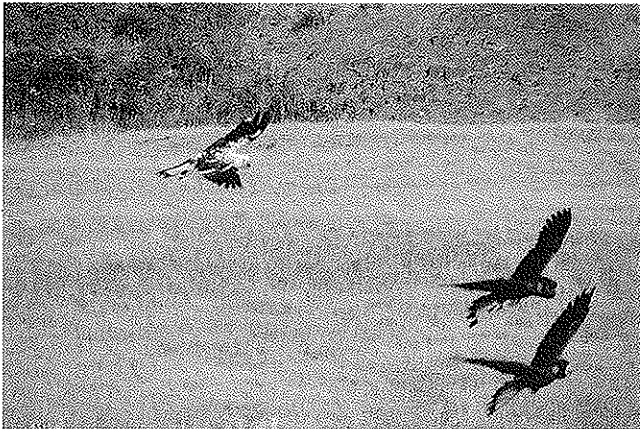
A PIEBALD COCKIE!

Sheila Howat

Land for Wildlife member and bird enthusiast, Deb Perry, has been thrilled to have an albino-like leucistic Carnaby's black cockatoo regularly visit her Bridgetown farm this autumn.

Deb says that flocks of Carnaby's feast on the seeds of her stone pine trees every autumn. The cones are sometimes opened and eaten in the trees, but more often are opened by the birds on the ground after they have cut them off with their powerful beaks. They often leave them on the ground for a week or more before returning to open them.

In late March, Deb heard from intrigued friends that they had seen a white bird flying down to the Blackwood River at dusk with a flock of white-tailed black cockatoos.



Then, on Easter Monday, a mid-air commotion turned out to be that unusual cockatoo under attack from a magpie as the flock flew towards Deb's pines to feed. She thought that perhaps the magpie thought that the cockatoo was a trespassing magpie due to its unusual coloration. The magpie and leucistic cockatoo almost hit the house as they tumbled through the air.

Deb says that the flock with this unusual bird comprises around 30 Carnaby's, including some young which she has seen and heard being fed by the adults. Her observations during the flock's regular visits over autumn suggests that the leucistic bird is simply treated as one of the 'gang', screeching, squawking and squabbling over pine nuts with the rest. Each evening they fly back down the gully towards the Blackwood River to roost for the night.

Carnaby's black cockatoo specialist, Dejan Stojanovic says that the leucistic mutation is an extremely rare and random genetic chance whereby both parents possess a recessive partial albino gene. He says that a similar bird has been sighted a few times in the last two years, and may in fact be the same bird.

Deb, who keeps a general nature diary and records bird observations on the farm on a monthly basis (she has 90 species on her list) will certainly be looking out for the extraordinary cockatoo next autumn.

PEBBLE MOUND MICE

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