

Cocky Notes



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Photo: K. Lightbody

'Chasey' tastes some offerings at the plant label launch

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BIRDLIFE BRINGS NEW PLANT LABEL TO PERTH NURSERIES

With some decent Autumn rainfall in Perth, now is a great time to put a native plant in your garden for the cockatoos!

The 'Choose for Black-Cockatoos' plant label was launched in late March. This new initiative, a joint project between BirdLife Australia and the Dieback Working Group, is targeting Perth gardeners to **plant habitat for Carnaby's and other black-cockatoos**. We selected 12 species, local to the Swan Coastal Plain and Darling Plateau, to promote as preferred plants for cockatoos. Banksias and hakeas are key food plants for **Carnaby's**. Marri and Jarrah are important for food and night-time roost spots for all three black-cockatoo species, as well as nesting trees in the right areas.

Nurseries taking part in the pilot trial are all NIASA-accredited, which means they are certified to have **good hygiene practices that won't spread plant diseases**, including Phytophthora Dieback. Cockatoo habitat, including banksias and Jarrah, is severely affected by Phytophthora Dieback. Participating nurseries are APACE, Australian Native Nurseries Group, Muchea Tree Farm, Ngulla Community Nursery and Zanthorrea Nursery. Find out more at www.birdlife.org.au/carnabys/plants-for-carnabys.

The plant label was launched by local gardening celebrity, John Colwill, at Zanthorrea Nursery in March. Around 40 people attended, including staff from BirdLife Australia, the Dieback Working Group, Kaarakin Black-Cockatoo Conservation Centre and 'Chasey' the **Carnaby's** cockatoo. We hope the pilot trial will be successful, and that the label can be expanded in future to include plant species and nurseries across the South West.

Tamara Kabat

YOU CAN HELP TRACK CARNABY'S

Keep looking out for **Carnaby's Cockatoos** with tail feathers painted pink, green, purple or blue. Any observations of where they are feeding, roosting and flying are important. If you see one, please call 0409 087 631 or email christine.groom@dec.wa.gov.au.

Christine Groom has just released another seven Carnaby's Cockatoos with painted tail feathers as part of her PhD project to investigate how the birds meet their basic survival needs in the urban landscape on the Swan Coastal Plain. Data gathered is increasing our understanding of the species ecology.

For more information on Christine's research project, visit her blog <http://carnabyscockatoo.blogspot.com.au/>



Photo: C. Groom

WHAT TO DO WITH AN INJURED OR DEAD COCKATOO

While loss and degradation of habitat is often regarded as the biggest threat to black cockatoos, large numbers of all three species are impacted by activities like shooting and vehicle strikes.

If you find an injured black cockatoo, only attempt **to rescue it if it's safe to do so**. Injured cockatoos will often be in shock and may be aggressive and capable of giving a severe bite or scratch. Cover the injured bird using a large towel, ensuring you cover the head. Carefully pick up the bird and place it gently in a secure cardboard box or pet carrier with a second towel lining the bottom. Close the lid or cover the box with a towel and move to a quiet, dark location. Do not attempt to feed the injured bird.

If you haven't already done so, call the Wildcare Helpline on 9474 9055. The Black-Cockatoo Conservation Centre (Kaarakin) also offer a 24 hour rescue service for any injured black-cockatoos. Call Kaarakin on 9390 2288 during business hours. Contact Louise Hopper (Vet Nurse) on 0448 046 202 or Phil Digney (General Manager) on 0499 991 041 out of business hours.

Wildlife officers from the Department of Environment and Conservation and staff from **Kaarakin take the injured birds to Perth Zoo's** veterinary hospital for assessment and treatment. The cockatoos are provided with emergency treatment, surgery when necessary and intensive medical care.

Following initial treatment, the cockatoos are handed over to accredited black-cockatoo carers where they continue their rehabilitation and, if possible, are released back into the wild. Many of the candidates for release spend time at Kaarakin in the Perth foothills, where they strengthen their flight muscles in large, purpose-built aviaries. Others which are permanently disabled may join Kaarakin's captive 'breed-for-release' program.

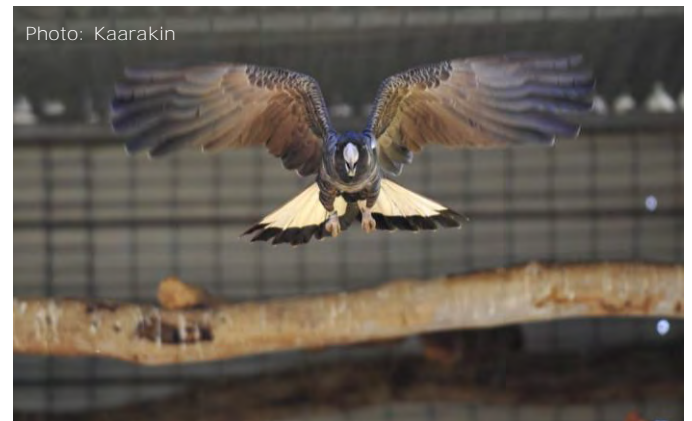


Photo: Kaarakin

A cockatoo in one of Kaarakin's purpose built rehabilitation aviaries

It's important that dead cockatoos are delivered to the right place. All cockatoo bodies are valuable for research purposes and should be collected where possible. If you find a dead black cockatoo, contact Perth Zoo on 9474 0404 (8am - 5pm, 7 days). Attach a label to the foot with details of the date and location found and the name of the collector. Place the specimen in a plastic bag. If transporting to the Zoo within 72 hours, refrigerate. If storing for more than 72 hours, put the dead bird in a freezer.

Matt Fossey

EVALUATING 12 YEARS OF THE CARNABY'S RECOVERY PROJECT

As reported in Issue 17 of Cocky Notes (June 2012), a State NRM funded project has provided the **chance to evaluate BirdLife Australia's Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Project**. The evaluation was carried out mainly through a desktop review of project documents, discussions with previous and current staff and a small number of interviews with landholders and volunteers.

The achievements of the project over the last 12 years are largely a result of successful engagement and working relationships with a diverse range of stakeholders. These include farmers, Landcare and community groups, rural shires, schools, government agency staff, NRM bodies and other non-government organisations. The project has excelled at mobilising volunteers and the broader **community in Carnaby's conservation efforts**. For example, since 2010 the Great Cocky Count has grown both range and participation rates, and reports from the public have identified new roost and breeding sites **across the species' range**.



Photo: R. Scott

The support of volunteers and the community has contributed to the success of the Recovery Project

BirdLife Australia has also played a leading role in implementing on-ground recovery actions for **Carnaby's**. About 2000 hectares of habitat on private land have been enhanced or managed to date – this figure will more than double by the time two of our currently funded projects are completed at the end of June 2013.

The evaluation documented, **that there hasn't been** enough investment in monitoring and evaluating project outcomes. Reasons for this include the short-term nature of funded projects; a focus on outputs rather than outcomes by funding bodies;

and high staff workload. Without such information, **it's hard to determine whether project activities** have truly been successful or not, and how well they are contributing to the recovery of the species. BirdLife will endeavour to put more focus on this in the future, however funding constraints make this difficult.

The evaluation report and summary will soon be available at www.birdlife.org.au/carnabys.

Matt Fossey

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR 2013 NESTING SURVEYS

Volunteers make our projects tick! We are seeking volunteers to survey Carnaby's nesting sites between September and November 2013.

BirdLife's nest surveys identify the numbers of active hollows at a site. This provides us with a better understanding of the distribution of the cockatoos during the breeding season and indicates whether breeding effort is increasing or declining. The surveys take place on private properties and reserves in regional areas, with sites ranging from near pristine bush to solitary paddock trees.

Training and a survey guide are provided, and we can team new volunteers up with experienced observers. Please register your interest at cbcvolunteer@birdlife.org.au.

If you are a landholder and black-cockatoos visit your property, we'd also like you to get involved. Contact Matt on 9287 2251 or matt.fossey@birdlife.org.au.

2013 GREAT COCKY COUNT

Over 270 volunteers participated in BirdLife Australia's **fifth Great Cocky Count (GCC) survey** on 7 April 2013. Surveys were completed at 243 sites from Geraldton, Perth, and across the south-west as far as Esperance. The largest roost this year was in the Pinjar pine forest north of Perth, where 800 cockatoos were recorded. Once again, the survey was greatly assisted by local people identifying new roost sites and coordinating volunteers in their

areas, particularly around Bunbury, Yanchep, Margaret River, Dunsborough, Geraldton, Esperance and Narrogin.



Photo: A. Elliott

A flock of Carnaby's flying to their roost at dusk

The GCC aims to count as many Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos at their night-time roost sites as possible on a single night each April. With increased numbers of people taking part, and more survey sites identified across the South West region, we're building a stronger picture of important roosting habitat for both Carnaby's and Baudin's Black-Cockatoo. As the fourth survey in a row, this year's GCC will also increase our understanding of how Carnaby's are using the Swan Region around Perth, which provides key over-wintering habitat for northern and western Carnaby's populations.

The final report will be ready in a few months, so keep an eye on www.birdlife.org.au/carnabys/great-cocky-count. The 2012 and 2013 GCCs were funded by Perth Region NRM through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program.

Tamara Kabat

NEWDEGATE PRIMARY SCHOOL OPENS COCKY TUCK SHOP!

BirdLife Australia coordinated a school planting day on June 13th as part of the Caring for our Country funded project in the south-east Wheatbelt. Students in Years 2 to 7 from Newdegate Primary School planted Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo food trees and enjoyed a barbeque thanks to the P&C.

Judy and Graeme Garlick generously allowed the group to access their property near Lake Bryde to revegetate a 60m-wide strip linking two bush remnants. Up to 300 of seedlings from five species were planted. This contributed to an additional 4.4 hectares of feeding habitat and improved connectivity for Carnaby's and other native fauna.

The students already knew a great deal about Carnaby's cockatoo as school principal, Anne Webster incorporated information about their biology and ecology, and the importance of the local area, into lessons during terms 1 and 2.

Photo monitoring points were set up on the planting day for future data collection with assistance from Marcus Owen (Shire of Lake Grace) and Melissa Cugley. The students are encouraged to participate in the monitoring of this site to increase their understanding of the habitat and conservation requirements of Carnaby's.

Deb Sullivan

NEW PHONE APP TO HELP UNDERSTAND FUNGAL CANKER

Marri (*Corymbia calophylla*) is an iconic Western Australian tree species used by black-cockatoos for feeding, nesting and roosting. In recent decades it has been impacted by a disease known as marri canker, caused by a fungal pathogen which infects the trunks and branches.



Marri trunk infected with canker disease

Photo: Murdoch University

The pathogen acts by cutting off the tree's sap flow, leading to ring barking and eventually death of limbs or entire trees, depending on the area of infection. Marri canker disease is visible as target-like lesions on either the main base or on other limbs or limb connections. One of the telltale signs that a tree is infected is the layering of the bark that produces the 'rings' of the target. There are still many knowledge gaps about marri canker disease, including how to control the pathogen.

The Centre of Excellence for Climate Change Woodland and Forest Health (hosted by Murdoch University), in collaboration with the East Metropolitan Regional Council is developing a smart phone application to help address some of the knowledge gaps about marri canker. The app has been designed to be used by interested members of the public, local government agencies, foresters and

scientists to capture GPS location, incidence and severity of cankers on trees, and to lodge photos and other site information to a central server. The app will also aid community education and raise the profile of marri canker in Perth's eastern region. It is due to be rolled out in June 2013.

For more information about marri canker disease or the development of the mobile phone app please contact: Ariadne Macleod at the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council on (08) 9424 2272.

Matt Fossey

CARNABY'S CHAMPIONS – PETER & LYNN KENNEDY

BirdLife Australia's south-east Wheatbelt project has combined a vast landscape with a small community and exposed a number of people with a passion to protect and support 'their' Carnaby's.

A great example of passionate landholders in the project region is Peter and Lynn Kennedy, whose enjoyment for Carnaby's cockatoo dates back many years. The couple have been on their property "Overall Farms" since the 70's, and are lucky to have their home surrounded by mature Salmon Gums and nesting cockatoos. A business card left by a BirdLife staffer in the mailbox a few years ago sparked some further interest in Carnaby's conservation and got the ball rolling.

Peter and Lynn maintain a calendar of the birds' arrival and departure each year at nesting time, and look forward to the return each year of their "extended family". With the hens in the hollows, the males head off early in the morning to feed. According to Lynn, "you can set your watch for their return in the evening to the females."

Peter and Lynn are to be congratulated on their commitment to successful outcomes for Carnaby's. Assisted by BirdLife Australia, they have:

- fenced all of the Salmon Gum woodland on their home farm;
- fenced off important feeding habitat on another property nearby;
- repaired nest hollows;
- carried out competitor control;
- established photo monitoring points for documenting changes to the bush;
- registered their Salmon Gum woodland under DEC's Land for Wildlife program; and

- negotiated with National Trust to covenant the site.



Photo: D. Sullivan

Repaired hollow being used on the Kennedy's property

Peter and Lynn have been a delight to work with on this project, and BirdLife Australia looks forward to continuing to work with them in the future.

Deb Sullivan

CARNABY'S PRACTITIONERS FLOCK TO 2013 SYMPOSIUM

In February, over 100 people attended the 3rd Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Symposium in Perth, organised by BirdLife Australia. As with the events held in 2003 and 2008, the aim of this year's symposium was to bring together professionals working to recover Carnaby's to share current knowledge. The 2013 symposium focussed on two of the most important threats to the species: loss of nesting and feeding habitat in the breeding range and loss of foraging and roosting habitat in the non-breeding range.

Invited symposium presenters included staff from government agencies, non-government organisations, researchers and the community. Presentations covered policy and planning initiatives

and on-ground actions and research. Dr Denis Saunders delivered the keynote presentation, a background paper in which he described the trajectory of decline and range retraction for the species and called for more intensive work, greater collaboration and improved prioritisation of recovery actions. He also noted the changes over the last **decade in the public profile of Carnaby's cockatoo**, and the number of agencies, organisations, groups and individuals involved in conservation.



Photo: A. Kendrick

Participants at the 2013 Carnaby's Symposium

The symposium proceedings provide short summaries of most presentations and posters, including contact details of speakers and authors, and are available at www.birdlife.org.au/carnabys.

The symposium was followed by a workshop where groups identified key recovery actions for critical habitats, as well as the monitoring and evaluation needed to tell us how effectively we are conserving the species. Notes from the workshop have been drafted and are being reviewed **by the Carnaby's Cockatoo Recovery Team**.

Thanks to the WA Government's State NRM program for the funding that supported the 2013 symposium and workshop, and to DEC for additional resources.

Matt Fossey

THANKS AND GOOD LUCK TO TAM, SANDRA & DEB!

BirdLife Australia's current suite of **Carnaby's** funded projects are wrapping up at the end of June 2013. The **Carnaby's Recovery Project will continue** to be managed by Matt Fossey, but we will be working at a reduced capacity from July 2013. Unfortunately, we will be losing Tamara Kabat, Deb Sullivan and Sandra Gilfillan from our cockatoo conservation team. Deb Sullivan will remain working for BirdLife but will be working on the Esperance Starling project.

Tam, Sandra and Deb have worked tirelessly over the last 18 months. They have helped promote **awareness about Carnaby's with local governments, landholders and communities**. The surveys and on-ground works they have coordinated have contributed to the recovery effort for the species. All three officers will be sorely missed by the Recovery Project and we wish them well for the future. Thanks for all your work!

We also thank the Australian Government, Perth Region NRM, South Coast NRM and State NRM for **funding our Carnaby's projects over the last couple of years**.

Contact us

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