

Cocky Notes

Issue 26: Summer 2017-18

INTRODUCING: COCKYWATCH

There are exciting things happening at BirdLife in 2018. For one, we're ready to launch our brand new citizen science project, CockyWatch!

Don't be worried Great Cocky Counters, CockyWatch is supplementary to the Great Cocky Count and we hope to keep counting cockies for many years yet. While the Great Cocky Count tells us how many of our feathered friends roost where, CockyWatch will allow us to estimate the entire population size – including areas we can't cover in the Great Cocky Count.

While our black-cockatoos can easily travel across the landscape, believe it or not, this actually makes it difficult to count how many cockatoos there are. In fact there are currently no robust or scientifically-defensible estimates of population size for any of our southwest black-cockatoo species, and this is a problem that has plagued cockatoo researchers for decades. But, the information gathered through CockyWatch will help to determine black-cockatoo population density throughout the southwest, for Baudin's, Carnaby's and Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

While the method is really simple, it is something that is best done for a route that you travel regularly. We're asking people to drive, ride or walk along a road or path, noting down details about Black-Cockatoos seen. CockyWatch Surveys can be undertaken at any time and any day of the year. Just note your start time, GPS point and odometer reading (if driving) and off you go.

For this method, the distance covered while searching for cockatoos is just as important as the cockatoo sightings themselves, so don't forget to record your start and end times, GPS points and odometer readings (if driving). We're hoping people from across Australia's Southwest, from Geraldton in the north to Esperance in the east will want to take part.

Unfortunately sightings of cockatoos seen before or after your CockyWatch 'trip' can't be used, additional bird sightings can be submitted to BirdLife's Birddata app or web portal <http://birddata.birdlife.org.au/>

To participate, you can download the instructions and data sheet here: birdlife.org.au/cockywatch

Rebecca Boyland,
Southwest Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos taking flight
Photo: Keith Lightbody

A NATIVE BIRD OASIS

BirdLife has partnered with City of Cockburn as part of a successful State NRM project called *Native Bird Oasis*. Aided by funds from generous philanthropists at Impact 100, the project aims to revegetate a one hectare site east of Bibra Lake to demonstrate ways of attracting birds to gardens to help local bird populations. This will include planting a full suite of local plants as habitat for birds in decline (like small insectivores and Black-Cockatoos) and installing bird baths. Dr Christine Groom is taking this project under her wing and we look forward to seeing progress as site preparation and planting takes place in winter. The Oasis is situated within the Cockburn Community Wildlife Corridor and will add to this valuable habitat.

Adam Peck,
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo
Project Coordinator

WILL YOU BE THERE WHEN IT COUNTS?

The tenth Great Cocky Count will be held on Sunday April 8, 2018 and we call on you to help us out! We have many roost sites throughout the Southwest of WA, all the way from Geraldton and across to Esperance. And the more volunteers we get, the more roosts we can survey, so it would be great if you could put the date in your calendar and register here:

<https://goo.gl/forms/K9Y3aqc7yxFTHxC53>.

Registrations close on Sunday March 18.

We're excited to announce that the 2018 GCC will be the first to feature **GCC campouts!** We sometimes struggle to find enough volunteers to count at important regional sites, so we're hoping city dwellers can help us to increase our regional coverage. There will be campouts at both Stirling Range and Cheyne's Beach, with Sue Mather (Stirling) and Brendan Kinsella (Cheyne's) coordinating. This will be an excellent opportunity to not only contribute to the GCC in a beautiful location, but to learn from and meet other birders. If you'd like to register for a campout, you'll need to stay both Saturday and Sunday nights (April 7 and 8). Please call the BirdLife office on 9383 7749 to register.

There also will be a series of workshops in the lead up to the big day. Keep an eye on the BirdLife WA Facebook page or register for the count to be kept in the loop.

Adam Peck,
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator



Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos having a snack on a Banksia
Photo: Georgina Steytler

Do you know of a black-cockatoo night roost near you? If so please let us know, as every roost site is crucial to helping us get the most accurate count of cockatoos possible.

As the name suggests, what we use in the Great Cocky Count are **night roosts**, places where cockatoos gather to sleep at night (you may have to stay and watch beyond sunset to check). Unfortunately areas birds use during the day are not often also used as night roosts as well.

If you would like to know more, or if you have any other questions, check out the new FAQ online at:

http://www.birdlife.org.au/documents/GCC_FAQs.pdf

CALLING ALL COCKATOO WATCHERS!

Do you ever make a note about something unusual you see our feathered friends up to, and think 'I must tell someone about that'? And how often do you REALLY share that information? Well, of course, there IS an app for that – BirdLife's *Birdata* app!

If you haven't heard about it yet, *Birdata* is BirdLife's data collection web portal and phone app – it's free to download and it is very easy to use, even when you are on the road or in remote locations.

Birdata is a great way to keep track of bird sightings and conduct bird surveys, regardless of whether you are a recreational birdwatcher, or just like to keep track of what drops by your garden. You can use it to record what you see in your neighbourhood, note unusual sightings and even contribute to some of BirdLife's ongoing citizen science projects, like the Great Cocky Count.

To find out more or to sign up, visit birdata.birdlife.org.au. Keep an eye out for some upcoming *Birdata* workshops – they will be advertised on the BirdLife WA e-news and social media.

Tegan Douglas,
WA Citizen Science Project Coordinator

HAPPY HAPPY HOLLOWES

In early 2017 BirdLife received grant funds from State NRM for its new Happy Hollows project. The aim of this project is to intensively survey four sites with both natural and artificial hollows in the southern wheatbelt for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo breeding. Many of our other breeding sites are only surveyed once a year at most and unfortunately sometimes breeding hasn't commenced or chicks have already fledged when the hollows are checked. In this case very little knowledge is gained. But in this project surveys in August, September, November and December allowed us to get much more insight into cockatoo breeding in the southwest.

2017 turned out to be a very late breeding season for Carnaby's. This meant that no breeding was found until the third visit in early November. The survey team was led by Joe Tonga of NatSync Environmental, ably assisted by experienced volunteers. They were disappointed on the early trips but still kept busy. Many trees were tagged for easy location and missing data such as DBH, tree species and hollow height and orientation were recorded.

What a relief it was to finally find breeding! One site near Lake Magenta is set to fledge over 12 chicks, half from natural hollows and half from artificial ones. Trail cameras have been set up to record images of birds all the way from adults prospecting to chicks fledging. Breeding competition was evident at all sites, with the main competitor being Regent Parrots. These endemic parrots seem to particularly like artificial hollows, despite the bird's small size.

A trip to two reserves near Katanning was interesting. The reserves are relatively small and surrounded by broad acre farm land. Many large, suitable hollows were found in the reserves (Wandoo, Salmon Gum and Red Morrell trees), but very few Carnaby's were nesting. One possible explanation is that the limiting resource is not hollow availability but food resources. If there is insufficient food within 6-12km of a hollow then breeding is very unlikely to be successful. One implication of this is that the installation of artificial hollows in this area is unlikely to have any effect on breeding success. Revegetation will be the key to boosting breeding success under this scenario and conservation activities should take this into account.

Many thanks go to our hard working volunteers on this project: John and Bev Koch, John Tucker, Mark Jones, Brendan Kinsella, Ben Wilcox, Grant Buller and Candice Le Roux. Many thanks also to State NRM for funding this project.

Adam Peck,
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator



Some of the Happy Hollows team: Adam Peck, Ben Wilcox, Joe Tonga, David Secombe, Rebecca Boyland and Brendan Kinsella at Badgebup Reserve.
Photo: Adam Peck

BREEDING SEASON WRAP-UP:

Carnaby's breeding surveys have now finished for 2017. The season was very late, with few records of breeding until September (historical data shows that breeding can start as early as June and go until April, with a peak usually between September and December). Volunteers spent a huge 1,600 hours and staff spent 120 hours surveying breeding site this season. 509 natural and 163 artificial hollows were surveyed between Badgingarra and Borden.

The following data also includes Happy Hollows project data. 15% of natural hollows and 36% of artificial hollows showed evidence of breeding activity. 8% of natural hollows and 23% of artificial hollows were used by competitors. The top competitors for natural hollows were Barn Owls, while Regent Parrots were the top competitor for artificial ones.

Adam Peck,
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator



Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos in the pre-release aviary at Kaarakin
Photo: Celine Dubois

RELEASE THE COCKATOOS!

It was an exciting end of year and Christmas period for all the volunteers and staff at Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre. On the 29th of November 2017, 10 forest red tailed black cockatoos were released on site at Kaarakin, these birds had a variety of stories and some had been in rehabilitation for severe injuries.

A total of eight mature birds were released along with two juveniles. It is hoped that these birds will assist with the continuation of a healthy breeding population, with every bird saved and released a vital importance to maintaining diversity within wild breeding groups.

The majority of the adults released were brought to Kaarakin as a result of vehicle strikes. This provides a timely reminder to the motorists of Perth and regional areas to slow down in this busy holiday period, and give these iconic Australian cockatoos a chance to get out of the way.

In order to be released, each of these birds had to pass tests of feather condition, fitness and their ability to eat wild food sources. Without the continued assistance of Kaarakin's many volunteers who dedicate many hours to monitoring, feeding and cleaning, these individuals would not have been given this second chance. Rehabilitation work is only possible due to volunteer effort, and Kaarakin would like to thank anyone involved for their assistance with this release and the many to come.

Kaarakin welcomes new volunteer applications via our website www.blackcockatoorecovery.com

Georgia Kerr
Avian Management Officer, Kaarakin



WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Nobody knows your local patch better than you do. So, if BirdLife WA wants to find out more about changes to the local environment in the southwest, who better to ask than the locals?

That's the thinking behind our new Community Wisdom survey – we want to know what changes you have noticed in the black-cockatoo populations in your local area in the time you've been living there.

We're trying to get as many people from throughout the southwest to participate – can you join us? You don't need to be a bird expert – just a local! Ask your neighbours and family to participate too – we're trying to get as many people as possible to tell us what they see.

The survey can be filled out online – visit <http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/southwest-black-cockatoo-recovery/community-wisdom-swbc>. If you would prefer a paper copy for yourself, or someone you know, get in touch and let us know. You can call the BirdLife WA office on (08) 9383 7749, or email wa@birdlife.org.au and we will send one out to you.

KEEP UP WITH THE FLOCK!

The Southwest Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program is on social media! Keep up to date with all of the latest cocky happenings:



Southwest Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program



@blackcockatoos



@birdlifewa



The Carnaby's Kite floats gracefully in the setting sun.
Photo: Helen Bryant

LET'S GO FLY A KITE

2017 was a big year for the Carnaby's Cockatoo Action Group (CCAG). The group launched its 'Fly a Kite for Carnaby's' awareness raising campaign, which saw an impressive 3 metre Carnaby's kite flown at different venues around Perth.

Made possible by crowd funding – and a well feathered thanks to all the readers who contributed – the kite drew attention wherever it was flown. Its success encouraged the CCAG to look to raise the profile of Carnaby's conservation even further in 2018, by successfully seeking to enter Perth's 'Sculptures by the Sea' Exhibition.

Selected from more than 200 applicants from 31 countries, CCAG's 'Fly a kite for Carnaby's Cockatoo Conservation' installation, will be assembled, featuring specially designed small kites, on Cottesloe Beach, on selected days throughout the 2018 Sculptures by the Sea Exhibition, March 2-19.

The installation will involve kite flying. But we don't want to fly just one kite – we want to fly dozens of kites to raise awareness of the need to conserve this iconic species and we need the help of enthusiastic members of the public to achieve this. We are looking for volunteers to be part of kite flying performances at selected times (wind dependent) throughout the Sculptures by the Sea event. Individuals, couples, families and groups are all welcome, but should be prepared to commit to one training session and a minimum of 3 performances, between 4.30-6.30 pm, during the 2 week event. If you are interested – and we really hope you are – please follow this link to register that interest:
<https://goo.gl/forms/c79XskicHvweTb3v1>

Chris Greenwood
Carnaby's Action Group member



The Carnaby's Kite and some of the Carnaby's Cockatoo Action Group.
Photo: Christine Groom

COOMALLO CREEK UPDATE

Rick Dawson provided a breeding update for 2017: Denis Saunders' study site at Coomallo continues to provide interesting data. When research started there in 1969 there were 264 suitable natural hollows available for breeding. This year there were just 89, which sadly means that two thirds of the natural hollows have been lost to natural attrition (fire, senescence, hollow wall or floor collapse, etc) over the past 48 years. This is a huge concern for the future breeding at this site and throughout the range.

Thankfully artificial hollows have proved successful for Carnaby's and their installation, along with revegetation and remnant vegetation retention, will definitely help to boost breeding rates. In 2017 53% of the available natural hollows and 93% of the artificial hollows were used at Coomallo. This shows that at some sites artificial hollows are actually preferred to natural ones.

Adam Peck,
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator

THE COCKY CONSERVATION TEAM

Rebecca Boyland, Southwest Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator

With Tegan Douglas switching roles to become BirdLife WA's Citizen Science Development Coordinator, Rebecca Boyland has joined the flock as the new Southwest Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator. Rebecca is focussed on the two species of Southwest Forest Black-Cockatoos, the Red-tailed and Baudin's. She has a number of projects on the go, including the new citizen science project CockyWatch. You can contact Rebecca if you want to get involved with CockyWatch, or if you know where these species feed, roost for the night, drink or nest, at rebecca.boyland@birdlife.org.au or (08) 9287 2716.

Adam Peck, Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator

Adam works on all things Carnaby's-related - from running the Great Cocky Count, to coordinating black-cockatoo breeding season surveys, raising awareness to making sure the voices of our cockatoos are heard. If you would like to volunteer to assist with these projects or if you know where Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos feed, drink, nest or roost for the night please contact carnabys@birdlife.org.au or (08) 9287 2251.

Vicki Stokes, new WA Program Manager

Helen Bryant, WA Program Manager has sadly left WA and headed east, to Melbourne. Luckily for us she has stayed with BirdLife, just in a different role. We will have Vicki Stokes, our new Perth-based Program Manager for BirdLife Australia's WA funded projects joining the team very soon.

HAD A CHANGE OF ROOST?

If your home or email address changes, or if you don't want to receive Cocky Notes in the future, please let us know at wa@birdlife.org.au.

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Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



natural resource management program



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