

Cocky Notes

Issue 27: Spring/Winter 2018

GREAT COCKY COUNT 2018

The 2018 Great Cocky Count (GCC) was the ninth consecutive GCC and was a great success as always. 750 volunteers were allocated to 440 sites between Geraldton and Esperance. All of the results are in, so here is a summary:

- 416 sites were surveyed April 8th and 223 of these were occupied by Black-Cockatoos.
- 20,316 White-tailed Black-Cockatoos (both Carnaby's and Baudin's) counted at 109 occupied roosts.
- 5,497 Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos (FRT) counted at 83 occupied sites.

These numbers suggest that we counted approximately 40% of all Black-Cockatoos in the Southwest of Western Australia on a single night! (this assumes total populations of 40,000 Carnaby's, 10,000 Baudin's and 15,000 Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos).

31 of the sites surveyed were occupied by both White-tailed and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

63 new sites were surveyed in 2018, with 22 being occupied by WT's, 19 occupied by FRT's and three jointly occupied.

The count at the 'mega roost' east of Yanchep National Park was 6,226 Carnaby's!

65% of Carnaby's roosted within 1km of pine plantations north of Perth, reinforcing the need to protect this critical feeding and roosting habitat.

The FRT count was almost twice that of 2017, which shows their increased use of the Swan Coastal Plain for feeding and roosting (average FRT roost size rose from 32 in 2016 to 67 in 2018).

The ratio of White-tailed pairs to triplets indicates a good breeding year in 2017 (47% were triplets-two adults and a juvenile).

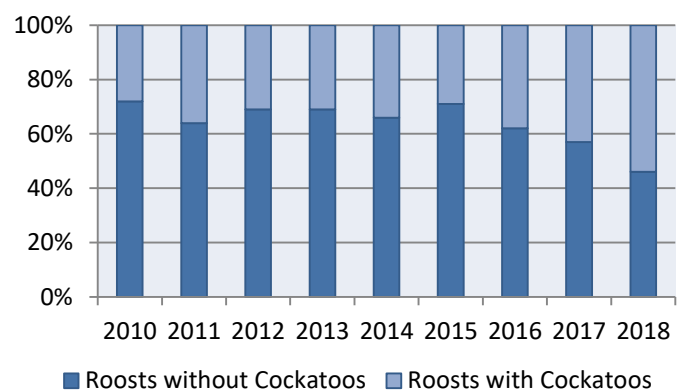
The GCC campouts were a great success. The Cheyne's Beach trip confirmed three new sites, with one site recording 250 Baudin's. The Stirling Range trip also recorded two occupied sites where we often struggle to get volunteers.



Baudin's Black-Cockatoos sitting in a *Banksia grandis*
Photo: Keith Lightbody

A focus on not allocating what we consider to be day roosts (where cockatoos may have a quick kip in the middle of the day, but don't spend the night there) has borne fruit. For the first time in GCC history there were more occupied roosts than unoccupied ones.

Percentage of all sites surveyed which were occupied by Black-Cockatoos (White-tailed, Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos, or both):



Of course we couldn't do it without you! Birdlife would like to thank all the volunteers for their efforts and to the land owners who gave us access to their properties. The results are now being analysed, with the report due to be released in late October. Everyone on the Cocky Notes distribution list will be notified when the GCC report is out.

Adam Peck
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo
Project Coordinator



Major Mitchell's cockatoos, Eyre Bird Observatory WA

"The Eyre Bird Observatory is a very reliable place to photograph a Major Mitchell, the only problem is getting there. Eyre is a difficult 40km 4WD south of Cocklebiddy in the middle of the bight." Photo & words: Darren Hamley

LAND OF COCKATOOS

Australia is the land of cockatoos, home to fourteen of the world's 21 species. In Western Australia we are lucky to have ten different species including Long-billed Corella introduced from Western Victoria.

I recently set an assignment for my year 8 science students to plan a scientific expedition to photograph every species of cockatoo in Australia. The students wrote the plan and I took a month of long-service leave to undertake the expedition. Half of the species in Australia were very easy to locate, including the Galah, Little Corella, Long-billed Corella, Carnaby's, Sulfur Crested, Red-Tailed and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos. Others were not too difficult to find, but almost impossible to take a decent photograph of. In order to capture an image of Baudin's Cockatoo, you need to find some cooperative birds willing to sit in profile exposing their long slender bill differentiating them from the Carnaby's. The best place to find a Baudin's Cockatoo is the Eucalypt woodland around Wungong dam and Bungendore nature reserve.

On paper, the Western Corella should be easy to locate. They have a stable population with a quite specific but limited distribution between the town of Rocky Gully and Lake Muir. In practice, they proved to be very hard to find. I made two trips to the area focusing around the oval and cemetery, both well grassed areas. Eventually I picked one up at the Rocky Gully cemetery a few km out of town.

Nomadic species are always problematic, both the Cockatiel and to a lesser extent Major Mitchell's fit into this category. Fortunately a stable population of Majors can be found at the Eyre, it just takes a bit of a commitment and a good 4WD to get there. You need a little bit of luck to take a good photo of a Cockatiel. When I eventually found a flock North of the Billabong Roadhouse, I had to follow them for kilometres until they eventually found a tree to land in.

The Gang-Gang Cockatoo was meant to be easy to locate in the Canberra Botanic Gardens. I could hear their distinctive 'creaky hinge' call and even spot them in the distance but when they perched the birds were high in dense dark foliage. Less than ideal for photography. The gardens of the Australian National University proved to be an ideal place to find the Gang-Gang on a very cold bright sunny morning.



Gang-gang cockatoo, Australian National University, Canberra

"To locate a Gang-gang cockatoo, you need to listen carefully for the gentle creaky hinge call that it makes while feeding." Photo & words: Darren Hamley

I had never seen a Glossy-black Cockatoo and was not at all confident that I would be able to find one, they are shy and unlike other cockatoos very quiet. With the help of a few locals I found a pair a few hundred kilometres East of Canberra in a thick Casuarina Woodland. All we could hear to help us find them was the gentle cracking and falling of the Casuarina fruit.

My final target was the Palm Cockatoo in far North Queensland which was cut off by floods, so I had to be satisfied with 13/14 Australian cockatoos.

The keys to success for this project were twofold, research and patience. The full gallery of photographs can be found on the Australian Geographic website by searching "darren hamley cockatoo".

Darren Hamley
Teacher, Willetton Senior High School

Darren is a science teacher and the coordinator of gifted education at Willetton Senior High School.

HAD A CHANGE OF ROOST?

If you've moved homes or changed email addresses, or if you don't want to receive Cocky Notes in the future, please let us know at wa@birdlife.org.au.

COCKATOO WORKSHOPS

In May this year, BirdLife Australia held two black-cockatoo workshops, supported by Holcim Australia.

The first workshop at Kaarakin Black-Cockatoo Conservation Centre treated attendees to a unique introduction to these special birds, led by Kaarakin's Education Coordinator Candice Le Roux and her lovely assistant Rex the Carnaby. Lindall Kidd from BirdLife's Threatened Bird Network spoke about the important role of the community in protecting Australia's threatened birds. After this, Adam Peck provided a local perspective, showcasing how knowledge gained is providing us with a strong foundation to conserve our southwest black-cockatoos. In the afternoon, a tour of Kaarakin's grounds walked participants through the different stages involved in black-cockatoo rehabilitation. The day finished with a bit of giving back to our hosts (and the cockies!) by planting native seedlings.

In a second workshop at Edith Cowan University's (ECU) Joondalup campus, BirdLife's Threatened Bird Network's Lindall Kidd and Rebecca Boyland, Forest Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator, shared stories of the great work volunteers are doing across the country to protect our threatened birds, and introduced us to some of our local threatened black-cockatoos, and the work being done to protect them. Candice Le Roux then spoke about her recently completed Masters research into Carnaby's roost preferences on the Swan Coastal Plain and how her findings can provide for targeted management of Carnaby's habitat. Her study showed that there are a variety of tree species used by Carnaby's and on average the trees were tall (>20m) with a single thick trunk and medium foliage density.

The afternoon was spent touring the scenic ECU campus to learn about the breeding ecology of black-cockatoos and seeing how the university assists and monitors Cockatoo breeding efforts on campus. There are two natural hollows and nine



Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Coordinator, Adam Peck, getting up close and personal with a Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in Kaarakin's interactive aviary. Photo: Adam Peck

artificial hollows suitable for black-cockatoos around ECU which are monitored regularly throughout Carnaby's breeding season by a dedicated band of volunteers. In the 2017/18 season three of the nine artificial hollows were used by Carnaby's with three chicks successfully fledging.

If you're interested in helping out with the Cockatoo breeding surveys on ECU campus, get in contact with Candice Le Roux at Candice.Lr@gmail.com. Or if you're keen to help out with breeding surveys a little further afield in WA, read Adam's article below.

A big thank you to BirdLife Australia's Threatened Bird Network for organising these workshops.

Rebecca Boyland
Forest Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator

BREEDING SEASON

Every year Birdlife volunteers visit Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo breeding sites to conduct breeding surveys. These surveys take place between September and December at sites ranging from Geraldton in the north to Ravensthorpe in the south. The information gathered through these surveys feed into a joint Birdlife/DBCA database which tracks breeding success each year.

If you are interested in taking part please email carnabys@birdlife.org.au to let us know.

Please note that the surveys are hard work at times and a certain level of strength and fitness are required. The main method used to survey the hollows is via 'Cocky Cam', made up of a wireless camera attached to a fibreglass telescopic pole. Training can be provided.

If you have Black-Cockatoos breeding near you, or would like to know more about how you or a local community group could survey for black-cockatoos in your patch, please contact carnabys@birdlife.org.au

Adam Peck
Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator



Candice Le Roux leading a tour on Black-Cockatoo breeding ecology at ECU Joondalup Photo: Rebecca Boyland



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

FLYING A KITE FOR CARNABY'S CONSERVATION

A big thank you to all the volunteers who were part of the 'kite flying installation' at Sculptures by the Sea (SxS), at Perth's iconic Cottesloe beach, in March this year. During the multiple one hour performances throughout the exhibition, the skies over Cottesloe beach were metaphorically thick with the sight and sound of a flock of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos, as a way to raise awareness of the plight of this endangered species.

The SxS initiative was the brainchild of the Carnaby's Cockatoo Action Group (CCAG), a volunteer group of Birdlife WA members and concerned public, passionate about the conservation of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos in Perth (and elsewhere).

Formed in 2016 in response to the then state government's Green Growth Plan, which promised to destroy a significant proportion of the Carnaby's feeding grounds, CCAG has three main aims:

To Promote awareness of the endangered plight of the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo.

To Protect and conserve existing habitat by discouraging clearing of native trees and encouraging the planting of food trees and native habitat for the species.

To Plan for the future survival of the species by taking its habitat and food needs in to consideration in future development plans and decisions.

The SxS performance was the first of its kind at the internationally renowned exhibition and drew wide spread attention to the species.

A big thank you to the SxS organisers, selection panel and the thousands of visitors that saw and commented favourably on the performance.

Look out for more activities planned by CCAG. We hope you can join us in future initiatives and share your love of Carnaby's Cockatoos and the need to protect them from extinction in the Perth-Peel region.

Follow CCAG and see images from the SxS event at: <https://www.facebook.com/carnabyscockatooactiongroup>

Channel 7's Today Tonight also did a news item on the event at: <https://www.facebook.com/TodayTonight/videos/1718437201529062/>

Thanks again for your support. CCAG members, Linda, Christine, Laura, Merril, Lynne, Aidon and Chris.

Chris Greenwood
Carnaby's Action Group member



Volunteers flying kites for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo conservation at the 2018 Sculptures by the Sea, Cottesloe
Photo: Christine Groom

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 Community



@birdlifewa



HELP WATCH COCKIES WITH COCKYWATCH

BirdLife's new citizen science project, *CockyWatch* launched in February and is off to a great start with more than 80 surveys having been completed, but we need your help to do more.

To protect Black-Cockatoos and their habitats, we need to know just how many there are, and where their favourite haunts are. This information is critical to conserving them and the *CockyWatch* project will help us answer these questions for all three of our threatened black-cockatoo species in the southwest. That's why we are calling for *CockyWatch* survey data from all across the southwest - from Kalbarri through the southwest to east of Esperance. And each and every survey matters.

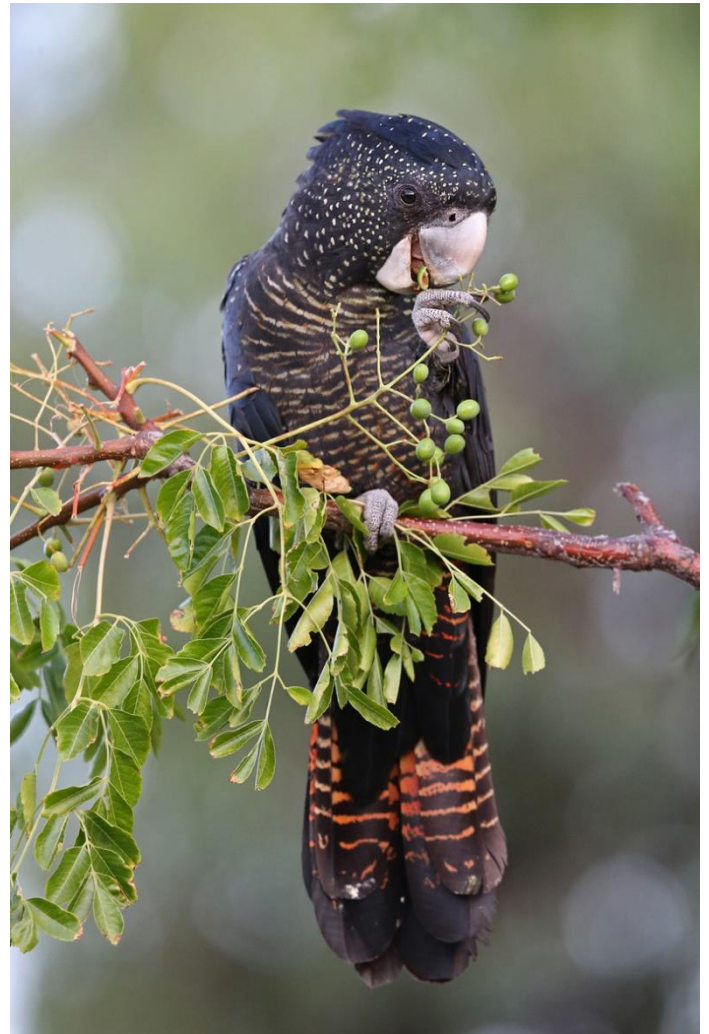
Surveys are easy to do. Any time you're going for a drive that's longer than 10 kilometres, you can do a *CockyWatch* survey. In addition to providing some details on your journey, you count the groups of black-cockatoos you encounter on the way. Visit <http://birdlife.org.au/cockywatch> to find out exactly what details you need to record, and to download the simple-to-use data sheets.

We've had enquiries about whether participants can record their *CockyWatch* survey results electronically. We are working towards putting *CockyWatch* into BirdLife's *Birdata* app, however this is still a little way down the road (pun intended!). For the meantime, the best way for you to record your *CockyWatch* survey results is the old school way, with a data sheet and pencil.

Remember, if you see black-cockatoos at any other time, while not doing a *CockyWatch* survey, you can still let us know through BirdLife's *Birdata* app (<http://birdata.birdlife.org.au/>) as an incidental sighting. These one-off sightings are still useful if you send them to us through *Birdata*, helping us to help feathered friends.

This project is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program which is supported by Royalties for Regions, and developed in partnership with DBCA.

Rebecca Boyland
Forest Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator



Female Forest Red-tail Black-Cockatoo feeding on Cape Lilac
Photo: Keith Lightbody

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

THE COCKY CONSERVATION TEAM

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 and 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 adam.peck@birdlife.org.au or (08) 9287 2251.

Rebecca Boyland, Forest Black-Cockatoo Project Coordinator

Rebecca works 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.

Vicki Stokes, WA Program Manager

Vicki is our new Perth-based manager for BirdLife Australia's WA funded projects, including the Southwest Black-Cockatoo program. Vicki joined the flock in January and we're chuffed she's here. Contact Vicki for questions about the program at vicki.stokes@birdlife.org.au or (08) 9287 2204.



Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo enjoying a Marri fruit
Photo: Keith Lightbody

Cocky Notes is published with funding from State NRM. The Southwest Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program is funded and supported by a number of organisations, including State NRM and those represented here:



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



natural resource
management program



Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats.

With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

[facebook.com/BirdLifeAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/BirdLifeAustralia)
[@BirdlifeOz](https://twitter.com/BirdlifeOz)

birdlife.org.au

Add your voice

join us

Enjoy the rewards of membership, making a real difference for our native birds

volunteer

Contributing your time is one of the most effective ways to help

donate

Help us create positive outcomes for birds and their habitats