

Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*

Conservation Status: Vulnerable

Identification

The red-tailed black cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii* is a red-tailed black cockatoo found throughout the mainland of Australia. The forest red-tailed black cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii naso* is found in the humid and subhumid zones in the south-west. There are two other subspecies found in Western Australia: *Calyptorhynchus banksii macrorhynchus* in the Kimberley and *Calyptorhynchus banksii samueli* in the western arid and semiarid zones of the Pilbara, Midwest and Wheatbelt.



Photos: T. Kirkby

Forest red-tails have a short rounded crest and are a mostly glossy black colour with rectangular orange-red panels on the tail feathers. They have a significantly longer and wider bill compared to *Calyptorhynchus banksii samueli*. They make a loud and harsh 'karee' or 'krar-raak' call. Experts are able to identify which black cockatoo species has been in an area by looking at the bite marks on chewed Marri nuts.

The male has a dark grey bill, and can easily be distinguished from the female which has a whitish bill and pale yellow spots on the head and wings, yellow-orange barring on the breast and belly, and narrow bands of orange-yellow on the tail feathers. Juvenile birds are similar in appearance to the females. Juvenile males begin to lose the spots and barring after the first and second year, with red tail feathers developing between 2.5-5 years of age.

Length: 53-55cm

Weight: 600-610g

Taxonomy

Family: Cacatuidae

Genus: *Calyptorhynchus*

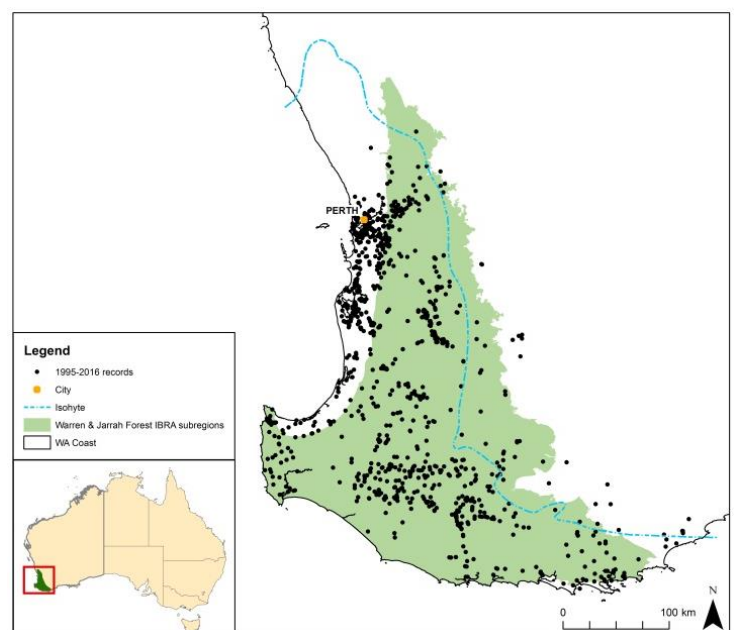
Species: *banksii*

Subspecies: *naso*

Other common names: karrak

Distribution and Habitat

The forest red-tailed black cockatoo is endemic to the humid and subhumid zones of the south-west of WA, generally inhabiting the Jarrah, Marri and Karri forests within the 600mm average rainfall isohyet. Their current distribution ranges from north of Perth to Augusta and Albany, and east to Mount Helena, Christmas Tree Well, North Bannister, Mt Saddleback, Rocky Gully and the upper King River. Family groups and small flocks are now also observed on the Swan Coastal Plain throughout the year. The critical breeding habitat for this species is within remnant patches of old Marri *Corymbia calophylla* trees within the Northern and Southern Jarrah Forest IBRA sub-regions.



Current distribution of forest red-tailed black cockatoos.

It is estimated that the species' range has contracted by 25-36% since widespread vegetation clearing began in the 1950s. The population size was estimated to be 15,000 individuals in 1998 and it is suspected that there have been major declines that are ongoing (>30% over three generations).

For further information regarding the species distribution, please refer to www.naturemap.dpaw.wa.gov.au.

Community Involvement

If you think you have seen a forest red-tailed black cockatoo, fill out a [fauna report form](#) and send it to the Department's Species and Communities Branch at fauna@dbca.wa.gov.au. The Department keeps track of the distributions of threatened species to help monitor population trends and inform management decisions.

The [Great Cocky Count](#) is a long-term citizen science survey that monitors known roost sites of Carnaby's cockatoos, but also takes note of Baudin's and forest red-tailed cockatoos. Anyone can get involved, with volunteers participating in the one-night survey every autumn across the south-west of WA.

Artificial nesting hollows can be installed for any of the black cockatoo species, which allows cockatoos to breed in areas where natural hollows are now limited. The Department of Parks and Wildlife have produced information sheets on [designing, monitoring and maintaining artificial hollows](#) for Carnaby's cockatoos that are applicable for all black cockatoo species.

The Department runs a variety of volunteer projects across WA including scientific research, community education and manual labour. Further information about these opportunities can be found on the Department's [webpage](#).

Biology and Behaviour

Forest red-tailed black cockatoos are very long-lived and individuals may survive in the wild up to 25-50 years. They are a largely sedentary species, living in small flocks (up to 50 individuals) that split into family groups (up to 10 individuals) during the day when foraging. Roost sites are in Jarrah-Marri-Blackbutt habitat generally situated within 4km of potential feeding sites. They are most often observed in small flocks at dawn or dusk as they leave or return to a roost sites. They are sometimes seen associating with the other two black cockatoos (white-tailed) found in the south-west, Carnaby's cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus latirostris* and Baudin's cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus baudinii*.

Approximately 90% of the forest red-tailed black cockatoo diet is made up of Marri *Corymbia calophylla* seeds and Jarrah *Eucalyptus marginata* fruit, but they will also feed on Blackbutt *Eucalyptus patens*, Karri *Eucalyptus diversicolor*, Sheoak *Allocasuarina fraseriana*, Snottygobble *Persoonia longifolia*, *Hakea* species, and the introduced Spotted Gum *Eucalyptus maculata* and the exotic Cape Lilac *Melia azedarach* on the Swan Coastal Plain.

Breeding has been recorded throughout the year with a peak in autumn-winter (April-June) and spring (August-October). Only about 10% of the population breeds each year, and breeding events appear to be linked to the volume of fruit produced by Marri and Jarrah. It is estimated that approximately only 20-50% of Marri trees produce a large crop each year, and Jarrah trees may only flower every four to six year.

Pairs form monogamous bonds and will mate for life, and generally start breeding from four years of age. For nesting they require large natural hollows that form in very large and old (>100 years old) Marri trees. Nest hollows have a diameter of approximately 30cm and are generally more than 1m deep. Both adults in a pair are involved in selecting the nest hollow, usually in the vicinity of other nesting cockatoos. The female is then responsible for preparing the hollow for breeding. Incubation lasts between 29-31 days and the chick is fully feathered within 48 days.

Conservation Status

The forest red-tailed black cockatoo is recognised as a threatened species under State and Commonwealth legislation. In Western Australia the species is listed as fauna that is 'likely to become extinct' in the wild (Specially Protected) under the [Wildlife Conservation Act 1950](#) and has been assigned the threat status ranking of Vulnerable using [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#) (IUCN) criteria. Nationally the species is listed as Vulnerable under the Commonwealth [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#).

The species has experienced a continued population decline in the past 60 years. Nest hollow shortage is considered to be the principal threat to the species; a large number of suitable trees have been felled in the past and are likely to continue to be lost due to mining activities, timber harvesting and fires. Other threats currently impacting on the species include:

- Competition for limited nest hollows with other cockatoos, native ducks and feral Honey bees
- Ongoing habitat loss from vegetation clearing and selective removal of Marri trees;
- Death and injury resulting from vehicle strike;
- Past illegal shooting; and
- Reduced food and nest availability due to fires and climate change.

Management

Recovery Plan

A [national recovery plan](#) has been produced for the two forest black cockatoos, Baudin's cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus baudinii* and forest red-tail black cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*. The plan outlines the recovery actions required to stop further decline in breeding populations and to ensure their persistence throughout their range (DEC, 2008). Management objectives from this plan for the forest red-tailed black cockatoo include:

- Eliminate illegal shooting and develop non-lethal means of mitigating fruit damage by Baudin's cockatoo in orchards.
- Map feeding and breeding habitat, and identify and manage important sites.
- Determine patterns and significance of movement.
- Monitor demographic indicators (population size, distribution, trends).
- Identify factors affecting the number of breeding attempts and breeding success and manage nest hollows to increase recruitment.
- Determine and implement ways to: remove feral honeybees from nesting hollows, minimise the effects of mining and urban development on habitat loss, and manage forests for conservation.
- Maintain and promote community awareness and support.

Existing Conservation Measures

The Forest Black Cockatoo Recovery Team, led by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, has been assisting with the implementation of recovery actions as outlined in the recovery plan since 2005.

The [Western Australian Museum](#) and the [Water Corporation](#) launched the [Cockatoo Care](#) research initiative in 2001, with the aim of researching the distribution and ecology of black cockatoos and threats to their survival, as well as implementing measures to encourage the conservation of the species.

BirdLife Australia has a [Southwest Black-Cockatoo Recovery Program](#), which has involved working on recovery actions for black cockatoos since 2001.

The Department, BirdLife Australia and the WA Museum have been involved in installing artificial nest hollows, and repairing damaged and degraded natural nest hollows.

The Department of the Environment and Energy has published a [referral guideline](#) for the three species of black cockatoos in WA, which provide guidance for vegetation clearing and other activities that could have a significant impact on the species and their habitats.

[Kaarakin](#), a black cockatoo conservation centre, and [Perth Zoo](#) are involved in rehabilitating injured black cockatoos for release back into the wild. Kaarakin also revegetates areas of degraded bushland and educates the community about the conservation of these species.

Damage Prevention and Control

Forest red-tailed black cockatoos are not known to cause any damage to commercial crops in the south-west. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the species was shot for sport and food and to collect the feathers for decorative purposes. There are also records of shooting of forest red-tailed black cockatoos between 1999-2000 because of supposed damage to blue gums (DEC, 2008). Killing of black cockatoos has been considered an offence since 1989 under the provisions of the Western Australian [Wildlife Conservation Act 1950](#). Unfortunately, black cockatoos continue to be illegally shot each year, resulting in injuries and deaths. Offenders may face a fine of up to \$10,000.

Studies have shown that shooting or otherwise destroying black cockatoos is not an effective means of preventing damage. The Department's fact sheets on [minimising damage to crops](#) outline how to control damage caused by black cockatoos using non-lethal methods, including various scaring techniques and exclusion netting.

If you suspect black cockatoos are being harmed or captured, or find an injured or dead cockatoo, call the [Wildcare 24-hour Helpline](#) on (08) 9474 9055.

Related Information Sheets

Department of Parks and Wildlife fact sheets: [Bird Control in Orchards](#)

BirdLife Australia webpage and brochure: [Identify your Black-Cockatoo](#)

Western Australian Museum webpage and fact sheet: [Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo](#)

Citation

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. (2017). *Fauna Profile - Forest red-tailed black cockatoo Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*. Retrieved from <http://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/>

Key References and Further Reading

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