

Black-Cockatoo numbers down again

It's been a familiar sight around Perth for decades — flocks of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos winging their way to their evening roost sites. Enjoy them while you can. Updated research from BirdLife Australia shows that flocks are getting smaller as the population of these large, white-tailed, black-cockatoos declines each year.

"Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos are found only in WA," said Tegan Douglas, BirdLife Australia's Cockies in Crisis Project Coordinator.

"Earlier this year, over 600 people took part in BirdLife Australia's annual Great Cocky Count, at nearly 300 sites across the Greater Perth–Peel region, as well as sites as far north as the Chapman Valley, inland to Narrogin and east to Esperance."

"We asked our volunteers to count the cockatoos as they flew in to evening roost sites," Tegan continued. "Each year the number of sites we've surveyed has increased, but the number of cockies recorded has declined."

This year, the minimum number of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos recorded in the Greater Perth–Peel Region was 5518 birds, continuing the drop in numbers from previous years' counts.

Analyses of numbers from seven Great Cocky Counts have shown a significant, ongoing decline in their population, a reduction in flock size as well as fewer occupied roost sites around Perth.

"If the current trend continues, the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo population of the Perth–Peel Coastal Plain will continue to decline at a rate of roughly 15 per cent each year."

Nearly half of the black-cockatoos recorded were in the Gnangara Pine Plantation, north of Perth, emphasising the site's importance for Perth's Carnaby's population.

"Perth suburbs continue to expand into the bushland that traditionally supported black-cockatoos. So the black-cockatoos moved into the pine plantations for food and shelter, but now these plantations are being cleared and not replaced."

The *Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions* currently being prepared must ensure protection of roost sites and feeding habitat to stem the decline and ensure these iconic West Australians survive in the region.

"Carnaby's are a big casualty of urban sprawl," Tegan said, adding that bringing an end to clearing of native vegetation for urban expansion will protect the birds while also benefiting people through better urban design.

The 2015 Great Cocky Count was supported by the Perth Region NRM, with additional support from the Peel–Harvey Catchment Council, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. The project underpins the Department of Parks & Wildlife Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo Recovery Plan.

The 2015 Great Cocky Count report will be launched on Friday 30 October at 1.30 pm, at the WA Threatened Species Forum, Durack Institute of Technology in Geraldton.

You can find out more about the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo and download the report at <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/southwest-black-cockatoo-recovery/publications-and-forms>.

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