

Great Cocky Count 2011 Report Summary

2011 Report Released

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo is a threatened species, endemic to south-western Australia. In the non-breeding season, most of the cockatoos move from the wheatbelt where they breed, to coastal and near coastal areas, including the Perth Metropolitan Area and other parts of the Swan Coastal Plain. The birds are vulnerable to increasing levels of clearing for urban and industrial development in areas where human populations are rapidly growing.

The Great Cocky Count

In 2006, BirdLife Australia (formerly Birds Australia) conducted the first Great Cocky Count to estimate the population of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo (CBC) in the Perth region. Since 2010, an annual Great Cocky Count has been established with the support of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC). The Count uses a standardised method that is rigorous and repeatable.



Findings from the 2011 Report

The report for the 2011 Great Cocky Count, just released, details the findings of the count conducted on 7 April 2011, which identified CBC roost sites throughout the species' range and provided a population estimate for the DEC Swan Region.

In 2011, the range of the survey expanded to include 323 locations from Geraldton to Esperance: 123 confirmed roosts, 35 unconfirmed roost sites, and 165 potential roosts. The Count formally surveyed 185 sites, utilising 263 volunteer observers. Despite extensive survey effort, only 11 new roost sites were identified in the DEC Swan Region, suggesting that few large roosts were overlooked during the 2010 Great Cocky Count.

There were changes in the results between the 2010 and 2011 Great Cocky Counts. In 2011, there was a statistically significant decline of 37% from 6,672 CBCs counted in 2010 to 4,222 counted in 2011, in the DEC Swan Region. In the Greater Perth Region, there was a statistically significant ($p = 0.002$) decline of 34% from 6,282 CBCs counted in 2010 to 4,143 counted in 2011.

Statistical modelling based on the total count of 4,222 CBCs in 2011 suggests an estimated total population of 5,177 to 8,629 birds for the DEC Swan Region. At 65 matched roost locations, there was a statistically significant decline ($p < 0.01$, 40%) in the number of birds counted in 2011 (3,038 birds) compared with 2010 (5,058 birds).

Four follow-up surveys performed at monthly intervals following the 2011 Count confirmed this population decline, showing a mean 19% decline in numbers of birds compared with time-matched surveys performed in 2010 Count follow-up surveys.

On the night of the 2011 Great Cocky Count, 64 of the 185 sites surveyed (35%) were occupied by cockatoos, supporting the view that many roost locations are not occupied all of the time and that the number of birds using them will vary from night to night.



Between the 2010 and 2011 Counts, there was a change in the way CBCs utilised the roosts. Overall, the number of birds utilising roosts decreased. The number of roosts with 151-500 cockatoos reduced by 42% and no roosts had more than 500 birds. There was a 66% increase in the number of roosts that had 150 or fewer birds. The reason for smaller numbers of birds at roosts in 2011 is unclear.

The 2011 Great Cockey Count has confirmed that the method is a repeatable, valid and robust way of generating accurate counts of numbers of cockatoos on a single night at known roosts. In addition, the follow-up surveys also validate the Count technique as a repeatable method and indicate that nightly variation from roost to roost did not have a significant impact on counts. In order to assess the long term decrease or increase of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo there is a critical need to continue surveying CBC roost locations at least annually over the long term.

Key facts

- The Great Cockey Count counted Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos in the Perth region in 2006, 2010 and 2011.
- The 2010 and 2011 Counts have used standardised, rigorous surveys that allow for defensible estimations of the population in the Swan Region around Perth.
- Between 2010 and 2011, there was a drop in the number of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos counted.
- Between 2010 and 2011, there was a decrease in the size of larger flocks of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos at night roosts.
- It is critical that as many members of the public, and BirdLife Australia members, contribute to Great Cockey Counts so that we can continue to monitor the rate of increase or decrease of numbers at night roosts.
- The 2012 Great Cockey Count will take place for an hour at sunset on Sunday 15 April. For the cockies, join us!

More information

The full version of the 2011 Great Cockey Count report and the 2010 Count report is available at birdlife.org.au/carnabys

2012 Great Cockey Count on 15 April

Get involved in the 2012 Great Cockey Count, contact our Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo project officer, Tamara Kabat.

Tamara Kabat

M 0457 333 177

E greatcockycount@birdlife.org.au



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