



Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

ENDANGERED

GENERAL INFORMATION

March 2005

There are five sub-species of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. The South-eastern Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptrorhynchus banksii graptogyne*) is only found in south-east South Australia and south-west Victoria. With an estimated population of only 800 - 1000 birds, it is in danger of extinction. Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos nest from Spring through to Autumn, mostly in dead Red Gums in farmed paddocks. The single egg is incubated by the female. The male spends his day feeding and returns in the evening to feed his mate. Nestlings are fed only by the female, who leaves the nest for longer periods as the chick develops. Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos are 55-60 cm in length and may live in the wild for more than 30 years.

FOOD

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos feed almost entirely on the seeds of Brown Stringybark, Desert Stringybark and Buloke trees. Past clearing of these trees is a major contributing factor to their population decline. You can often see where they have been eating by the trash of leaves, twigs and cracked nuts left on the forest floor - these are called 'chewings'. Like most cockatoos, the Red-tail drinks daily.

NESTS

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos nest in large hollows formed in old eucalypts, particularly dead Red Gums but also in other large live and dead eucalypts. Many of these dead trees were ringbarked in the early 1900's. These trees and other trees with hollows are often removed for firewood or to tidy a paddock for farming. It is essential for Red-tails to have access to suitable nest trees and farmers are helping by protecting trees with hollows.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

1. Protect dead and live trees with hollows.
2. Avoid burning areas of stringybark as this reduces their food supply.
3. Fence off existing stands of Stringybark and Buloke to allow regeneration.
4. Take part in the annual survey, ring 1800 262 062 for details.
5. Ring 1800 262 062 with any sighting of Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos.
6. Protect stands of younger Red gums for roosting.
7. Plant new stands of Stringybark and Buloke.

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

1. Make sure it is a Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo and not the more common Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo. Apart from a yellow tail and cheek, the Yellow-tail has a very different call to the Red-tail. The Yellow-tail often feeds in pine plantations. The Red-tail does not eat pine seeds.
2. Once you become familiar with the Red-tail call, see if you can tell the difference between adults and young birds. The young birds or 'squeakers' make a begging, squeaky call. Look for birds in a family group of three - quite often one is young and will 'squeak' constantly.
3. Identify males from females. This can be hard when birds are in flight. Look at their bill - the males have a dark grey bill while the females have an off-white bill. When landing, the birds spread their tail feathers and it's quite easy to pick the all red male from the female tail, which goes from orange through to red at the tip. Females also have flecks through their plumage. Young birds all have female plumage.

The Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team is a joint project involving Birds Australia, Department of Environment & Heritage, Department of Sustainability and Environment and Department for Environment and Heritage (South Australia).

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WHERE CAN I SEE A RED-TAILED BLACK-COCKATOO?

The map shows the range of the south-east sub-species of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, but this is a very large area in which to search. We suggest the best chance of seeing one of these beautiful but rare birds, is to search in Brown and Desert Stringybark forests in the early evening till dusk, when the birds noisily fly to watering sites and then to roost.



HAPPY RED-TAIL BLACK-COCKATOO SPOTTING!!

Remember to record your sightings and post to:
BIRDS AUSTRALIA P.O. BOX 243, CASTERTON, VIC 3311
OR RING 1800 262 062

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