

Red-tail nest confirmation procedure

The Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo Recovery Team is conducting an exciting new incentive to locate nest trees. The information below will help you identify if Red-tails are using the nest. It sets the procedure for checking if a nest is being used by Red-tails by describing typical Red-tail nesting behaviour. Knowing the Red-tail call is important, if you are unsure of the Red-tail call check our website to distinguish between Red-tail and Yellow-tails (www.redtail.com.au)

Equipment; GPS, Binoculars, camera, note pad, warm clothes, food and drink!

Arrive in plenty of time 4.00pm is good, maybe a little later in summer (minimum of 2.5 hours before sunset).

Use your car as a hide and park as inconspicuously as possible (eg next to a bush, under a tree) about 100m away from suspected tree.

If the nest is in use and the female is 'sitting' the male will return in the evening to feed her. Alternatively, if there is an older chick (alone in the nest) the male and female will approach the tree together, with the female coming to the nest site to feed the chick. He will call on and off as he approaches the nest and then may settle in a nearby tree, occasionally calling (more quietly now). As the male approaches or after he has landed in a nearby tree the female will drop silently out of the hollow and quickly join the male. This behaviour is expected to reduce predators (possums/ravens?) from observing the exact location of the hollow and it can be very tricky to catch the moment, especially if there are more than one suspect tree in the paddock.

The male will often feed the female straight away and then the two will move off to water and continue feeding. They will probably be out of sight by now. The male will continue to feed the female at intervals and they may even feed directly from stringybark trees.

The two will return in about an hour (but sometimes much sooner so don't be caught out). If you didn't see which hollow was being used, now is the time to record it. The female will resume her place in nest (backing into the hole) and the male will often hang around for a time gently calling before taking off to roost elsewhere for the night.

You can go home now also!

Please record details such as times of events and a photo of the tree, GPS location with bird if possible. You will also need to describe which hollow is in use. Remember that birds can leave a nest permanently if disturbed.

Other notes on Red-tail nesting

Nests started in January to autumn are likely to be re-nestings after failures. They lay one egg which is incubated for about 30 days, hatched and the chick remains in the nest for about 87 days. Feeding may continue by parents for another six months after the chicks leave the nest.

Our Red Tails range widely and individual birds, from year to year, can nest in quite different areas. They require large hollows in either trunk or branch but can't be more than 45' off vertical. This is because the birds enter the hollow and descend tail first to the floor of the hollow where they make their nest. Over 95% of known nest sites are within 2km, and all within 5km, of blocks of stringybark. They can nest in loose colonies with several nests within 1km² and a minimum of 40m between active nests. The same nesting hollow may be used in successive years or could also be reused after being vacant for several years. They show a preference for dead trees (81%), but also use live trees. Nests are most often found in farmland (perhaps because they are more easily spotted here) containing scattered live and dead Red Gums.

In the wild they have been recorded nesting successfully in all seasons of the year but generally, the breeding season commences in September. Nests with an egg are often found up until December.