

glossy black-cockatoo

HELPING THEM IN THE WILD

where are glossy-black-cockatoos found?

The glossy black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) has a patchy distribution in Australia, having once been widespread across most of the south-eastern part of the country. It is now distributed throughout an area which extends from the coast near Eungella in eastern Queensland to Mallacoota in Victoria. An isolated population of glossy black-cockatoos is also known to live on Kangaroo Island, South Australia, (Garnett 1993). The species has become regionally extinct in parts of western Victoria and south-eastern South Australia.

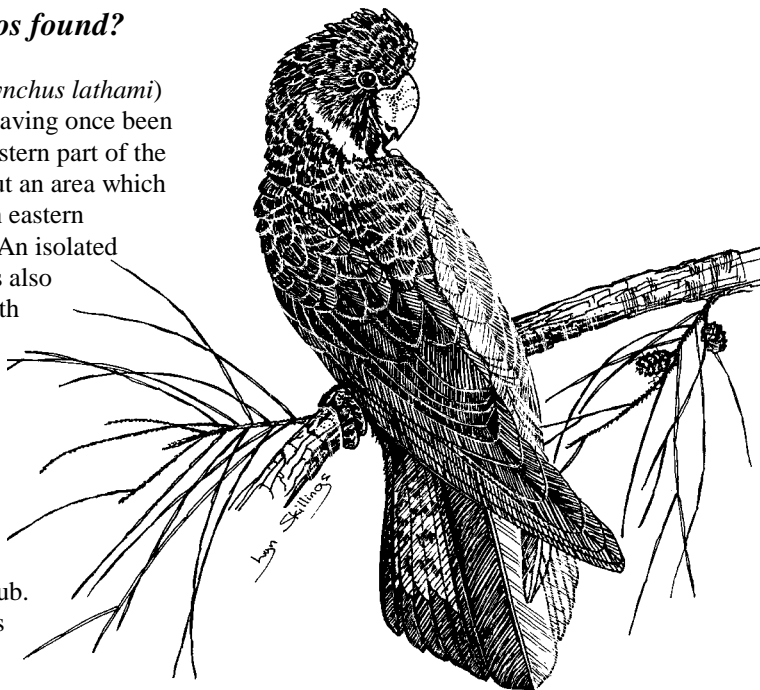
The current distribution of the glossy black-cockatoo in NSW covers areas from the coast to the tablelands, and as far west as the Riverina and Pilliga Scrub. In the west the glossy black-cockatoo is found in an area from Inverell to Warrumbungle National Park near Coonabarabran and in the hilly areas west to Cobar, including the Hervey Range, in Mount Hope, Hillston and Griffith, including the Lachlan and Cocoparra Range, and south to Narrandera Range, south-west of Ardlethan (Pizzey 1980).

The glossy black-cockatoo lives in coastal woodlands and drier forest areas, open inland woodlands or timbered watercourses where casuarina, its main food trees, are common.

It is thought that glossy black-cockatoos prefer to live in rugged country, where extensive clearing has not taken place. Brigalow scrub or hilly rocky country containing casuarina species tend to be the preferred habitat within inland NSW (Ayers et al. 1996).



■ Location of the glossy black-cockatoo



other facts about glossy-black-cockatoos

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

The glossy black-cockatoo is around 46–50 cm long and is generally smaller than other black-cockatoos. It is a brownish black colour with a small crest. There are some distinct differences in appearance between male and female birds. The male can be identified by the browner colour on the head and underparts and by bright red panels in the black tail. The female has a wider tail which is red to reddish-yellow barred with black; yellow markings may also be apparent around the head area.

BREEDING

The glossy black-cockatoo prefers to nest in hollows found in large, old eucalypt trees, alive or dead. The typical nest tree may have a nest site around 3–30 metres above the ground and the nest hollow is generally lined with decayed debris. In NSW breeding takes place from March to August, with one egg, white in colour, being produced. In some instances both the male and female parent feed the chick, whilst the female will brood the chick overnight. At other times the male will not feed the young, and the female will brood and feed the young.

It is thought that breeding occurs throughout the glossy black-cockatoo's range, including Goonoo and Bidden State Forests, the Narrandera Range and Rankin Spring (Ayers et al. 1996).

There is a tendency for glossy black-cockatoos to nest in the same areas as other nesting pairs, sometimes even sharing the same nest tree.

WHAT DO THEY EAT?

The glossy black-cockatoo generally prefers to feed from the seeds of mature casuarina trees, although they occasionally eat seeds from eucalypts, angophora, acacias and hakeas, as well as eating insect larvae (Crome & Shields 1992). In central west NSW they also eat the seeds of cypress pine (Peet, J., personal communication).

In north-eastern NSW the main food source is seeds from the forest oak casuarina (*Allocasuarina torulosa*) and the black oak casuarina (*A. littoralis*). In south-eastern NSW seeds from black oak casuarina are the favoured food source. Glossy black-cockatoos favour eucalypt-pine-acacia-casuarina woodland in inland NSW.

The drooping she-oak (*A. verticillata*) and belah (*Casuarina cristata/C. pauper*) are their favourite feed trees in this area (Smith et al. 1995). The glossy black-cockatoo has been known to eat the soft, green, unripe cones of the casuarina and cypress pines but the hard, woody cones are generally left uneaten (Peet, J., personal communication).

A study undertaken at Eden in NSW indicated that the glossy black-cockatoo is selective in its choice of feed trees, the favoured casuarina producing seeds with a high nutrient value (Crome & Shields 1992). A pair of glossy black-cockatoos may make short visits to various feed trees within a small area, checking the quality of the seeds. Once satisfied, the pair will settle in the one feed tree and harvest all the cones within reach. As such, the presence of a glossy black-cockatoo is often indicated by a layer of cracked cones and fragments that have accumulated under favoured casuarina trees (Crome & James 1992).

It is estimated that the birds spend at least 88 percent of their time foraging (Clout 1989).

threats to glossy-black-cockatoos

Since European settlement, a major threat to the survival of the glossy black-cockatoo is the clearing of casuarina trees in woodland areas, and the loss of mature eucalypts for nest hollows. The Riverina in NSW is one area in the bird's range that has suffered a major decline in population due to the removal of habitat (Garnett 1993). There has also been evidence to suggest that some of the glossy black-cockatoos from this region have been trapped for the illegal bird trade.

Changes in the fire regime in eastern Australia since European settlement have also contributed to the loss of habitat for the glossy black-cockatoo. Casuarina trees are very fire-sensitive, and easily killed in an intense fire (Clout 1989; Ayers et al. 1996). Large dead trees where the birds nest may also be destroyed in a fire (Clout 1989).

Nest predation by feral cats and possums, as well as competition for nests from galahs and introduced honeybees, threaten the glossy black-cockatoo. Possums invading nests have been a significant problem for the glossy black-cockatoos on Kangaroo Island, due in part to increased numbers of possums on the island. A possum has been also found in the nest hollow of a glossy black-cockatoo at Narrandera Range (Ayers et al. 1996).

The breeding success of the glossy black-cockatoo is considered to be linked to the proximity of food trees and nest trees. Fragmentation of habitat has a detrimental effect on the successful breeding of the bird. Its specific diet can make it vulnerable to changes in the environment. For example, in the Western Australian wheatbelt area, the white-tailed black-cockatoo is now extinct due in part to the increased patchiness of food trees (Garnett 1993).

The full impact on the glossy black-cockatoo from threats such as habitat clearing and modification is still unknown, as the bird has a relatively long life span, and the effect from these threats may not yet be fully evident on population numbers.

Recognising these threats, the glossy black-cockatoo is listed as vulnerable in NSW, under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. If action is not taken to stop these threats, the glossy black-cockatoo is likely to become endangered across its range in NSW.



what you can do to help glossy black-cockatoos

- As the glossy black-cockatoo feeds mostly on casuarinas and nests in eucalypts, retain existing stands of casuarina/eucalypt and extend this habitat where possible.
- Many casuarinas and eucalypts have previously been removed due to land clearing, for grazing and crops. Encourage regeneration and re-establish stands of casuarinas and eucalypts as they are essential for the habitat and food source of the glossy black-cockatoo.
- As the glossy black-cockatoo nests in both living and dead trees, removing dead trees for firewood and other uses is harmful to bird, as nesting will not occur if suitable nest hollows are not present. Consider using fallen, dry, green wood and allocate areas for wood collection on your property.
- Planting favourable tree species, such as casuarina, in rural areas and on urban fringes can provide feeding habitat and breeding sites. Tree planting can link and provide flight paths to protect and connect existing breeding and feeding sites.
- Watch out for suspicious situations which may indicate illegal trapping or poaching activities. If you suspect any illegal activities, report them to Wildlife Watch (freecall 1 800 819 375).
- If you find an injured or displaced glossy black-cockatoo, contact the National Parks and Wildlife Service or a registered voluntary group, such as WIRES, as soon as possible.
- Don't let your pets wander unsupervised at night. Domestic dogs and cats kill glossy black-cockatoos.

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