



Glossy Black-Cockatoo – a vulnerable species

The distinctive Glossy Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*) risks becoming extinct in the ACT region in the medium-term future unless active steps are taken to protect and improve its habitat.

Declared a vulnerable species by the ACT Flora and Fauna Committee in 2010, the cockatoo is also listed as endangered, vulnerable or threatened by the Australian, New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian and Queensland governments.

The Glossy Black-Cockatoo is the smallest of the black cockatoos. The male has distinctive red panels on his tail, while the female has yellow patches around her neck/head and orange/red and black horizontal bars across her tail.

These social birds usually gather in pairs or family groups that often combine to form larger feeding flocks. Pairs lay only one egg a season, with young hatching from April to September. The young stay with their parents for at least a year and can live longer than 15 years.



Glossy Black-Cockatoos live in open forests and woodlands of the coast and the Great Dividing Range up to 1000 metres elevation. They need large hollow-bearing eucalypts for nest sites.

The birds are fussy eaters. In the ACT they feed almost exclusively on the cones and seeds of mature age Drooping Sheoaks (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) in larger stands. They are highly selective of both the trees and the cones they favour, often returning to particular trees.

The major feeding and breeding areas in Canberra are on Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie, though the birds have been sighted at Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve, the Pinnacle Nature Reserve, the National Botanical Gardens, Kowen Forest Park and Rob Roy Nature Reserve.

Conservation threats

It is estimated only 10,000 adults remain in the wild across Australia. The main threats to the Glossy Black-Cockatoo include:

- loss of canopy seedbanks of the sheoak through clearing or regular burning
- loss of hollow bearing nesting trees near the feeding areas
- encroachment of urban development on remnant woodland
- low density and patchy distribution of the birds
- climate change, with drought leading to a lower breeding rate.

Conservation actions

The ACT Government aims to protect the Glossy Black-Cockatoo by protecting the bird and conserving its habitat, particularly in the ACT's nature reserves. Actions are being driven by the action plan for the cockatoo and the ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy.

Conservation actions include:

- gaining better information about the birds and their ecology to better understand and manage ecological threats and develop management strategies
- protecting and, where possible, expanding their habitat through nature reserves, connectivity between woodlands and planting more drooping sheoaks.



Current status

The main nesting and feeding sites for the Glossy Black-Cockatoo are on Mount Majura and Mount Ainslie. Being nature reserves, they protect the birds habitat.

Community groups have helped create more feeding sites by planting Drooping Sheoaks at Goorooyarroo Nature Reserve, Tuggeranong Hill, Isaacs Ridge Nature Reserve, Wanniassa Hills Nature Reserve and Red Hill Nature Reserve. Planting will increase the existing size and connectivity of stands allowing birds more options for feeding and breeding.

More information

- Action Plan No. 33: Glossy Black-Cockatoo
- Action Plan No. 27: Woodlands for Wildlife: ACT Lowland Woodland Conservation Strategy
- http://www.environment.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/234480/actionplans10.pdf
- Australian Government environment protection and biodiversity conservation: <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/protect/species-communities.html>
- Plans of management for relevant nature reserves in the ACT
- Canberra Ornithologists Group (www.canberrabirds.org.au)

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Acknowledgements

Photo courtesy of Geoffrey Dabb.