

LIVING WITH GLOSSY BLACKS:

GLOSSY BLACK-COCKATOOS IN URBAN AREAS

The Glossy Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathamii*) is one of the rarest and most threatened of Australia's cockatoos. The species is restricted to eastern and south-eastern Australia, throughout which they are uncommon and declining, and is currently listed as Vulnerable under Queensland legislation. South-east Queensland (SEQ) has some of the most significant populations in Australia, including those around the southern Moreton Bay islands, Gold Coast hinterland and the Sunshine Coast.

It is acknowledged that most new sightings and records of the species in SEQ come from community members and that none can monitor the region as easily and effectively as local residents. The birds are even known to feed and breed in urban yards and residential areas where there are she-oaks present. Consequently, the maintenance of resources in urban areas may be crucial to their long-term future in the SEQ region and increased community awareness and voluntary monitoring and protection of she-oaks within these areas will contribute to a more secure future for the bird.

GLOSSY BLACK-COCKATOO IDENTIFICATION (GETTING IT RIGHT)

Unlike other cockatoos, Glossy Blacks (**Plate 1**) are generally secretive and are not raucous - they call little and then in subdued notes. When seen, however, they are still commonly mistaken for other species, notably the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*) (**Plate 2**) and Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (*C. funereus*) (**Plate 3**). In appearance, Glossy Blacks are most readily distinguished by their broad, bulbous bill; dull, brownish tinge on the head and breast (despite the name!); and low, rounded crest, whereas both Red-tails and Yellow-tails are bigger, 'blacker' birds, the former with a larger, helmet-like crest and the latter with distinctive, large yellow panels in a long tail. Glossy-blacks are also usually seen in pairs or small groups (as opposed to Yellow-tails and Red-Tails, which often occur in large flocks) and their call (distant, drawn-out "tarr-red") is softer and more feeble than Red-Tails (far-carrying, drawn out trumpet sound "kree", like a rusty windmill) and Yellow-tails (weird, far-carrying squeal - "wee-lar").



Plate 1: Female Glossy Black-Cockatoo (photo: Terrie Saunders)



Plate 2: Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos (photo: Birds QLD)



Plate 3: Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo (photo: Bob Inglis)

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of Glossy Blacks is that they feed almost exclusively on the seeds of the cones of she-oaks (*Casuarina* and *Allocasuarina*) via a flexible wrist and a tough, specially shaped beak.

Unfortunately, despite the common occurrence of she-oaks throughout SEQ, the birds do not feed on all trees available in an area. They tend to favour particular species and select specific trees, showing fidelity to them over time.



The glossy black conservancy is a not for profit consortium that seeks to increase awareness and promote a collaborative conservation management approach for Glossy Black-Cockatoos across SEQ, through a partnership between government, private enterprise, researchers and the wider community. Information included in this fact sheet does not necessarily express the views of all Conservancy partners.

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As such, the birds are only using a small part (often < 1%) of the potential resource.

In addition to the presence of feed trees, water is seen as a key limiting factor in the birds' distribution in SEQ. After all, eating nothing but she-oak seeds all day is thirsty work! Unfortunately, accessible surface water is often scarce during the dry season, which also coincides with the Glossy-Black's breeding season. However, the birds are opportunistic and extensively use waterholes created by humans that are a by-product of other activities (e.g. quarrying, road-works) and also purposely built watering points such as bird baths.

The other key limiting factor for the species during this time is the presence of large hollows (usually within Eucalypts) in which to breed.

PROTECTING/PROVIDING RESOURCES IN URBAN AREAS

The greatest threat to the Glossy Black-Cockatoo is from habitat destruction, which includes both feed tree and nesting hollow loss. Maintaining and planting feed trees in the urban environment provides increased foraging availability for the Glossy Black-Cockatoo throughout their range. Having feed trees in 'your' garden might mean a group of Glossy Black-Cockatoos stay in your area for many days and return on frequent occasions to forage. Preferred she-oak species in SEQ include:

Allocasuarina littoralis (black she-oak)

Usually a small tree up to 10m with greyish black, rough, fissured bark. Branchlets with 4 teeth and cones typically smaller and more elongate than *A. torulosa* (Plates 4 and 5).

Allocasuarina torulosa (forest she-oak)

Tree up to 20 m with grey to reddish brown and somewhat corky, deeply fissured bark. Branchlets with 6-8 teeth and cones typically larger and more spherical than *A. littoralis*.



Plate 4: Comparison of *A. littoralis* and *A. torulosa* branchlets



Plate 5: Comparison of *A. littoralis* and *A. torulosa* cones

Where practical and safe, also strive to protect, maintain or enhance known or potential water sources and nesting trees/hollows in your area. If you already have Glossies in the area, you could even try installing a bird bath to see if they become regular afternoon visitors.

REPORT SIGHTINGS TO THE CONSERVANCY

Monitoring of Glossy Black-Cockatoo populations in SEQ needs your help. This not only includes sightings of the bird, but also the locations of known resources. The best way to find out if a she-oak has been used as a feed tree is to find an 'Ort' (Plate 6) - the discarded chewed cone from a she-oak. These can be found under a feed tree for several weeks following foraging.



Plate 6: Chewed she-oak (*A. littoralis*) cones (Orts)

If you find a Glossy Black-Cockatoo, feed tree, watering point and/or nesting tree, the following data should be collected:

- A detailed description (or GPS point) of where the observation took place;
- The date of the observation;
- How many birds were observed and/or what type of resource was located;
- If seen, what activity the birds were engaged in (feeding, drinking, etc); and
- If possible, a photo or small sample of orts collected.

All sightings can be submitted using email GBC@biodiversity.tv or by using the online form at www.glossyblack.org.au.

