

# Great Cocky Count 2013 Report Summary

## Carnaby's numbers up in Perth, but remain down on 2010

### Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo

Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo is a threatened species, endemic to south-western Australia. In the non-breeding season, most of the cockatoos move from the wheatbelt where they breed, to coastal and near coastal areas, including the Perth Metropolitan Area and other parts of the Swan Coastal Plain. The birds are vulnerable to increasing levels of clearing for urban and industrial development in areas where human populations are rapidly growing.

### The Great Cocky Count

The Great Cocky Count (GCC) is a synchronised community-based survey that monitors Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos flying into their night-time roosts. In 2006, BirdLife Australia conducted the first GCC to estimate the population of Carnaby's in the Perth region. Since 2010, an annual GCC has been conducted. The 2013 GCC was funded by Perth Region NRM through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country program. The GCC counts as many cockatoos as possible on a single night each April.



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### The 2013 Count: key findings

The report details the findings of the GCC conducted on 7 April 2013, which monitored Carnaby's roost sites throughout the species' range and provided a minimum population count for the Swan Region.

In 2013, 93 new sites were identified, including 28 confirmed Carnaby's roosts. The GCC site database now contains 452 locations from Geraldton to Esperance, including 174 confirmed roosts, 98 unconfirmed roosts, and 169 potential sites.

The 2013 GCC formally surveyed 243 sites, utilising 308 volunteer observers. This represents a 14% increase in participation rate since 2012. Nearly half of the 2013 volunteers were involved in a previous GCC.

The survey confirmed a statistically significant increase of 44% in the number of Carnaby's counted in the Swan Region between 2012 (4036 cockatoos) and 2013 (5794 cockatoos). The increased numbers were focused in the northern Swan Region.

Despite this, there remains a statistically significant decline of 14% in the number of Carnaby's counted in the Swan Region between 2010 and 2013. Similarly, the total number of Carnaby's counted in the Greater Perth Region decreased by 12% from 2010.

Counts from 38 Swan Region roosts surveyed each year from 2010 to 2013 found a statistically significant decline of 62% in the total number of Carnaby's counted since 2010. However, there was no significant change in the mean roost count between surveys at these 38 sites.

Fourteen large roosts (> 150 cockatoos) were recorded in 2013, an increase compared to 2012 (8 large roosts), but still fewer than the 19 large roosts recorded in 2010.



There was also a trend toward increased mean roost size in the Swan Region since the 2011 GCC, however this was not significant.

The increased cockatoo numbers in the Swan Region were also observed during the May follow-up survey, with greatly increased total numbers and mean roost size compared to previous years, particularly in the northern Swan Region.

There has been a change in utilisation at some of the best-monitored metropolitan roosts, and increased use of roosts in the northern Swan Region since 2011. This highlights the importance of monitoring as many sites as possible, in order to observe inter-roost movements and assess the Swan Region population as a whole.

Photos by Keith Lightbody

The increase in Carnaby's numbers in the northern Swan Region is potentially due to recent clearing of pine plantations in the area, removing an important food and roosting resource, and causing the cockatoos to move to more easily observed coastal areas.

Habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation remain the most significant threats facing Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo. Rapid expansion of development in the northern Swan Region, including pine forest clearance, needs to be controlled, and greater protection and management of Carnaby's habitat is essential. The increased numbers observed in the 2013 GCC indicate that the cockatoos are still present, and it is not too late to conserve the species by protecting critical habitat.

Confirmed roosts identified in regional areas will, in time, provide information on Carnaby's population changes beyond the Swan Region. However, more sites are required across WA in order for statistical analyses to be conducted on data collected outside the Swan Region.

### More information

The 2013 Great Cocky Count report and previous reports are available online. Go to <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/carnabys-black-cockatoo-recovery/great-cocky-count>

### Next Great Cocky Count: 6 April 2014

The 2014 Great Cocky Count will take place for an hour at sunset on Sunday 6 April 2014.

To report new black-cockatoo roost sites and get involved in the 2014 Great Cocky Count, contact [greatcockycount@birdlife.org.au](mailto:greatcockycount@birdlife.org.au)



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