

BLACK COCKATOOS

What are they and why do they need our help?

Black Cockatoos are extremely beautiful and unique birds, four species of which are native to WA: *Baudins, Carnabys, and two species of Red-Tailed Black Cockatoos.*



Each have their own individual feeding and breeding habits, however, they all have one thing in common; they are becoming increasingly uncommon along the Swan Coastal Plain. In fact, only 10% of their original habitat remains, due to large areas of native vegetation being cleared for development. Black Cockatoos not only have to deal with their habitat being degraded, they also have to compete with feral bees, Corellas, possums and other creatures for nesting positions. The black cockatoo is a very unique animal indeed, some interesting facts about these birds are:

Black Cockatoos are the only birds that have gall bladders. They like nesting in large Marri trees where there are plenty of honky nuts available for them to feed on. Black cockatoos breed at 5-6 years of age. They breed only once every two years or so and have a lifespan of approximately 70 years. Generally, they only produce one chick per breeding cycle.

If you look at these facts and figures, you will soon work out that these birds are in DIRE STRAITS and are in urgent need of our help. Fortunately the State Government has just approved a law that will make developers accountable for land clearing—for every suitable nesting hollow for Black Cockatoos that they remove, they will be required to replace it with TWO artificial hollows, as there is so little of their original habitat left on the Swan Coastal Plain—alarming!

The Serpentine Jarrahdale Landcare Centre saw a need to replenish lost natural hollows in 2005 and began a project that began with funding from Lotterywest. The project was aimed at producing artificial nesting hollows from recycled poly pipe from BHP's Leinster and Mount Keith Nickel Operations and installing them in suitable trees. The goal then was to produce more and have them monitored for occupation and (possibly) breeding. Since 2005, the Serpentine Jarrahdale Landcare Centre and its band of dedicated volunteers has produced over 150 nests that are now erected in suitable trees up from Chidlow right down to Albany.

These nesting hollows, or "Cockatubes" are quite a simple design, as you can see by these pictures below:



Completed Cockatubes

Sacrificial timber

Mulch

Ladder



The inside of a completed Cockatube

They simply consist of a piece of poly pipe (approximately 30mm thick), 350mm wide and approximately 1m high), with a "ladder" added so the Cockies can climb down to the bottom of the tube, where there lies a piece of flat black plastic with drainage holes cut into it, with some mulch added, just to make them feel a little bit more at home! You can also see from the picture next to the completed Cockatubes that there is a piece of sacrificial Marri that we also hook onto the inside of the tube to allow the Cockies to chew on whilst inside (actually, we provide them with two pieces, as generally families tend to inhabit them, which means more than one hungry mouth in the tube!).

We have found this to be an extremely effective design, approved by relevant Cockatoo experts from the WA Museum and Department of Environment and Conservation, and as these pictures show you, the Cockies are certainly adapting to their new dwellings very well!



Courtesy Tony Kirkby, WA Museum



Courtesy Glen Byleveld, SERCUL

