

Carnaby's numbers still down

BirdLife Australia's (BirdLife Partner) 2012 Great Cocky Count has found that numbers of Endangered Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo in the Perth Region are still lower than reported in 2010. The Great Cocky Count, organised by BirdLife Australia in partnership with the Department of Environment and Conservation, counts as many Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos as possible on a single night each year in April. This year's count was at sunset on 15 April. BirdLife Australia's WA Program Manager, Cheryl Gole, said, "The latest results show a 40 per cent decrease since 2010 in the number of Carnaby's counted at night roosts in the Swan Region, which includes the Perth metropolitan area. The minimum population size in the Swan Region was only 4000 Carnaby's this year, similar to 2011, compared to 6700 in 2010. This suggests that numbers are still down in the region." The Swan Region provides critical winter feeding habitat for northern and western populations of the cockatoos. The 2012 count shows there is a decrease in the number of active roosts south of the Swan River. "While all the reasons for the decreased number of Carnaby's are not clear, habitat clearance has to be an important factor," said Ms Gole. Pressure on cockatoo habitat in the Perth and Peel Region will increase because of our rapidly growing population and increasing housing requirements. BirdLife Australia believes increasing habitat clearance is the greatest threat to the species and that the remaining cockatoo habitat in the Perth and Peel Region is critical for the survival of Carnaby's and must be protected. "The Great Cocky Count is important as it allows us to monitor what is happening with the cockatoos. We don't have long-term information yet and it is imperative that we continue the counts to understand the changes we are seeing". Tamara Kabat, the Count's organiser, said, "The Great Cocky Count is a fantastic community-driven event. Monitoring over 200 sites on a single night across south-west WA can't be done without dedicated volunteers. The number of people willing to put up their hands to count the much-loved cockatoos this year was overwhelming". "Many people are looking for ways they can help protect the cockatoos. Taking part in surveys such as the Great Cocky Count is just one way they can help. New roost sites have been reported across south-west Australia, including one outside Esperance of over 1000 cockatoos. However, we know there are more sites out there, and we're asking everyone to tell us about night-time roost locations for all cockatoos", she said. To get involved or to pass on information about new cockatoo roost locations, contact Tamara Kabat on (08) 9287 2204 or greatcockycount@birdlife.org.au The full 2012 report will be available on the BirdLife Australia website in September.