

Cockatoo Calls

Black-cockatoos are often heard before they're seen, and can be reliably distinguished from one another by their calls. Click on the link to find out more and to listen to their calls.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo

A soft, drawn-out, wheezing and grating *kee-aiirrk* or *airrk*.

Find out more

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

A raucous, metallic, far-carrying, drawn out *karraak* or *airrk* (like a 'rusty windmill'). Also a husky or squeaky, whistling *kreeeeeik*.

Find out more

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo

A loud, distinctive wailing *wee yu* or *wy-la*, or a loud, harsh screech *kee-ow... kee-ow*. Often noisy in flight.

Find out more

Gang-gang Cockatoo

A long, drawn out, creaky *gr-raer-iriek*, usually given in flight. Also make a soft growl when feeding.

Find out more



Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo
by Thomas Hunt

Report a sighting

If you see a Glossy or Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo in the South East, we'd love to hear from you. We're particularly interested in sightings of Glossy Black-Cockatoos in East Gippsland and eastern NSW. When reporting a sighting, please provide as much information as possible, including date and time of the sighting, location (preferably a grid reference), how many were seen, and what the birds were doing (feeding, nesting, flying, drinking, etc).

Contact details

Report sightings of Glossy and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoos in Birddata at: birddata.birdlife.org.au

Alternatively, contact us to report sightings via the following:

Glossy Black-Cockatoo

Email glossybc@birdlife.org.au

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo (in SA and VIC)

Enter details at www.redtail.com.au

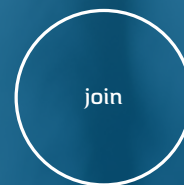
Email redtail@birdlife.org.au

Or freecall 1800 262 062

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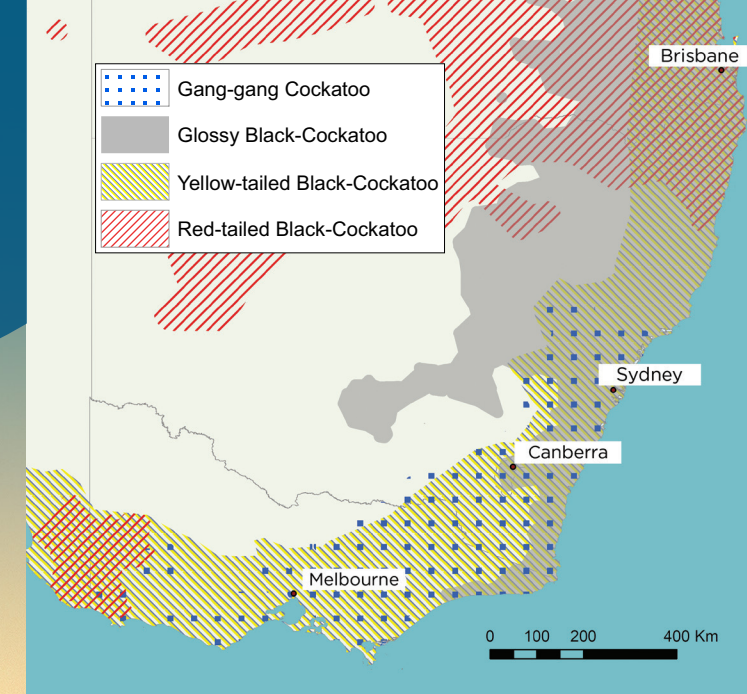
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Identifying South-Eastern Black-Cockatoos



Male Glossy Black-Cockatoo
by Jan Wegener



Black-cockatoos of the South East

Black-cockatoos inhabit many habitats across Australia, ranging from arid and semi-arid rangelands to tropical rainforests, and open forests and woodlands dominated by eucalypts and casuarinas.

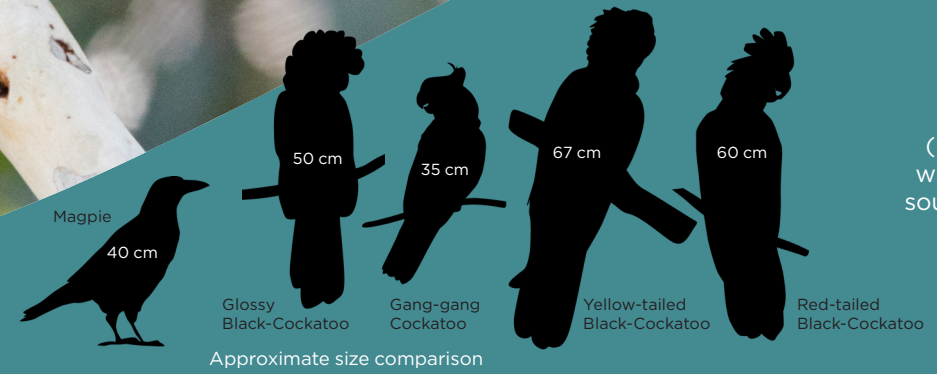
There are three species of black-cockatoos in south-eastern Australia: Glossy Black-Cockatoo, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo and Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo. All are endemic to Australia, and their distributions overlap in some parts of their range. Though not a true black-cockatoo, the Gang-gang Cockatoo has also been included here.

Black-cockatoos have robust bills which can crack open hard seedpods that other birds can't; they also use their bills to gouge out insect larvae from wood.

Familiarity with their appearance, calls, habitat use, diet and social behaviour are key in helping observers distinguish between different species of black-cockatoos.



Gang-gang Cockatoos by David Stowe



Hollows are homes

Black-cockatoos nest in large tree hollows (15-50cm in diameter) in old, large eucalypts, which are usually located near food and water sources. Hollows are in short supply, due to the loss of suitable hollow bearing trees. Black-cockatoos pair for life, often re-using the same hollow year after year.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo

Look out for: Dull-black body with feathers on the head, neck and underparts fringed brown. Males have solid, bright-red panels in the tail and a grey bill; females have irregular yellow patches or flecks on the head and neck; and tails have red, light-orange or yellow panels with black barring.

Habitat: Woodlands and open forests dominated by she-oaks.

Food: Feed almost exclusively on the seeds of she-oaks.

Notes: Often quiet and inconspicuous when feeding. Can be closely approached. Usually seen in pairs or small groups. Their flight appears 'lazy'. The soft clicking of their bills as they feed and the debris of seedpods and twigs beneath food trees are good indicators of their presence.

Glossy Black-Cockatoo photos: Chris Tzaros & Jan Wegener

Gang-gang Cockatoo

Look out for: Stocky, slate-grey cockatoo. Both sexes have a wispy crest, red in males (together with red head), but wholly grey in females.

Habitat: In summer, tall heavily-timbered mountain forests and woodlands with dense shrubs; sub-alpine woodlands, temperate rainforests. In winter, open eucalypt forests and woodlands; parks and gardens.

Food: Seeds and berries of native and introduced trees and shrubs, especially eucalypts and wattles, and exotic hawthorn and cotoneaster. Insect larvae.

Notes: More closely related to Galahs than black-cockatoos. Usually seen in small flocks; sometimes form flocks of up to 60 in winter. Often quiet and difficult to spot among dense foliage; listen for their soft, growling calls. Spend summer in the mountains, moving to lowlands for winter.

Gang-gang Cockatoo photos: David Stowe, Jan Wegener & Patrick Tomkins

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Look out for: Pale-yellow cheek-patches and yellow tail panels (flecked with black in females) which contrast with their otherwise black plumage. They have a short crest.

Habitat: They inhabit numerous habitats, especially forests and woodlands dominated by eucalypts, banksias and she-oaks; also pine plantations and urban parks.

Food: Seeds of many native trees and shrubs, as well as exotic pines. They also dig out wood-boring insect larvae from trees using their bills.

Notes: Buoyant flight, with slow, deep wingbeats and floating glides. Quiet when feeding; sometimes the only noise is made by debris falling to the ground below; noisy and gregarious at other times. Seen in family groups, and flocks during winter, sometimes comprising hundreds of birds.

Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo photos: Shutterstock, Jan Wegener & Ken Griffiths

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo

Look out for: Males are black with red panels in the tail. They have a helmet-like crest and a grey bill. Females are dusky black-brown, with pale-yellow speckles on the head, neck and wings; underparts with pale yellow/orange barring; and black barring across yellow to orange/red panels in the tail. The bill is off-white.

Habitat: Various treed habitats. In Vic and SA, mainly eucalypt forests and heathy woodlands. In semi-arid woodlands, riparian eucalypts and savanna along the Darling River.

Food: Seeds of native trees and shrubs, mainly eucalypts, casuarinas and banksias; in the South East, usually stringybarks and bulokes.

Notes: Social and conspicuous. Seen alone or in family parties of 2 to 3 birds during spring to early summer (breeding season). Flocks of up to 250 birds in autumn and winter.

Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo photos: Bob McPherson & Rob Drummond

