

White-tailed Black Cockatoo

FAMILY: *Cacatuidae*
GENUS: *Calyptorhynchus*
SPECIES: *baudinii*

Description:

Large cockatoo with dull black body plumage narrowly scalloped in white, off-white cheek patches and large white tail panels. Males have black or dark grey beaks and a fleshy coloured periophthalmic ring. Adult females have white beaks and a (less pronounced) dark grey periophthalmic ring. Immatures resemble females.

Often encountered in family parties or large feeding/foraging flocks.

Length: 500-600mm.

Distribution:

Restricted to Marri and Karri forests in south-western Western Australia.

Habitat:

Eucalypt forests and woodland, especially Karri and Marri, suburban parks and gardens.

Diet:

Eucalypt seeds, fruits and insects.

Breeding:

From July to December.

The usual nesting site is a tree cavity high in a eucalypt. The cavity varies from 50cm to 2m or more. Both the male and female prepare the nesting site, sometimes commencing preparation several weeks before the first egg is laid. Although only the female incubates the eggs, both parents care for the young. The male feeds the female during incubation. The bottom of the nest is usually covered in a thick layer of woodchips.

In captivity white-tails usually prefer nesting logs of 1-1.5m in height with an internal diameter of about 40cm and an entrance of at least 20cm diameter. Entrances should be at the top or on the side near the top. Logs may be suspended vertically or placed on the ground (upright). The preferred nesting material is a mixture of wood shavings and dirt (esp. termite nest) or peat moss.

Courtship Display

This is similar to that of the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo. It involves approaching the female with the crest ruffed and tail feathers fanned whilst holding the body fully erect. His approach is in a strutting manner and he accompanies this with a clucking sound.

Sexual Maturity

White-tailed Black Cockatoos reach maturity at 4-5 years of age. As is the case with so many cockatoos and parrots however, they may breed as early as 2-3 years. This only happens in unusual circumstances however.

Clutch:

2 white oval eggs laid at interval of between 2 and 7 days. Incubation period: about 28-30 days. Fledging usually occurs at about 70 days after which the chick remains dependant on the parents for a further 3-4 months.

Mutations and Hybrids:

No records.

Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds

As a minimum, a single bird may be housed in such a cage provided it measures at least 800mm x 600mm x 1200mm (approximately). Pairs can be kept in a slightly larger cage. However, these birds always fare better (and look more spectacular) in larger aviaries. These should be somewhere in the vicinity of 2m wide x 2m high x 5 or 6m long so as to provide amply flight space and to accommodate nesting logs etc.

The wire should be of a heavy duty grade, as cockatoos easily chew holes in lighter grade wire. Similarly, the frame should be constructed of steel to avoid the birds chewing the structure away.

Species Specific Problems

Intestinal worms are a common problem in species which spend considerable time on the ground. Similarly, fungal infections may become a problem. These are relatively easily dealt with however simply by maintaining a high standard of hygiene.

Another problem encountered in this species is Psittacine beak and feather disease. This is an incurable disease which is transmitted through faeces. Essentially, it results in poor feather growth and feathers which don't replace themselves when they fall out. Similarly, the beak is also affected and becomes fragile and does not repair itself.

It is advisable to test birds suspected to have this condition. The best course of action for affected birds is to destroy them as there is no cure. Infected birds will infect their offspring simply by feeding them as there is always chances of contact with faeces in the nest and during feeding of the young.

Feather plucking may also occur in these cockatoos