

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo

FAMILY: *Cacatuidae*
GENUS: *Calyptorhynchus*
SPECIES: *funereus*

Description:

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

Often encountered in large flocks. It is strongly arboreal in the east, but western birds are frequently found foraging on the ground

Length: 600-700mm.

Subspecies:

Calyptorhynchus funereus latirostris occurs in the west of the distribution. The description for this subspecies is distinctive in that it has white panels in the tail. Some authorities and aviculturalists generally regard this as a separate and distinct species.

Distribution:

Rockhampton (Qld), south to Tasmania and west to South Australia.

Habitat:

Tall eucalypt forests, pine (exotic) plantations and heaths.

Diet:

Varied. Wood-boring grubs, eucalypt and various pine seeds predominate.

Breeding:

From October to May in the east, July to December in the west of its distribution.

The usual nesting site is a tree cavity in a eucalypt at heights ranging from 10 to 30m or more above ground. Internal diameter is about 30-40 cm and depths of 60cm to 2m have been recorded. Both the male and female prepare the nest. Only the female incubates the eggs for the first 20 days. The male contributes thereafter. Both parents subsequently care for the young.

In captivity yellow-tails usually prefer nesting logs of 1m 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 should be suspended vertically or may be placed (upright) on the aviary floor. The preferred nesting material is a mixture of wood shavings and dirt or peat moss.

Clutch:

2 white oval eggs laid at interval of between 2 and 7 days. Incubation period: about 28 days. Fledging usually occurs at about 70 days. Once fledged, the young remains dependant on the parents for an indefinite period.

Courtship Display

Males stretch to their full height, raise the crest and fan the tail. In this posture, they approach the female and strut along the perch making flicking and bowing movements with the head. During this procedure, he utters a distinct clucking sound.

Sexual Maturity:

These birds are sexually mature at about 4 years of age. There are exceptions to this however with some birds having bred at 2-3 years of age.

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 ample 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.