



Farmnote

Parrots and cockatoos in orchards

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At least three species of parrot and one species of cockatoo are frequently found in orchards. However, not all of these species cause serious damage.

Some species are fairly rare and might not recover from severe culling; therefore, it is important to be able to distinguish between them.

All these birds are protected, but open seasons have been declared for some species of parrots in some shires of the State. In areas where there are no open seasons in place, a damage licence is required from CALM before any control can take place.

Red-capped Parrot (*Purpureicephalus spurius*)

Red-capped parrots are also known as W.A. king parrots. They are common birds of the forest and surrounding farmland of the south-west.

Adult males have a crimson cap, yellow-green cheeks and rump and a purplish-blue breast. The back and tail are green. Females are generally duller and most have a violet-grey breast.



Adult Red-capped parrot

Immature birds have a totally green crown and cheeks, a yellow-green rump and a grey to reddish-brown breast; the back and tail are dull green.



Immature Red-capped parrot

Red-capped parrots can be distinguished in flight from Twenty-eight parrots and Western rosellas by the yellow-green rump which is visible when the birds are flying away from an observer.

Red-capped parrots feed mainly on Marri (*Eucalyptus calophylla*) seeds and introduced weed seeds, but may also attack apple, pear and citrus fruits.

Twenty-Eight Parrot or Port Lincoln Ringneck (*Barnardius zonarius*)

The Twenty-eight parrot is found throughout the south-west. It is a very successful parrot having increased in number since settlement, due to improved food supplies and reliable water.

Twenty-eights are mainly green with a blackish head and a prominent yellow collar. They have purplish-blue cheeks and a green, or green and yellow abdomen. There is also some blue colour in the wings and tail feathers. Both the sexes and immature birds have the same appearance.



Twenty-Eight or Port Lincoln Ringneck

They feed mainly on seeds of weeds, eucalyptus trees, introduced and ornamental plants, and insect larvae. They sometimes severely attack fruit.

Western Rosella (*Platycercus icterotis*)

The Western rosella is a common bird in the south-west, living in forest or remnant patches of native vegetation near farms.

The adult male is a bright red-orange colour with yellow cheek patches; the feathers of the back are black margined with green. Tail and wing feathers are blue, green and black. The female is similar but somewhat duller in colouring; the head and breast having more green colouring. Immature birds are a dull green, with no distinct cheek patch.



Western Rosellas (adult male on left).

Western rosellas feed almost entirely on weed seeds, native sheoak (*Allocasuarina* spp.) seeds, and some insects.

Western rosellas cause little or no economic loss to fruit growers. Although they may be seen eating fruit in orchards, they generally feed on fruit that has previously been damaged in some way.

White-tailed Black-cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*, *C latirostris*)



White-tailed Black cockatoo.

There are two species of white-tailed black-cockatoo found in the south-west: Baudin's cockatoo (*C. baudinii*) and Carnaby's cockatoo (*C. latirostris*). The two species are almost impossible to distinguish from one another, even at very close range.

Both cockatoos are large, black birds with white cheek patches and prominent white patches on the tail feathers.

Baudin's cockatoo is usually found only in heavily forested areas of the south-west, including many of the fruit growing districts.

Baudin's cockatoo eats primarily the seeds of marri, but also feeds on the seeds of Jarrah (*E. marginata*), *Banksia* spp., other native plants and insect larvae. It sometimes attacks apples, and although the damage can be locally severe it is not a regular pest in orchards.

Carnaby's cockatoo is found in the northern and north-eastern wheatbelt inland to Norseman and south to Esperance. This species is often seen in Perth in summer feeding in pine trees, and has been recorded in pine plantations in the extreme south-west.

Carnaby's cockatoo eats the seeds of native plants such as *Banksia*, *Hakea* and *Dryandra*, the seeds of introduced pines (*Pinus* spp.) and insects. It does not eat apples or other fruits.

Both species of white-tailed black-cockatoo are now listed as 'Rare and Endangered'. Baudin's cockatoo is very low in numbers, but because this species is large and noisy and often found in quite large flocks, few people realise this. White-tailed black-cockatoos are slow breeders. At best they produce one fledgling each year, but up to two thirds die before breeding. A heavy cull could reduce numbers to such a low level that recovery is impossible and the species could then become extinct.

There is no reason to shoot any white-tailed black-cockatoo outside orchards. Baudin's cockatoo is easily scared from orchards by loud noises, and can be driven off by firing into the air without having to kill any of the birds.

Further Information

For further advice contact Agriculture Western Australia, Baron-Hay Court, South Perth, 6152. Tel: (08) 9368 3333 or your nearest country office. or Department of Conservation and Land Management office.

All photos by Robyn Knox, except white-tailed black cockatoo (Babs and Bert Wells, CALM)

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