# Glossy Black-Cockatoo

*Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami*

Vulnerable in NSW

Vulnerable nationally



Female: yellow on the head

Photos © Peter Rowland



Male: plain head, red tail

**SIZE**
About 36 cm, the smallest black-cockatoo

**FOOD**
Only she-oak seeds, eaten from the cones

**NESTS**
In big hollows of old trees, raising one chick

**BLACK SUMMER**
About 38% of its range burnt in 2019–20

## Left-footed and fussy

Like most cockatoos, Glossies are usually left-footed. They hold a green cone in one foot and shred it with their huge bill to reach the seeds. They choose the trees with the best cones, and leave piles of chewed cones on the ground below, a clue that Glossies have been feeding.

## The climate connection

A bird that eats only one food depends on that food surviving. The Black Summer fires burnt she-oaks across much of the Glossies' range. Burnt she-oaks take years to grow back and carry cones, and hotter, drier years bring more fires and smaller cone crops, leaving less time to recover.

## Quiet cockatoos of the coast

Glossies live in she-oak country along the Illawarra and South Coast, usually in pairs or small family groups. They are quiet for cockatoos, with a soft "tarr-red" call. Males have a plain brown head and a red tail band. Females have yellow on the head and neck, and young birds have yellow spots.

Scan to watch them preen and call

**WONDER QUESTION**

**How does a Glossy know which she-oak has the best cones?**



Turn over for teacher notes

# Teacher notes

Glossy Black-Cockatoo · *Calyptorhynchus lathami lathami*

## Curriculum links (new NSW syllabuses, 2026 to 2027)

| Stage | Outcome | Where the Glossy fits |
|---|---|---|
| Early Stage 1 | STe-SCI-01 (S&T K–6) | How living things get what they need: a bird that eats just one food |
| Stage 2 | ST2-SCI-01 (S&T K–6) | Habitat: she-oaks for food, old hollow trees for nests, water to drink |
| Stage 3 | ST3-SCI-01 (S&T K–6) | Adaptations: cone-crushing bill, left-footed feeding; planting feed trees |
| Stage 4 (Year 8) | SC4-LIV-01 Living systems | Interactions: a specialist feeder and its food tree; fire as a disturbance |
| Stage 5 (Year 9) | SC5-ENV-01 Environmental sustainability | Effects of climate change on ecosystems: more frequent fire and drought shrink the food supply |
| Year 11 to 12 | BI-12-03 Biology 11–12 | Biodiversity conservation after bushfire; using citizen science data |

## In the classroom

K–2

### Cone detectives

Collect fallen she-oak cones (or use photos). Sort the whole cones from the chewed ones, and talk about who might have been eating, and how we can tell without seeing the bird.

YEARS 3–6

### Left or right?

Most Glossies are left-footed. Survey which hand and foot each student uses to pick up and kick a ball, graph the results, and compare the class with the cockatoos.

YEARS 7–12

### After the fire

Use Great Glossy Count or BioNet records to map local sightings before and after the 2019–20 fires. Which unburnt areas acted as refuges, and where should feed trees be planted?

## Get outside

Look under she-oaks for piles of chewed cones and listen for a soft "tarr-red". Join the Great Glossy Count each May, or record sightings any time in BirdLife's Birdata app.

## First Nations perspectives

Through your local AECG or Land Council, invite knowledge holders to share how black-cockatoos, she-oaks and fire are understood on Dharawal or Yuin Country. *[Local story, added with permission]*

## Hope and action

Since the fires, volunteers have counted Glossies across their range every year to track their recovery, and community groups are planting she-oaks as feed trees. Small things students and schools can do:

- Plant local she-oaks as feed trees
- Protect old trees with hollows
- Join the Great Glossy Count
- Report Glossies and chewed cones in Birdata

**Talking tip:** lead with wonder and action rather than loss. A she-oak planted at school today could feed Glossies for decades.

**Scan for the full fact sheet and video: prpw.com.au/project/glossy-black-cockatoo**

Words and photos: Peter Rowland · *Wonder through nature* · Version 1.0, November 2026

Sources: Peter Rowland, Glossy Black-Cockatoo fact sheet (prpw.com.au); BirdLife Australia; Glossy Black Conservancy; NSW Threatened Species Scientific Committee final determination (2023); Australian Government EPBC Act listing (2022). Check curriculum links at curriculum.nsw.edu.au.