



Young Kangaroo Island glossy black-cockatoo males.
Photo: Daniella Teixeira

For the past 40 years, the last remaining population of the South Australian subspecies of glossy black-cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathami halmaturinus*) has been confined to Kangaroo Island. Its diet is highly specialised, comprising almost entirely the seeds from the drooping she-oak (*Allocasuarina verticillata*).

Glossy black-cockatoos have a naturally low reproductive rate. Females lay only one egg per year, with a chick hatching after 30 days and remaining in the nest for almost three months before fledging.

Predation of eggs and chicks by common brush-tailed possums has a big effect on the cockatoos. Possums are native to Kangaroo Island, but introduced pastures have led to increased densities in their populations in the cockatoo nesting habitat.

The glossy black-cockatoo also suffers from a shortage of naturally occurring tree hollows for nests, due to historical clearing of large sugar gums and strong competition from self-introduced corellas and

galahs - both cockatoos that spread to the island after agriculture was established - and feral bees. Feral bees also take over hollows, making them unusable for the cockatoos.

Recovery action

In 1995, the population numbered fewer than 150 individuals and was deemed at risk of extinction, initiating the Glossy Black-cockatoo Recovery Program.

As a priority, nesting trees were isolated and protected from possums with corrugated iron guards and canopy pruning of surrounding trees. This led to nest success rates rising from 23% to 50% in only five years. Two hundred and ninety-five nest trees are now managed by recovery staff.

The program also erected and maintains artificial nest boxes, and since 2007, 50% to 60% of monitored breeding pairs nest in artificial boxes.

Extensive planting of the food tree drooping she-oak since the 1980s should provide ample food for a future population of around 600 cockatoos.

Awareness on Kangaroo Island of the recovery program is extremely high. Community support for and participation in the program has been instrumental in recovery activities.

Program success

Tremendous support from the local community in a 20-year-long program of recovery has more than doubled the population size from fewer than 150 to 373 individuals of this long-lived species.

The future

The glossy black-cockatoo is management-dependent. If funding ceases, it is highly likely that its population will decline once more. At the time of publication, no funding beyond 2017 had been secured.

With the last confirmed sighting of a glossy black-cockatoo on the South Australian mainland in 1977, it is hoped that the subspecies may one day re-appear there. However, this will depend on maintaining the gains so far, which in turn is dependent on continuity of funding as well as continuing to restore habitat for the cockatoos on the mainland.

The Glossy Black-cockatoo Recovery Program has now teamed up with Nature Foundation to allow [donations](#) from the public direct to the program.

More information

Berris, K., Barth, M., Mooney, T., Paton, D., Kinloch, M., Copley, P., Maguire, A., Crowley, G., and Garnett, S., (2018) From the brink of extinction: successful recovery of the glossy black-cockatoo on Kangaroo Island. In *Recovering Australian Threatened Species: A Book of Hope*. (Eds S Garnett, P Latch, D Lindenmayer, J Woinarski) pp 75-84. CSIRO Publishing, Melbourne.