

Cockatoos find food in rehabilitated forest

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Murdoch University researchers have found that Western Australia's iconic black cockatoos have been drawn to a new food source – rehabilitated mining pits.

Jessica Lee, a PhD candidate at Murdoch University, said the research team spent three years documenting the feeding habits of black cockatoos at the Newmont Boddington Gold site, around 120 kilometres south east of Perth.

"Western Australia's iconic black cockatoos are smart, curious creatures. It makes sense they would learn to find [food](#) in new places," she said.

"The pits we studied had been revegetated with native trees and shrubs less than 15 years ago.

"We were able to confirm that cockatoos were feeding at these sites after about seven years, when the plants begin producing flowers and seeds."

The study examined the feeding habits of three different species of black cockatoo – the [Forest red-tailed black cockatoo](#), [Carnaby's cockatoo](#) and [Baudin's cockatoo](#).

All three are nationally threatened and occur only in the south-west of WA.

Dr Hugh Finn, from Murdoch University's School of Veterinary and Life Sciences, said the findings are particularly important for industries involved in land clearing, such as mining and property development.

"It's promising to see that these threatened cockatoos are feeding at revegetated sites after only seven years," he said.

"Of course, the ideal option for native animals is to preserve the [natural habitat](#) wherever possible."

Loss of [native vegetation](#) in the south-west is a significant threat to black cockatoos and other fauna, with land clearing for agriculture, housing and mining reducing the amount of food and shelter available for native animals.

The jarrah [forest](#) is the region's large forest area, providing food and nesting habitat for all three species of black cockatoo.

"Food is important, but it is also critical to preserve big, [old trees](#) across the forest, particularly as hollows for cockatoos generally occur in trees that are more 200 years old," Dr Finn said.

Provided by Murdoch University

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