



**PALM
COCKATOO**
PSITTACIFORMES
Family: **Cacatuidae**
Genus: *Probosciger*
Species: *aterrimus*



Range: New Guinea and Cape York Peninsula Queensland, Australia

Habitat: lowland areas up to 4429 ft, rainforest, forest edge and woodlands

Niche: arboreal, diurnal, herbivorous

Diet: seed, fruits, nuts and berries

Life Span: wild- 40-60 years; captivity- 90 years

Sexual Dimorphism: male beak is larger

Location in SF Zoo:

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Palm cockatoos are also known as the goliath cockatoo or great black cockatoo and are the largest of the cockatoos. They are a large smoky-grey or black with a distinctive large backward curving crest; they are the only cockatoo with all dark feathers. The feathers are heavily coated with powder-down, giving a bluish-gray appearance. They have prominent scarlet cheek patches, which are bare skin; the color becomes a brighter shade when the bird gets excited. When the bird is feeling shy, it raises its cheek feathers to cover the red patch completely. Large tongue is red with a black tip.

Their large black beak is one of the largest of any parrot and can measure up to 3.5 inches (only the hyacinth macaw's is larger). This powerful beak enables palm cockatoos to keep a good grip on the nuts, large seeds, and fruit it eats and they can tear open a pandanus fruit (a palm-like plant) that humans need a hatchet to harvest! They are able to break off thick (~1") sticks from live trees to use for a drumming display. The lower and upper mandibles do not meet for much of its length, allowing the tongue to hold a nut against the top mandible while the lower mandible works to open it.

Weight: 2.01-2.65 lb
Length: 22 – 24 in
Wingspan:
Tail Length: 8 - 10 in

STATUS & CONSERVATION:

The Palm Cockatoo is listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List and on Appendix I of CITES. This species has a very large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the range size criterion.

The Palm Cockatoo is still relatively common in Cape York, but is threatened there by habitat destruction and loss, particularly due to bauxite mining and altered fire regimes. Logging and seasonal fires destroy significant numbers of their nest trees each year. Palm cockatoos are hunted in New Guinea. This species is in high demand for the pet trade due to its unusual appearance. The population trend is declining.

COMMUNICATION & OTHER BEHAVIOR:

The Palm Cockatoo has a large and complex vocal repertoire, including many whistles and even a "hello" call that sounds surprisingly human-like. There are distinct dialects throughout the species' range. When it gets excited, a palm cockatoo makes itself look even bigger by raising its crest feathers (those are on top of its head).

To advertise its territory, a palm cockatoo (typically the male) holds a stick (up to 1 inch in diameter) in its foot and drum against a hollow tree, creating a loud noise that can be heard up to 100 m away. The reason for this behavior is unknown, however it is maybe that females can assess the durability of the nesting hollow by the resonance of this drumming display or that males drum to mark their territory against other males.

This species normally does not appear in large numbers as many of the cockatoo species; they are seen in pairs and small groups of up to 30 birds. If these birds do congregate it will usually happen in open woodland just after sunrise or along the rainforest edge before returning to individual roost for the night. These larger groups form especially when foraging fruit outside their territory. One bird stands guard to alert the groups of a predator or danger approaches. Much time is spent preening or interacting.

COURTSHIP & YOUNG:

Palm cockatoos only lay one egg every second year and have one of the lowest breeding success rates reported for any species of parrot. Off-setting this is their very long life-span. Breeding takes place inside tree hollows in the topmost branches of tall trees. Breeding normally occurs during October, November and December (spring to early summer). Nests are often reused by a pair each year. As with other large birds both parents care for young. Hatchlings are naked; they do not have downy as other cockatoos. Chicks stay in the nest and are fed by their parents for 3 months. On fledgling, young bird remains with parents until next nesting season approaches.

Incubation: 33 days	Sexual Maturity:
# of Eggs: 1 egg	Fledging: 100 days

MISCELLANEOUS:

Fires play an important role in the destruction and creation of nest hollows. Fires allow the colonization of microorganisms and termites, which enter the tree and start hollowing out the inside. Cyclones are important in the final stage of nest hollow development.

SOURCES:

created 12/2016

The Handbook of the Birds of the World Vol IV © 1996, Lynx Edicions, p 469-470

<https://www.beautyofbirds.com/palmcockatoos.html>

<http://kids.sandiegozoo.org/animals/birds/palm-cockatoo>

<https://www.parrots.org/projects/palm-cockatoo>

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22684723/0>

<http://www.dwazoo.com/animal/palm-cockatoo/>

<http://resourcelibrary.clemetzoo.com/animals/151>