

ENVIRONMENT

A colour increasingly defining Toodyay's landscape

Julimar Conservation and Forest Alliance

Melissa Adams, Secretary

It is not my favourite colour and I have not met many people who can say it is theirs either.

The landscape surrounding us is becoming brown.

We had the driest six months and hottest summer on record in 2023-24, compounded by another scorching season, highlighted by Geraldton's 49.5-degree peak,

The South West has seen a decline in rainfall since the 1970s.

Dr. Bryony Palmer, an Australian Wildlife Conservancy (AWC) Wildlife Ecologist says a dry summer is something we now come to expect, "In 2023, we got just 560 mm of rain and our average is 850"

These high temperatures and low rainfall are killing vast stretches of vegetation as plants succumb to heat and drought.

Experts have warned mass plant death is poised to intensify,

The region's long-term drying trend is a severe threat to biodiversity and experts predict worsening conditions as climate change progresses.

The Google Earth images of Julimar State Forest in December 2010 and December 2020 show the effects of a drying climate.

There are thinning and obvious brown patches running throughout the forest.

This imagery is worrying as it was taken before the 2023-24 brown-off.

More frequent brown-off events are having a huge impact on the wildlife's natural food sources.

The frequency and intensity of heat waves and dry conditions are putting additional stress on wildlife and the native vegetation on which they rely.

Carnaby's Black Cockatoos face a crisis due to habitat loss and reduced food sources.

Old-growth trees and banksia woodlands have been impacted by land clearing and starvation is becoming an increasingly critical threat.

Climate change and prolonged drought conditions intensify this issue by reducing the availability of native vegetation.

Although the government has granted \$70,000 to support Perth Zoo and Kaarakin vets in managing the increasing number of starving cockatoos, many supporters are demanding that they take action to prevent starvation in the first place.

Bindoon local, Dean Arthurell of Carnaby's Crusaders, supports emergency widescale planting.

He has submitted a plan to the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) for supplementary feeding of the birds. It is illegal to feed wildlife in WA.

Dean's proposed plan addresses DBCA's concerns about potential risks associated with feeding programs.

These concerns include disease, pests, predation and human interference.

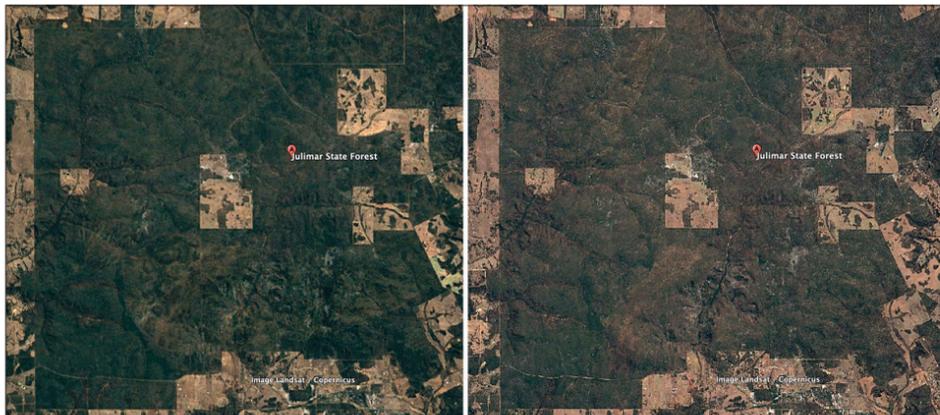
He argues that since the cockatoos already rely on human-provided resources, like water stations, artificial hollows and urban gardens, refusing to feed them is inconsistent.

So what can we do about it?

- The recent state election saw more MPs take a seat at the table supporting more action on climate change. With the federal election coming up, do your research.
- Call MPs, write to the environment ministers, Hon Matthew Swinbourn (WA Minister for the Environment) and Hon Don Punch (WA Minister for Climate Resilience), and demand action.
- Talk or write to Chalice about environmental protections they are putting in place at the Gonneville Project that is adjacent to critical habitat.
- Track tree die-off and join UWA's "Dead Tree Detectives" by submitting photos to Atlas of Living Australia.
- Plant food trees for Black Cockatoos (almonds, local banksia, grevillea etc.) and avoid clearing native vegetation.
- Donate to the documentary "Browned Off" by award-winning director Jane Hammond.

As a side note, JCAFA, CCWA and Wafa are conducting a bioblitz in Julimar State Forest, at the beginning of September.

Please email us at julimarforest@gmail.com if you would like to join us as a participant or expert.



Google Earth Satellite imagery. Left: December 2010 Right: December 2020.