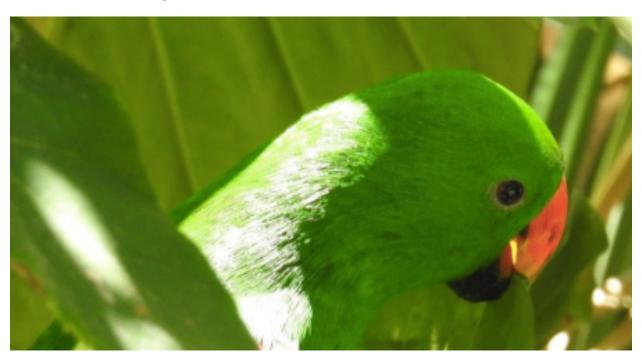


WANDER to WONDER

by MARTINA NICOLLS



The world will never starve for wonder, but only for want of wonder. G.K. Chesterson

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editor's note

Welcome to the 36th edition of WANDER to WONDER

This edition of Wander to Wonder focuses on parrots from around the globe.

Until next edition, with another theme,

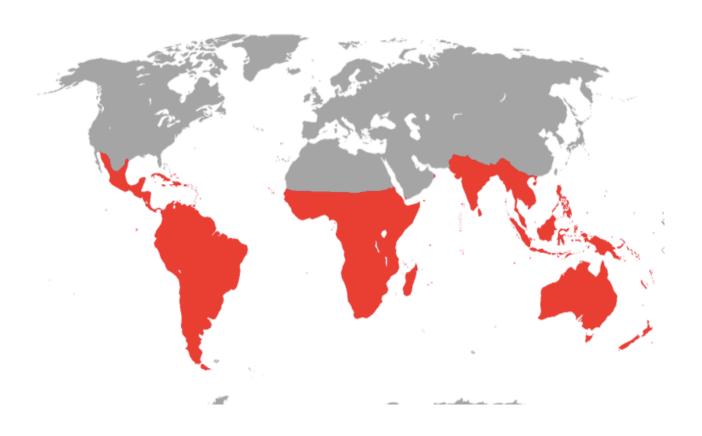
Martina

MARTINA NICOLLS





map – distribution of parrots



what is a parrot?

There are about 393 parrot species, also known as psittacines. Most are found in tropical and sub-tropical regions, and most are brightly coloured. The greatest diversity occurs in Australasia and South America.

Parrots include budgerigars, cockatiels, cockatoos, conures, galahs, keas, lorikeets, lovebirds, macaws, parakeets, and rosellas.

Parrots are medium-sized birds, with strong, down-curved beaks and sharp clawed feet. They range in size from 9-100 centimetres (3-39 inches) tall.

Parrots have zygodactyl feet, which means that their feet have two toes facing forward and two toes facing backward. This arrangement enables them to live in and climb trees. It also enables them to swing upside down and to manipulate food and other objects, similar to human hands.

Only three species of parrots are migratory – the Blue-Winged Parrot, the Swift Parrot, and the African Orange-Bellied Parrot.







african grey parrot

The African Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) is a medium-sized parrot. It is also known as the Congo Grey Parrot.

The African Grey Parrot is mostly grey with a black beak. It has darker grey feathers on its head and wings. Its tail feathers are red.

It grows to about 33 centimetres (13 inches) tall, with a wingspan of 46-52 centimetres (18-20 inches).

It is native to Africa, in countries such as Angola, Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda. It prefers dense forests.

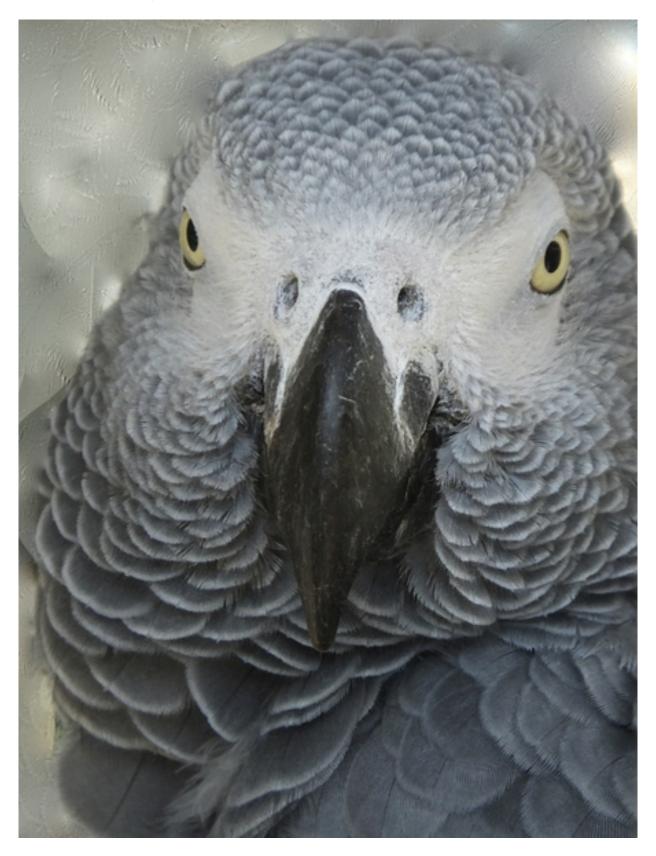
It is mainly frugivorous, feeding on fruit. It also eats nuts and seeds.

It forms a monogamous pair for life. It makes a nest in tree cavities. The female lays 3-5 eggs, which hatch after 30 days. The female sits on the eggs, but both parents care for the chicks. The chicks leave the nest after about 12 weeks.

Grey parrots live, on average, for 20-25 years in the wild.







african orange-bellied parrot

The African Orange-Bellied Parrot (*Poicephalus rufiventris rufiventris*) is a small to medium-sized parrot. It is also called the African Red-Bellied Parrot. It is native to Kenya and Tanzania in dry country areas.

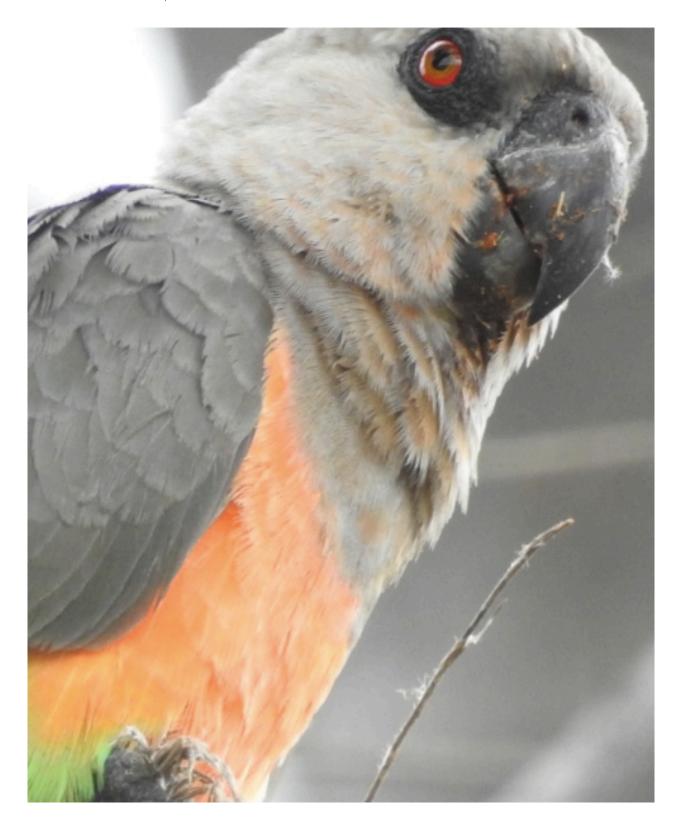
The African Orange-Bellied Parrot is mostly green and grey, with green on its lower parts and grey on its upper parts. Males have a bright orange belly and females have a green belly. It has green feathers on the upper parts of its black legs. It has orange-red eyes and dark-grey beaks.

It measures 23 centimetres (9 inches) tall.

It is usually seen in pairs. It nests in tree cavities. Females lay about three white eggs, which hatch after about 28 days. Chicks leave the nest after about 63 days.







alexandrine parakeet

The Alexandrine Parakeet (Psitacula eupatria) is a medium-sized parrot.

The Alexandrine Parakeet has mainly green feathers with a light blue-grey sheen on its cheeks and nape. Its belly is yellow-green ad it has a red patch on its shoulders. Its tail is green and blue with a yellow tip, and its undertail is yellow. It has a large, thick, red beak with yellow tips. The male has a black stripe across his lower cheeks and a pink band on its nape. The female does not have a stripe on her cheek or nape.

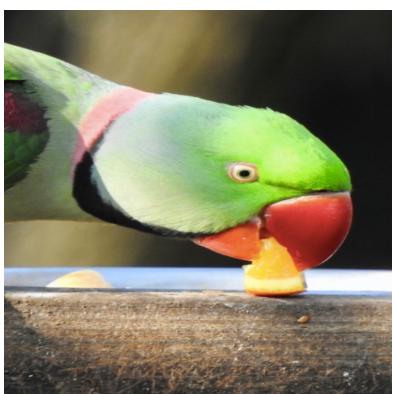
It grows to 56-62 centimetres (22-24 inches) tall, including its tail. Its tail measures 28-35 centimetres (11-14 inches).

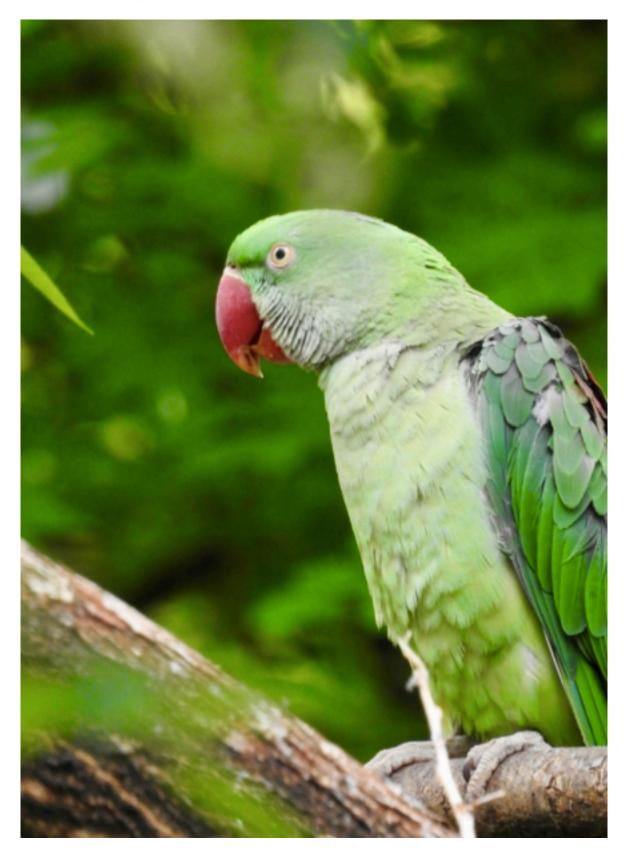
The Alexandrine Parakeet is native to Asia, in countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. It prefers forests, woodlands, mangrove forests, and farmlands.

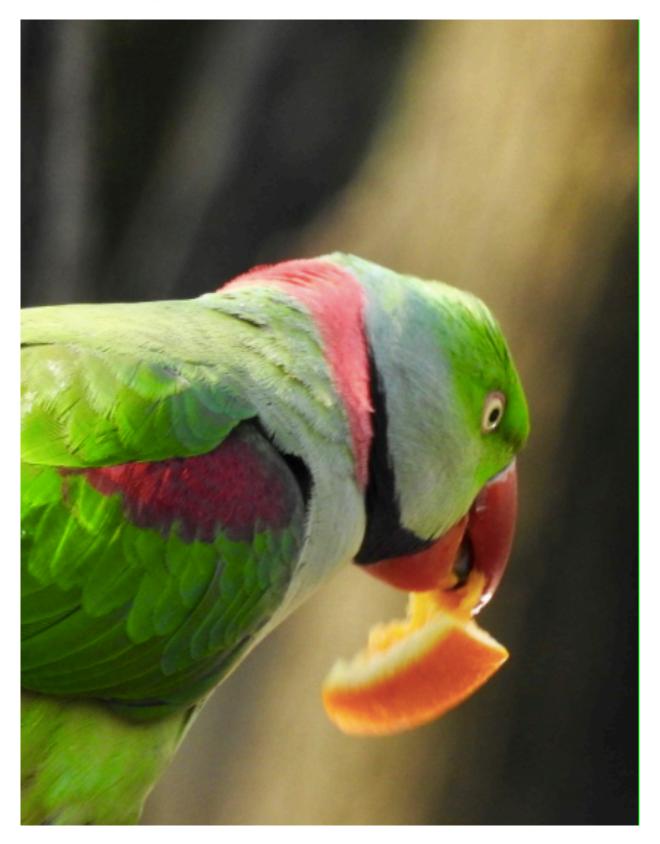
It eats seeds, buds, fruit, and nuts.

It lives in small flocks. It nests in tree hollows. The female lays 2-4 white eggs, which hatch after about 24 days. The chicks gain their flight feathers after about 49 days, and are independent after 3-4 months.









black-cheeked lovebird

The Black-Cheeked Lovebird (*Agapornis nigrigensis*) is a small African parrot found in southwest Zambia.

The Black-Cheeked Lovebird has mostly green feathers, with a reddish-brown head, black cheeks, and a yellow-orange patch on its chest. It has a red beak with a thin, white cere. It has dark eyes with a white eye-ring.

It measures 14 centimetres (5.5 inches) tall.

It prefers woodlands near water. It feeds on the ground on grass, grass seeds, fruit, and insect larvae.

It is a social bird, living in flocks, often up to 800 individuals. However, they are most often seen in pairs, as they form a mating bond for life. The female makes a small nest. She lays 4-6 eggs.

The average lifespan is 10-15 years.





budgerigar

The Budgerigar (*Melopsittacus undulatus*) is a small Australian parrot. It is also called the Common Parakeet or Shell Parakeet – and most commonly, Budgie.

The Budgerigar in the wild is green (on the body) and yellow (on the head) with black scalloped markings on the neck, back, and wings. In captivity, there are many colours, such as blue, white, yellow, and grey. It has cheek spots that are usually blue or grey, with three black spots across each side of its throat. Its beak is pearl or clear, with a pearl-white cere, and is down facing. Its legs are blue-grey. It has a long, blue tail.

It grows to about 18 centimetres (7 inches) tall.

It likes dry, open grasslands and scrublands. It is a nomadic bird, looking for food and water. It eats grass seeds, plants and plant seeds, fruit, and vegetables.

It is found in large flocks. It makes a nest in holes in trees or logs. Females lay 4-6 white eggs, which hatch after 18-21 days. The young chicks gain their feathers after about 30 days. They leave the nest after about 6-8 weeks.





cockatiel

The Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) is an Australian cockatoo. It is the smallest of the cockatoo family, the Cacatuidae.

The Cockatiel has grey feathers with white patches on the wings. The male has a yellow or white face, while the female has a grey face. Both males and females have a round orange patch on their ears, which looks like rosy cheeks. It has a crest that rises or lies flat. It has long tail feathers.

It can grow to 30 centimetres (12 inches) tall.

It is found in arid or semi-arid areas near water. It is nomadic, moving to where water is available. They are seen in pairs or small flocks.

It can live to 16-25 years.





crimson rosella

The Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*) is a medium-sized parrot, native to the coast and mountains of eastern and south-eastern Australia.

The Crimson Rosella begins with green feathers and gains its red and blue colours as it matures. It is red with blue cheeks and black-scalloped blue-margined wings, with a blue tail.

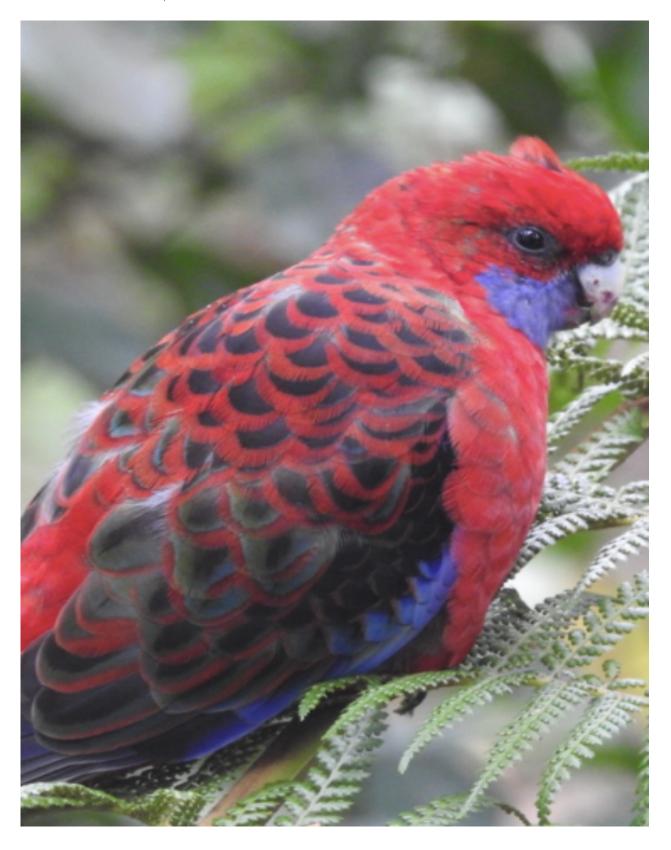
It grows to about 36 centimetres (14 inches) tall.

It is residential and gathers in flocks of up to 20 individuals. It eats fruit, seeds, nectar, berries, and nuts of a wide variety of plants. It also eats many insects and their larvae, including termites, aphids, beetles, weevils, caterpillars, and moths.

Nesting sites are hollow tree trunks, limbs, and stumps. The nesting site is selected by the female. The female lays 3-8 eggs, which hatch after 16-28 days. For the first six days, only the mother feeds the nestlings. After this time, both parents feed them. Juveniles reach maturity when they gain their adult feathers at 16 months of age.







fischer's lovebird

The Fischer's Lovebird (Agapornis fischeri) is a small parrot from Lake Victoria in northern Tanzania.

The Fischer's Lovebird has short feathers with a green back, chest, and wings. Its neck is golden yellow to darker orange, and the top of its head is olive green. In the wild Fischer's Lovebirds are green, but as a pet, several colour variations have been bred, such as yellow and blue.

Its beak is bright red, with a white line separating the beak from the forehead. The upper surface of its tail has some purple or blue feathers. It has a white eye-ring.

At 14 centimetres (5.5 inches), it is one of the smaller lovebirds in the world.

It eats fruit and seeds. It lives in small flocks. Its nest is in a hole in a tree. Females lay 3-8 white eggs, which hatch over about 23 days. The chicks can fly after 38–42 days.





galah

The Galah (*Eolophus roseicapilla*) is a common medium-sized Australian parrot. It is also known as the Rose-Breasted Cockatoo or the Pink-and-Grey Cockatoo.

The Galah has distinctive pink and grey feathers. Its back is pale-silver to mid-grey. Its rump is grey. It has a pink face and chest, and a light-pink crest. Its beak is beige and its legs are grey. Males and females look similar, except that the male has dark-brown eyes, whereas the female has mid-brown or red eyes.

It measures about 35 centimetres (14 inches) tall.

It is widespread across the country, but it prefers open country, rather than very dry regions or very wet tropical regions. It eats seeds on the ground in open grassy areas.

It is seen in flocks and pairs. It is a social bird. It is monogamous, forming a pair for life. It nests in tree cavities. The female lays 2-5 eggs, which hatch after about 25 days. The chicks leave the nest about 49 days after hatching.





jardine's parrot

The Jardine's Parrot (*Poicephalus gulielmi massaicus*) is a medium-sized African parrot from southern Kenya and northern Tanzania. It is also called the Red-Fronted Parrot.

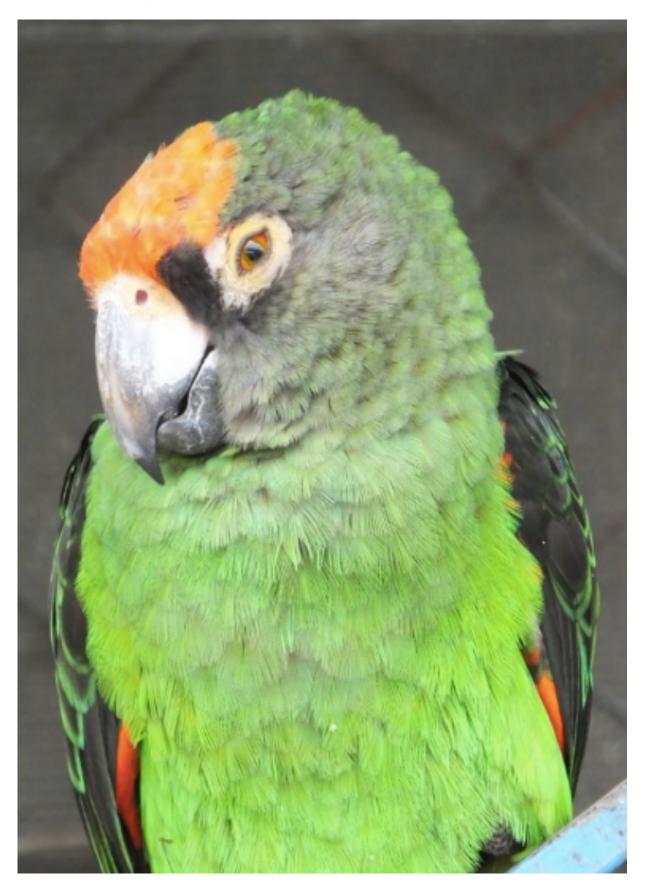
The Jardine's Parrot is mainly green, and its wings have lighter green edges. It has a red chest and an orange-red crown, with black feathers on it head, neck, and back. It has a short, black, square tail. Its lower beak is dark grey and its upper beak has a horn-colour with a dark grey tip. Its eyes are red-orange with a pink-grey eye-ring.

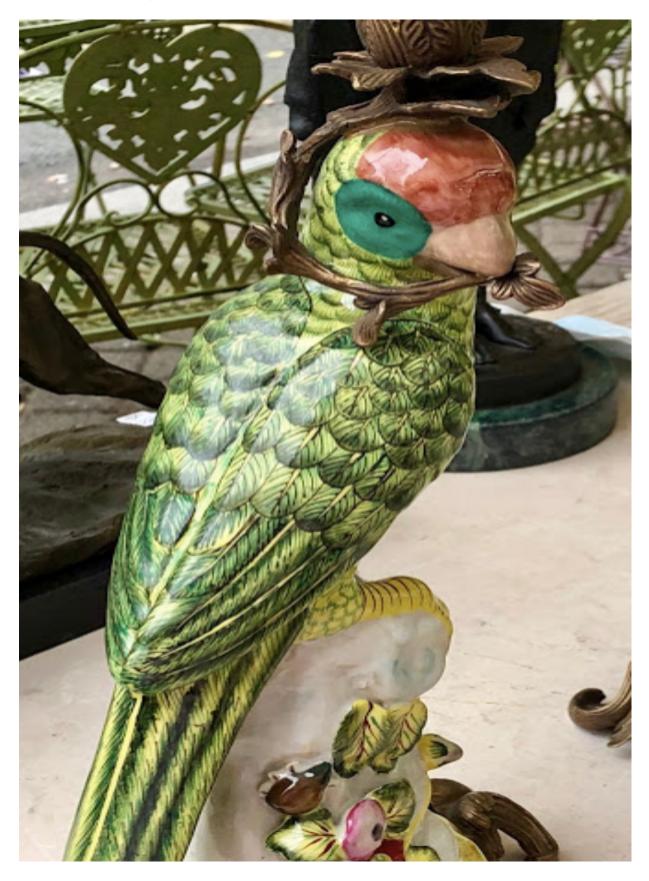
The Jardine's Parrot can grow to 28 centimetres (11 inches) tall.

It is seen in pairs or small groups. It nests in tree cavities. Females lay 3-4 white eggs, which hatch after about 27 days. The chicks leave the nest about 80 days after hatching.









kea

The Kea (*Nestor notabilis*) is a large parrot. It is the world's only alpine (high mountain) parrot. It is only found in the South Island of New Zealand. It is also a flightless, living mostly on the ground.

The Kea is mostly olive-green and well-camouflaged in trees. It has brilliant orange feathers under its wings. The feathers on its back and rump are orange-red, and some of the outer wing feathers are dull blue. It has a dark olive-brown face. Its grey upper beak is large, narrow, and curved. It has a short, broad, bluish-green tail with a black tip. It has dark-brown eyes. Its cere, eye-rings, and legs are grey.

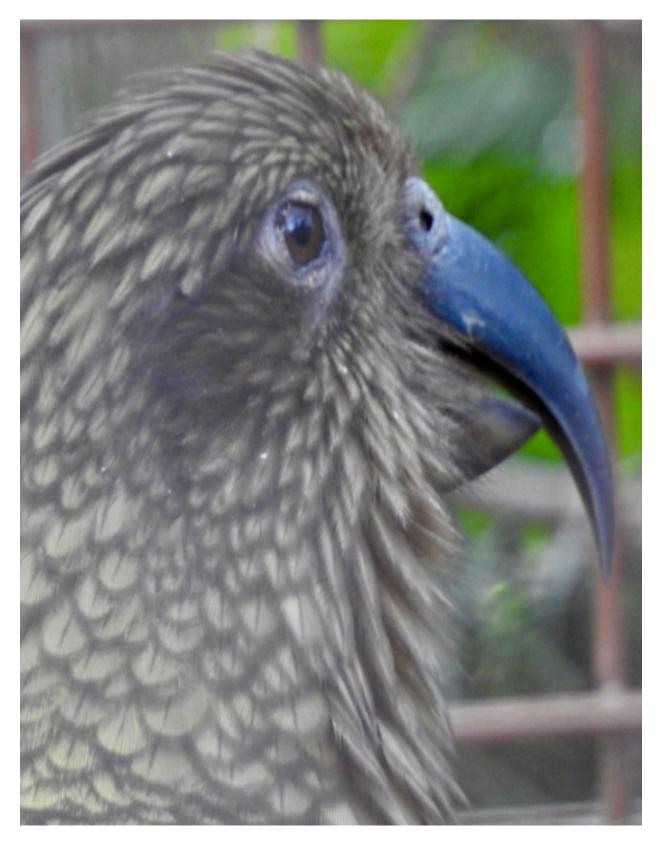
It grows to about 48 centimetres (19 inches) tall.

It is omnivorous, eating meat, especially the meat of dead animals. However, its diet also consists of roots, leaves, berries, nectar, and insects.

The Kea is social and lives in groups of up to 13 individuals. It nests in burrows in the ground or in crevices among tree roots. The nest has a tunnel that leads to a large room, which is lined with moss, lichens, ferns, and rotting wood. The female lays 2-5 eggs, which hatch after about 21 days.







macaw

The Macaw is a large, brightly-coloured, long-tailed parrot. It includes, for example, the Blue-and-Yellow Macaw (*Ara ararauna*) and the Scarlet Macaw (*Ara macao*).

The Macaw is featherless on its cheeks. It has small, dark eyes with a white eye-ring. It has a large, strong creamy-white beak.

It measures up to 90 centimetres (35.5 inches) tall, with a wingspand of 110 centimetres (43.5 inches).

It is native to Central America and South America, in countries such as Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Brazil. It prefers forests, especially tropical rain forests, and also woodlands.

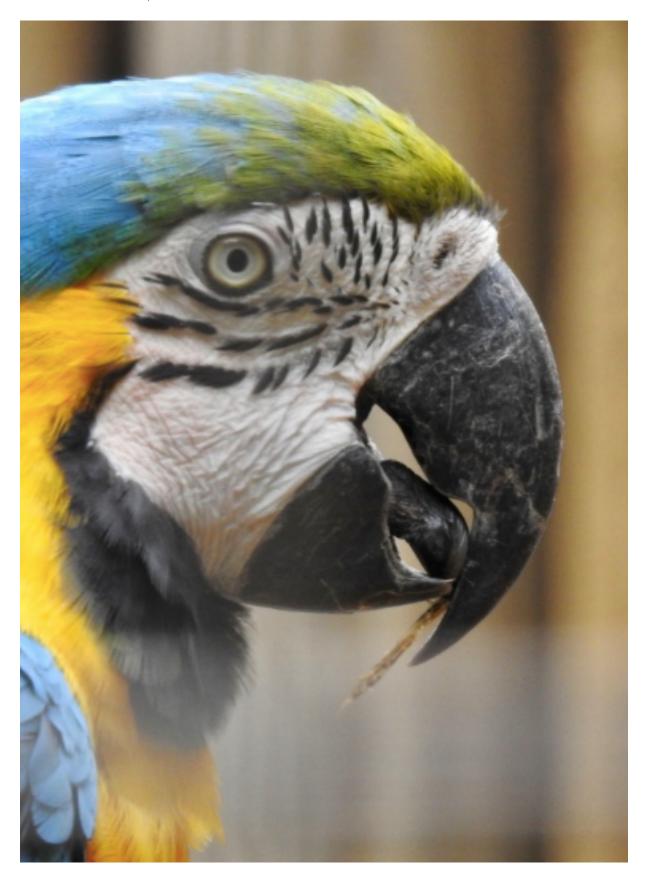
The Macaw eats a variety of food, such as seeds, nuts, fruits, palm fruits, leaves, flowers, and stems. It forages over 100 kilometres (62 miles) in search of seasonal food.

The female lays 2-4 eggs, which hatch after 25-27 days.

It lives, on average, 40-50 years in the wild.







palm cockatoo

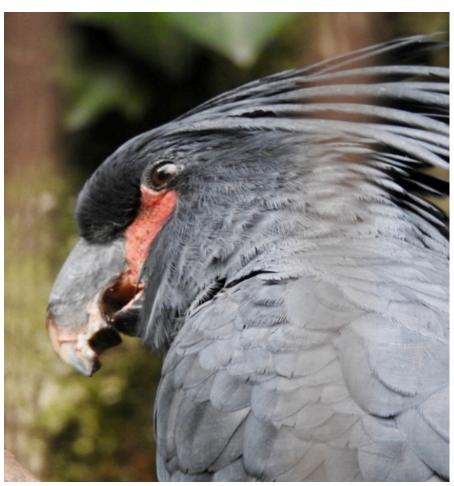
The Palm Cockatoo (*Probosciger aterrimus*) is a large parrot from New Guinea and a small area of northern Australia. It is also known as the Goliath Cockatoo or Great Black Cockatoo. It can break off twigs and use them as drumsticks to make a drumming noise.

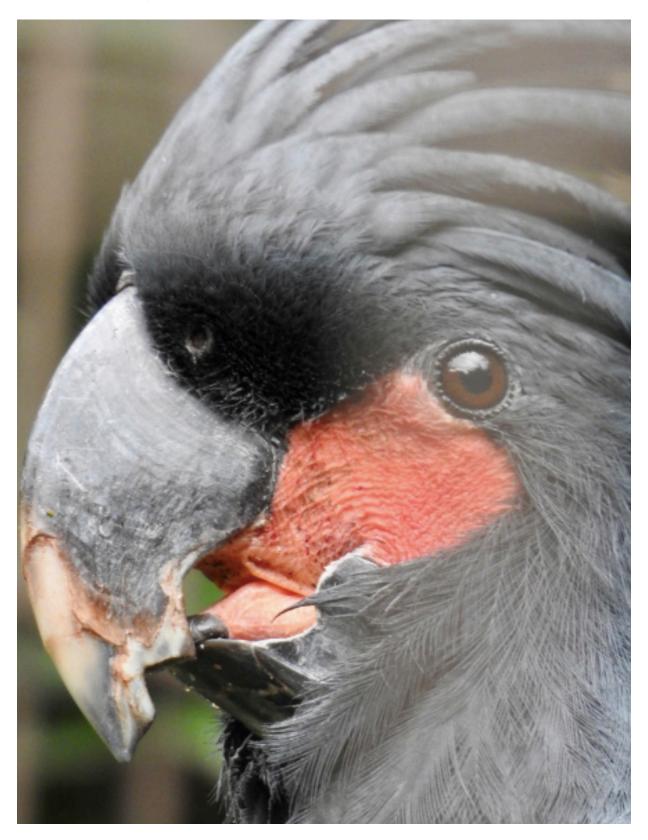
The Palm Cockatoo is grey-black with red cheeks that can change colour when it is frightened or excited. It has a very large black beak. It has the second largest beak of all parrots in the world (the Hyacinth Macaw has the largest beak). The top mandible (jaw) and the bottom mandible do not meet. It has a large crest. It has a red tongue with a black tip. It has black feet and large black claws.

It grows to about 60 centimetres (24 inches) tall.

The female Palm Cockatoo lays only one egg every second year. However, it has a long lifespan of 30-50 years.







patagonian conure

The Patagonian Conure (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*) is a medium-sized parrot. It is also called the Burrowing Parrot. It is related to the Macaw.

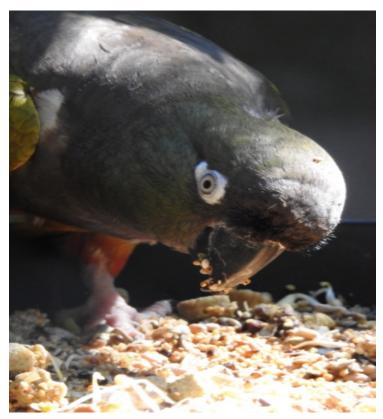
The Patagonian Conure is mainly olive green, with an olive-green neck, back and chest. It has yellow on it lower back and upper chest, with orange-red thighs. The male has red patches on its chest. Its throat is grey-brown. It has distinctive eyelashes and white eyerings. It has pale-yellow eyes and dark-grey beak. The male is not as colourful as the female.

It measures about 45 centimetres (17.5 inches) tall.

The Patagonian Conure is native to the South American countries of Argentina and Chile. It prefers dry bush steppes and deserts.

It is a social bird. It is monogamous and mates for life. It nests on cliff ledges. The female lays 2-3 eggs, which hatch after 24-25 days. Both parents take care of their chicks. The chicks gain their flight feathers after about eight weeks.





rainbow lorikeet

The Rainbow Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus moluccanus*) is a common medium-sized parrot along the east and southern coast of Australia.

The Rainbow Lorikeet is brightly coloured, with a deep blue head, green collar, and deep green wings, back, belly and tail. Its chest is red with blue-black barring.

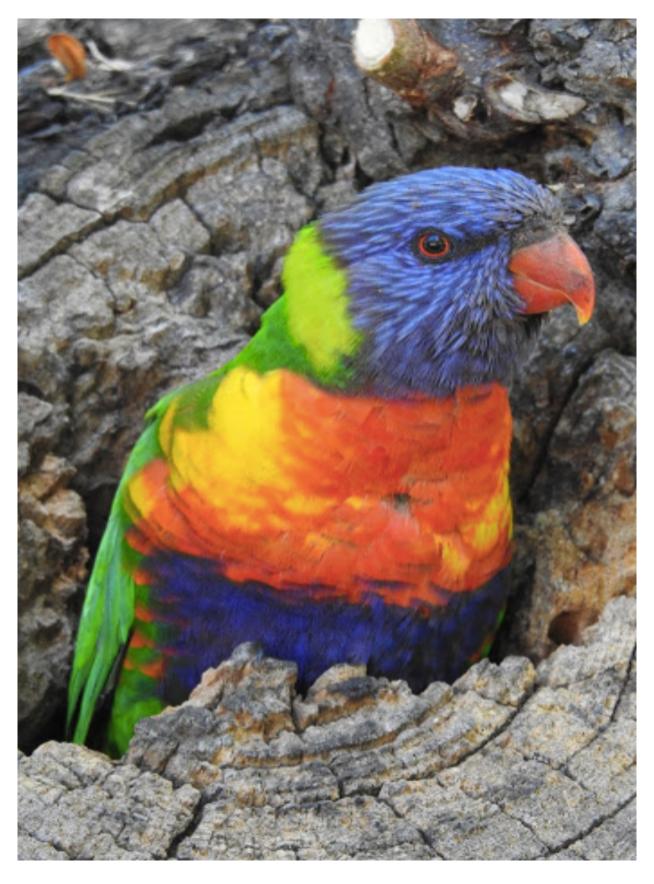
It grows to about 25-30 centimetres (10-12 inches) tall.

It eats fruit, pollen, seeds, and nectar.

The Rainbow Lorikeet is often found in pairs. It makes a nest in tree hollows. The female lays 1-3 eggs, which hatch after about 25 days. Only the female sits on the eggs.







red-tailed black cockatoo

The Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*) is a large parrot. It also known as the Bank's Black Cockatoo.

The Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo has all black feathers with a pair of bright red bars on its tail. It has a large crest on its head. Its beak and legs are dark-grey.

It can grow to about 60 centimetres (24 inches) tall.

The Red-Tailed Black Cockatoo is found in Australia in dry eucalyptus woodlands, near water, and dense tropical forests.

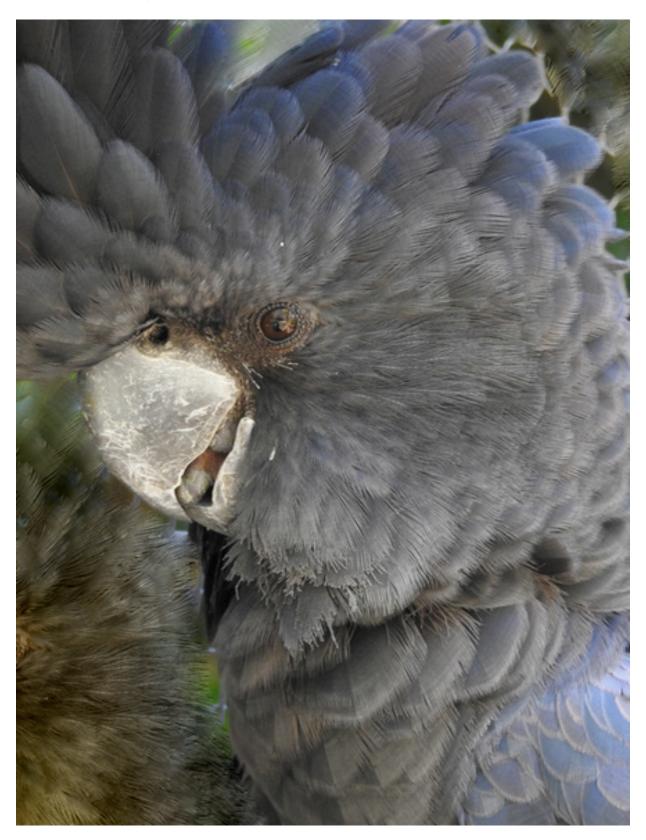
It is diurnal, active during the day. It is arboreal (living in trees), but when it feeds, it will look for eucalyptus seeds on the ground, as well as other grains and nuts.

It is often seen in large flocks of up to 500 individuals, and can be very noisy. It makes a nest in a hollow in a tall tree. The female lays 1-2 eggs.

It can live up to 45 years.







red-vented cockatoo

The Red-Vented Cockatoo (*Cacatua haematuropygia*) is a critically endangered medium-sized parrot. It is also known as the Philippine Cockatoo, after its native home.

The Red-Vented Cockatoo is all white with a red undertail, called the vent. The vent feathers are tipped with white or yellowish ends. It has pale-yellow underwings. It has a whitish beak and pink-grey feet. Its eyes are dark with a white eye-ring. It has a slightly bulbous forehead.

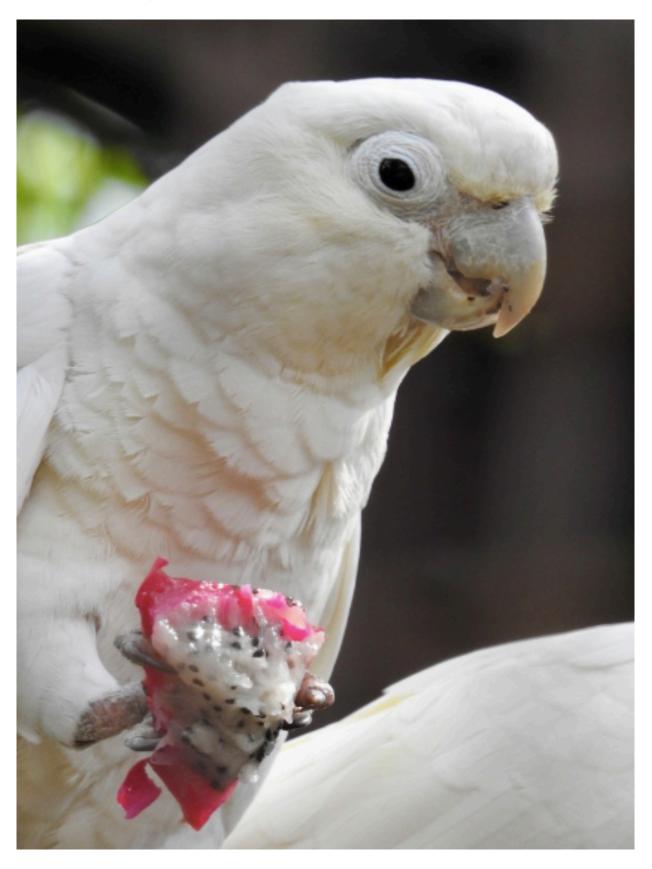
It measures about 30 centimetres (12 inches) tall.

It feeds on seeds, fruit, flowers, buds, and the nectar from flowers in forests and mangroves.

It is social. It nests, feeds, and flies in noisy groups, but during the mating season, it forms pairs which live apart from the flock. The female lays 2-3 eggs, which hatch after about 28 days.









sulphur-crested cockatoo

The Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita galerita*) is a large parrot from northern, eastern, and southern Australia.

The Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo is white, except for the underwing, undertail, and crest, which are yellow. The male has black eyes, and the female has red or brown eyes. It has a white eye-ring, black beak, and grey legs.

It grows to about 44-55 centimetres (17-21 inches) tall.

It can be found from Cape York in the north to Tasmania in the south. It prefers tropical forests, subtropical forests, and woodlands. It feeds on seeds and grains on the ground. While the flock of cockatoos feed, one cockatoo keeps guard in a tall tree. The guard will screech loudly to protect the flock from predators, such as dogs.

It makes a nest in the hollow of a tree. The female lays 2-3 eggs, which take 25-27 days to hatch. Both parents sit on the eggs, and feed their newly-born chicks. The chicks stay in the nest for 9-12 weeks.

It can live for about 70 years in captivity and 20-40 years in the wild.







the author: Martina Nicolls

I am an author and humanitarian aid consultant with over 30 years' experience in the management, implementation, and evaluation of international aid development projects, particularly in post-conflict environments and countries with transitional governments, such as Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Darfur, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Iraq, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Georgia, Kosovo, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka, and also Mauritius, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia – and others. I provide technical advice on areas such as peace-building and conflict mitigation, education, poverty reduction, human rights, child labour, data quality and financing models.

But mostly I am a wanderer. Wherever I am and wherever I go, I take photographs and I write. My books include:

Similar but Different in the Animal Kingdom (2017) A Mongolian Lament (2015) The Komodo Verses (2012) Liberia's Deadest Ends (2012) Bardot's Comet (2011) Kashmir on a Knife-Edge (2010) The Sudan Curse (2009)

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