

Red-rumped Parrot

FAMILY: *Psittacidae*
GENUS: *Psephotus*
SPECIES: *haematonotus*

OTHER NAMES: Black-hooded Parrot, Antbed Parrot, Anthill Parrot.

Description:

Small plump, long tailed parrot. The male's head, neck and breast are bright green with a blue tint. Lower back rich crimson and abdomen yellow fading to white with some green under the tail. Wings are blue-green with a yellow shoulder patch. Outer webs of flight feathers blue, tail green tinted with blue.

Females are among the drabest of Australian parrots, being dull olive in colour, with dull yellow on neck and breast. The undertail is white, and there are some blue feathers on the shoulder. Immatures are similar to but duller than adults. Females have pale bills. The Red-rumped Parrot is gregarious and roosts communally. It forages, mainly on the ground in small parties and sometimes congregates into small flocks. It is generally active, conspicuous and approachable. It drinks at dawn and dusk and intermittently during the day.

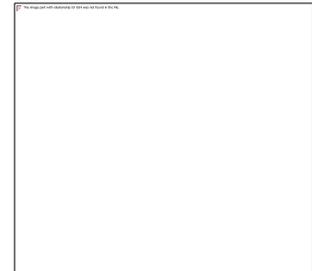
Length: 270mm.

Subspecies:

None.

Distribution:

Across most of south-eastern Australia from Brisbane (Qld) to Kangaroo Island and Yorke Peninsula (SA). It has profited from changes in land use by humans and is now common in areas where it was formerly rare.



Habitat:

Lightly wooded grasslands, riparian woodland in the arid zone (seldom far from water), farmland, roadside scrub and suburban parks and gardens.

Diet:

Seeds of various grasses and herbaceous plants.

Breeding:

August-January.

The usual nesting site is a cavity in a tree or sometimes a fallen log/post. The female incubates the eggs whilst being attended and fed (at almost hourly intervals) by the male. Both sexes participate in rearing the young.

Courtship Display:

Like the Mulga Parrot, the Red-rumped cock settles on a perch and stretches to his full height. He pushes the shoulders forward to reveal the blue and yellow markings and fans the tail which he wags from side to side. This is accompanied by much head bobbing and is followed (usually) by courtship feeding (ie. by regurgitation).

Sexual Maturity:

Red-rumped Parrots attain sexual maturity at around 12 months of age.

Clutch:

4-7 white rounded eggs (24mm x 19mm). Incubation period: 19-20 days. The young usually fledge at around 28 days.

Mutations and Hybrids:

Mutations in this species are as follows: a form with a bluish tinge and a pale red rump (occurs at Innamincka (SA)) and a Yellow (or Cinnamon) (sex linked).

The Red-rumped Parrot has hybridised with the Eastern and Western Rosellas, Mallee Ringneck, Mulga, Bluebonnet, Hooded and Red-capped Parrots.

Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds

As a minimum, a single tame bird could be housed in a small cage provided it measures around 400mm x 400mm x 600mm (approximately). Birds kept in this way should be provided with the opportunity for exercise every day. For breeding purposes, these birds are best kept to themselves and the best results are often obtained in suspended breeding cabinets (around 1200mm x 1000mm x 600mm).

Red-rumped Parrots are quite aggressive and should not be kept with other birds.

Species Specific Problems

Red-rumped parrots have a tendency to become overweight when kept in small aviaries. This is easily remedied by removing the majority of oily seeds (such as safflower and sunflower) from their diet.

Because Red-rumped Parrots spend quite a great deal of time feeding on the ground, they are at risk from fungal infections and intestinal worms. This is relatively easy to prevent by maintaining a high standard of hygiene.