

Red-capped Parrot

FAMILY: *Psittacidae*
GENUS: *Purpureicephalus*
SPECIES: *spurius*

OTHER NAMES: King Parrot, Western King Parrot, Pileated Parakeet, Hookbill.

Description:

Medium sized strikingly coloured parrot. The male of this species has a dark red crown, nape and forehead with bright yellow cheeks, rump and upper tail coverts. Back and wings are bright green, breast and belly bright blue. Flanks and undertail coverts are red mixed with some green. Underwing coverts blue with blue on the outer edge of primary feathers. Central tail feathers are green and the outers are blue tipped with white. Eyes are dark brown, bill blue-grey and legs brown. The female is duller than the male and has more green on the flanks and undertail coverts. Some birds have green feathers on the crown and a dull grey-mauve chest.

Immature birds have green crown and nape, a rust coloured band on forehead, blue on the wings and tail and yellow-green on the cheeks. Underparts are dull red-brown, washed with blue lower down. The flanks and undertail coverts are strongly diffused with pale green.

Red-capped Parrots mate for life and maintain permanent territories, but immature birds join wandering flocks until they reach maturity. Red-capped Parrots forage both in trees and on the ground. It is generally active and conspicuous in its behaviour but is quiet and unobtrusive when feeding. It is comparatively tame and approachable.

This bird has a close ecological relationship with the Marri tree (*Eucalyptus calophylla*). These trees are clearly preferred as a nesting site, and the bird's bill is specially adapted to extracting the seeds from the large nuts.

Length: 330-370mm.

Subspecies:

None.

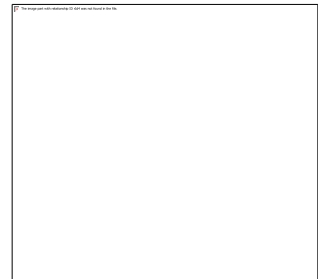
Distribution:

Confined to south-western Australia, from Esperance to Perth.

Habitat:

Eucalypt forest (esp. Marri) and woodland, also orchards and suburban parks and gardens.

Diet:



Mostly Marri seeds, but also nectar, insects and fallen fruit.

Breeding:

August-November.

The usual nesting site is a cavity in a tree (most often a Marri and quite high above ground). The nest is lined with wood dust. The female incubates, broods and feeds the young for the first 12-14 days. After this time the male joins in their care.

In captivity Red-capped Parrots will readily nest in a vertically hung nest box of around 90cm x 25cm x 25cm lined with rotten wood dust or peat moss. Logs of about the same dimension, perhaps a little taller, are also acceptable.

Courtship Display:

This consists of the male alighting on a perch whilst emitting a harsh rattling call. He ruffs the feathers on the crown and lowers the wings to expose his yellow rump. With this, he raises his fanned tail toward his back. This display is often followed by courtship feeding.

Sexual Maturity:

Red-capped Parrots become sexually mature and capable of breeding at around 12 months of age.

Males have much of the adult plumage after the first moult around 12-15 months of age. Females however, may not acquire adult plumage until the second moult.

Clutch:

4-7 white rounded eggs (26mm x 23mm). Incubation period: 21 days. The young usually fledge at around 35 days.

Mutations and Hybrids:

This species has hybridised with the Eastern, Western and Crimson Rosellas.

Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds

A single tame bird may be kept in a small cage provided it measures at least 600mm x 600mm x 800mm. When kept in this fashion, any bird should be given the opportunity for plenty of exercise every day. Breeding pairs or individual birds are best kept in a medium to large aviary however. The former should measure at least 1.5m x 2m. Regardless of size, cages or aviaries should be supplied with a range of perches. Red-capped Parrots are essentially quite peaceful and will readily share their aviary with a range of other species including grass parrots, Turquoise Parrots (and other Neophemas), Indian Ringnecks, Pheasants, Doves and Quail just to name a few. They may also be kept in flocks.

Species Specific Problems

Red-capped Parrots are naturally rather nervous and may injure themselves when introduced to a new aviary. To prevent any such problems, it is good policy to cover the flight section of the aviary in such a way as to screen the bird from passers-by.

The Red-cap's nervousness may also cause the hens to abandon their eggs at the slightest disturbance.