

Lorikeets

Trichglossus haematodus

Introduction and Origin

As a hand-raised pet Lorikeets excel because of their outgoing natures, ease of training, ability to talk and boisterous personalities. They are better suited to teenage or adult owners, as many children feel intimidated by their very active and outgoing personalities. They love lots of attention and social interaction with their family members, and because of this they are strongly becoming one of Australia's most popular hand-raised pet birds. The

Lorikeets have very specialised tongues for feeding on nectar.

wild rainbow lorikeet has a wide distribution covering the coastal regions of the north, east and southeastern parts of Australia. Like all lorikeets they are gregarious and mainly arboreal (Tree dwelling). They fly by day in

dispersed flocks of 2-50 birds searching for food as far away as 50 kms and large flocks of up to several hundred birds congregate in tree tops at night. All lorikeets are blossom feeders harvesting nectar and pollen from eucalypts, paperbarks, banksias, grevillias, palms and grass trees. They may also on occasion eat insects and any available ripe fruits they can find. In captivity they have an average life span of 15-20 years.

Getting your Bird Home

Birds travel better in cardboard boxes or cages that provide good ventilation, but restrict visual stress. While travelling in the car, try to place the bird in a position out of direct sunlight, and away from noisy car speakers, which may cause stress.

When you arrive home ensure that your cage has been thoroughly cleaned with an avian safe disinfectant and before releasing the bird from the box, place everything it will require such as water, seed, toys etc into the cage. Once the cage is set up, place the bird inside and leave him or her to acclimatise to the new surroundings. At night cover the cage with a sheet or cage cover, to prevent drafts and reduce visual stress.

Will my Lorikeet need a Feathered Friend?

Although Lorikeets are naturally a colony bird, a hand-raised bird will bond more closely to their human family members than their own species, so they usually don't seek the company of other birds. By keeping your bird as an only child (bird) it will remain more closely bonded to you, although if you worry it may be lonely because your away from home a lot, you can house two together, but you should try to obtain them at the same time, preferably from the same clutch or at least two birds of similar age.

Lorikeets by nature are gregarious birds that enjoy life in a colony situation but they have a tendency to dominate or harass other species. Housing them in a mixed collection is difficult as they commonly dominate or attack less assertive species such as cockatiels, neophema's,



budgerigars, finches, canaries and even some of the parrot species. For this reason it is recommended that rainbow lorikeets be housed with similar sized members of the lorikeet family such as the red-collared lorikeet, scaly-breasted lorikeet and musk lorikeet. Refrain from housing them with the smaller, more passive varieties of lorikeets such the purple-crowned lorikeet, varied lorikeet, and little lorikeet. It should be noted that breeding performance of a colony might be affected if housed in a mixed collection. Always ask about compatibility before purchasing another species and remember that the individual temperament of each bird plays an important part in compatibility.

Not all birds will be compatible under the same circumstances.

Diet & Water

Lorikeets are predominantly a nectar and pollen feeder, they have interesting body features such as a brush-tongue and thin walled stomach for easy collection and digestion of their food. Captive diets should be kept as close to their natural diet as possible. In the past lorikeets were avoided as pets because their dietary requirements were not fully understood or commercially available. Today after years of captive housing and breeding we now have an understanding of their nutritional requirements and many good wet and dry commercially produced diets are available in powder form. Dry lorikeet food should be freely available all day, this serves as the pollen portion of their diet, while wet mixes serve as the nectar, they should be prepared and fed either once or twice a day in amounts small enough to be consumed within 3 or 4 hours. Any uneaten wet mix should be removed after four hours to prevent the growth of bacterial contamination that could cause illness in birds if consumed after several hours especially in hot weather.

Wet and dry mixes alone are not a complete diet they may lack or contain insufficient concentrations of many important vitamins and essential minerals. In order to

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complete your birds diet you should supplement their wet and dry mixes, daily with small portions of fresh fruits and vegetables such as diced apple, carrot, beans, peas, corn (Kernels or Cob), broccoli and leafy greens like spinach. Remember never to feed birds lettuce or avocado. If fresh fruit and vegetables cannot be provided daily a Vitamin supplement such as Soluvet® can be added to the birds water or wet mix, two or three times a week. To provide calcium and iodine requirements, cuttle bone and iodine bells can also be provided.

All birds should have a fresh supply of water, changed on a daily basis. Used glazed stoneware or terracotta bowls and position in the shade away from perches.

Health and Quarantine

Kellyville Pets tries it's best to provide customers with healthy, quality pets, but we recommend that any new bird whether purchased from a pet store or obtained by any other means, be quarantined for a period of no less than 30 days in a dedicated hospital/quarantine cage, which is isolated from all other pet birds. As prevention is always easier than cure, your bird should be sprayed with an insecticide such as Avian Insect Liquidator® every six weeks to kill and prevent mite and lice infestations. Worms can be fatal so treatment and prevention are a must. The use of a broad-spectrum wormer such as Worm-out Gel® will kill any worms present in the new arrival. Don't forget to repeat this worming treatment in a fortnight's time and routinely worm your birds every three months. If any bird appears unwell during its quarantine period, please seek veterinary advice.

(Please note that when worming lorikeets the medication should either be administered directly to the crop via a crop tube or if medicating the water withhold fruits, vegetables, and wet mixes for that day to encourage the consumption of drinking water.)

Once the quarantine period is over, you can release your lorikeet into your aviary, but remember to always release birds into a new environment in the morning and certainly not after 3 pm in the afternoon. By doing this your new bird will have time to find food and water sources, make friends and settle into a safe roosting (sleeping) position in the afternoon, ultimately resulting in less stress and a smoother transition.

Colouration and Sexing

In the wild the rainbow lorikeet is seen in its original colours of green back, wings and tail with flecks of yellow. The chest varies in colour from yellow through to a bright orange-red or a combination of them. The head and abdomen are a striking blue, the feet and legs grey, the beak is orange and the back of the neck has a bright green collar.

Captive breeding has produced some colour variations (mutations), such as the blue-fronted, pied, and lutino to name a few.

**Learn more
from the team
at Kellyville Pets**

At Kellyville Pets, we encourage responsible pet ownership.

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Lorikeets are sexually monomorphic, meaning that both the cock and the hen appear almost identical in size, shape and colour, so sexing by visual signs cannot be determined. The only way to guarantee the sex of a lorikeet is to have it surgically or DNA sexed by a qualified veterinarian. Even sexing birds by behaviour is not always accurate, as males will often preen and display to each other, while two hens have often be found sharing a nest and incubating infertile eggs.

Housing and Breeding

It is recommended that only hand-raised lorikeets be kept as indoor pets. Aviary bred birds stress easily in confined, noisy and unfamiliar surroundings. They often die if they cannot adjust to life in a cage. Hand reared rainbow lorikeets on the other hand have been raised by humans usually from two weeks in age and they are accustomed to handling, cages and the many of the noises that occur in our everyday lives. As a hand-raised pet they excel because of their outgoing natures, ease of training, ability to talk and boisterous personalities.

A cage with dimensions of 20" (W) x 20" (D) x 30" (H) will give a hand-raised pet enough room to spread and exercise his/her wings without the risk of injury from hitting the wire sides. Cages that open at the top, providing a perch are ideal for hand raised birds as they offer more freedom, and interaction with their family. Always remember to cage your bird at night and when it can't be supervised, to protect him or her from accidents and injury.

Aviary bred lorikeets can be housed and usually breed well in an aviary of approximately 5ft(W) x 8ft(D) x 6ft(H), some pairs may breed year round although they generally breed more prolifically from August through to late January. Rainbow lorikeets require a breeding box with dimensions of roughly 10"(W) X 10"(D) x 12"(H), and the provision of a good nesting material. The hen usually lays 2-4 eggs, which are incubated and raised by both parents. Incubation usually takes between 25-26 days and the chicks remain in the nest for approximately 7 weeks, weaning usually occurs within a fortnight of the chicks leaving the nest.

Varieties

There are three different species available, the Red Collared, Rainbow and the Scalie Breasted Lorikeet.

Lorikeets are highly intelligent and make excellent pets for those seeking a playful and energetic bird. All species are strikingly beautiful with their varied colours and stunning glossy plumage. They make excellent talkers and with a very curious nature, lorikeets have a tremendous mimicking ability and will often be heard imitating household appliances such as the telephone or microwave.

Further information on diet, hygiene, worming, vitamins, bird stress, licensing, Avian Vets and much more is available from the team at Kellyville Pets.

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