

# Princess Parrots

***Polytelis alexandrae***

## Introduction and Origin

The wild princess parrot is a very nomadic species that migrates throughout central Australia. They only stay in one place long enough to breed and raise their young before departing as soon as the fledglings are capable of flight. Small flocks of several pairs (15-20 birds) are seen together

**The Princess Parrot acquired its name in the mid-19th century, when it was popular to name new species after royalty.**

forming small breeding colonies, which nest close together sometimes in the same tree. They spend most of the day close to the ground searching

for seeds of grasses and herbaceous plants such as the Spinifex. Acacia blossoms and berries of the mistletoe are also some of their favorites. Princess parrots have an average captive 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. 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 Princess Parrot need a Feathered Friend?

Hand raised princess parrots 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 you're 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. Another alternative is to provide lots of toys & entertainment for your bird.

Princess parrots by nature are fairly passive, non-aggressive birds making them an easy bird to keep in captivity and a moderately compatible species which can be housed in an aviary with



various other species such as cockatiels, budgies, bourke's parrot, scarlet chested parrots, and superb Parrots - just to name a few. It should be noted that breeding performance might be affected if housed in a mixed collection. Due to their passive nature, princess parrots are not ideally housed with more dominant bird species like members of the rosella and lorikeet families. 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

Princess parrots are predominantly a seed-eating species so their captive diet should consist of a good quality lovebird or small parrot seed mix, which should contain a variety of seeds such as french white millet, plain canary, hulled oats, pannicum, Japanese millet, saff flower and sunflower. Grit assists with digestion, and therefore is an important part of any seed eating birds diet.

Seed alone is not a complete diet it lacks many important vitamins and essential minerals. In order to complete your birds diet you should supplement their seed mix or pellet diet 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 can be added to the

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birds water, two or three times a week. To provide calcium and iodine requirements, cuttlebone 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 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 will kill any worms present, and must be repeated every three months.

If any bird appears unwell during its quarantine period, please seek veterinary advice.

Once the quarantine period is over, you can release your princess parrot into your aviary, but remember to always release birds into a new environment in the morning. 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.

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

## Colouration and Sexing

In the wild the princess parrot is seen in its original colours, of olive green back, neck and wings, which have a bright green band along the edge. The chest is a greyish-green and the head has a blue crown, pink checks and throat. The rump is blue and the tail is quite long with olive green, blue and pink feathers towards the centre. Captivity breeding has produced some colour variations (mutations) that do not occur in the wild. The first produced being blue, followed by lutino and albino. Sexing mature princess parrots is usually fairly easy. A cock bird over the age of twelve months will usually display more intense colouration than a hen, especially the blue crown of the head, the pink of the throat, the bright green bands along each side of the wings, and he will have a brighter orange beak. The cock

also has a longer tail in comparison to the hen and has small extension (Spatulate) present on the third primary feather, often called the bachelor feather by breeders.

The hen is similar in colour but usually less intense, her beak is a lighter orange, her tail shorter and she lacks the protrudence of the bachelor feather, which is only visible on the male. Young princess parrots look like hens only slightly duller and with shorter tails.

## Housing and Breeding

It is recommended that only hand reared princess parrots 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 princess parrots 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 reared pet they excel because of their passive natures, ease of training, ability to talk and their endearing personalities.

A cage with dimensions of 20" (W) x 20" (D) x 30" (H) will give your hand reared 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.

Aviary bred princess parrots 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. Princess parrots require a breeding box with dimensions of roughly 10"(W) X 10"(D) x 18"(H), and the provision of a good nesting material. The hen usually lays 4-6 eggs, which are incubated and raised by both parents. Incubation usually takes between 19-21 days and the chicks remain in the nest for approximately 6-7 weeks, weaning usually occurs within a fortnight of the chicks leaving the nest.

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

At Kellyville Pets, we encourage responsible pet ownership.

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