

Blue Winged Parrot

FAMILY: *Psittacidae*
GENUS: *Neophema*
SPECIES: *chrysostoma*

OTHER NAMES: Blue-winged Grass-parakeet, Blue-banded Grass-parakeet.

Description:

Small parrot displaying little sexual dimorphism. Olive-green above, golden on crown and more yellow below. Broad dark blue wing patches, flight feathers black. Dark blue band on forehead (extending to the eye) with lighter blue line behind it. Face yellowish, tail blue/grey with blue outer feathers tipped with yellow. Females resemble males but with less extensive band on forehead and duller wing patches. Immatures resemble adults but are duller and have grey/blue wing patches.

The Blue-winged Parrot is most often encountered in large flocks (in winter) but is mainly found in pairs or small parties during the breeding season (summer). Generally quiet and inconspicuous, the Blue-winged Parrot is almost exclusively terrestrial in its foraging behaviour but roosts and shelters in trees.

Length: 200-210mm.

Subspecies:

None.

Distribution:

Breeds in Tasmania, Victoria and south-eastern South Australia. Migrates northward to saltbush and bluebush plains of South Australia and western New South Wales during the winter months.

Habitat:

Breeds in open woodland and heath, migrates to saltbush and bluebush plains in winter.

Diet:

Seeds of grasses, especially Wallaby Grasses (*Danthonia sp.*). The diet may also be supplemented with blossoms, fruit, insects and insect larvae.

Breeding:

October-February.

Usual nesting site is a tree cavity which may be either high or close to the ground. Nesting may be loosely communal. The hen incubates the eggs but is attended by the male who also contributes to rearing the young. The Blue-winged Parrot is double brooded.

Courtsip Display

Like other *Neophema* parrots the Elegant Parrot approaches the female with the body fully erect, tail fanned and wings held slightly open. With this, he bobs his head and utters a soft chatter. This is usually followed by courtship feeding.

Sexual Maturity:

This species becomes sexually mature at 9-12 months of age.

Clutch:

4-6 white rounded white eggs (22mm x 19mm). Incubation period: 20 days. The young usually fledge at around 30 days.

Mutations and Hybrids:

Some cockbirds are known to have orange patches in the centre of the abdomen. Hybrids have been bred between this species and the Rock and Turquoise Parrots.

Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds

As a minimum, a single bird could be housed in a small cage provided it measures around 450mm x 450mm x 600mm (approximately). Pairs can be kept in a slightly larger cage or breeding cabinet. However, *Neophema* parrots usually perform better in aviaries. These need be no larger than around 1.5m wide x 2m long x 1.8m high and lined with a light to medium grade mesh. In addition, the aviary should offer plenty of shelter with part of the roof covered in and the back and sides at least partially covered.

It would be advisable keep only one pair of *Neophema* parrots per aviary as the cocks often squabble. However, they may be housed with a variety of other species including finches, doves and quail, Princess, Superb and Regent Parrots and even Indian Ringnecks. Some aviculturalists report problems with housing Bourke's in mixed colonies. Some birds have the tendency to fly during the (moonlit) night and may disturb other birds in the aviary. This can be detrimental to nesting and may also lead to injuries among other birds which are startled and blunder into the wire mesh etc.

Species Specific Problems

Blue-winged Parrots are mostly terrestrial and intestinal worms are a common problem in species which spend considerable time on the ground. Similarly, fungal infections may become a

problem. These are relatively easily dealt with however simply by maintaining a high standard of hygiene.