

# Elegant Parrot

**FAMILY:** *Psittacidae*

**GENUS:** *Neophema*

**SPECIES:** *elegans*

**OTHER NAMES:** Elegant Grass-parakeet, Grass-parakeet.

## Description:

Small parrot displaying little sexual dimorphism. Male's crown, nape and uppers golden- olive. Blue band on forehead (extending beyond the eye) with pale blue line above it. Yellow between eye and beak. Wings olive with dark blue on margin. Turquoise shoulder patch (narrow). Flight feathers deep blue, central tail feathers dull blue, outers blue edged with yellow. Underparts including underside of tail yellow. Adult females resemble males but is duller in colour on upper parts and lacks golden tinge. Flight feathers brown. Immatures are duller versions of the adults and lack the band on forehead. Young cocks are usually more yellow on underparts than hens, and young hens usually have a pale stripe under the wings which disappears after the first moult. The Elegant Parrot is most often encountered in flocks of 20-100 or more, except in the breeding season when tend to be found either in pairs or small parties. It, like other Neophemas, is quiet, unobtrusive and forages almost entirely on the ground. Its flight is high, swift and direct. Partly nomadic, the Elegant Parrot may be encountered in the company of the Blue-winged Parrot.

Length: 225mm.

## Subspecies:

None.

## Distribution:

From south-western NSW to the Mt Lofty Ranges and Kangaroo Island in SA and in WA from Esperance to Perth.

## Habitat:

Heathland and open country, open woodland, cropland and semiarid scrub.

## Diet:

Seeds of grasses and herbacious plants.

## Breeding:

August-January.

The usual nesting site is a small tree cavity near the ground. Usual nesting material is decayed wood dust. The hen incubates the eggs but is attended by the male who also contributes to rearing the young.

### **Courtship 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:**

These birds become sexually mature at 9-12 months of age.

### **Clutch:**

4-5 white rounded white eggs (21mm x 18mm). Incubation period: 18 days. The young usually fledge at around 30-35 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 Turquoise, Scarlet- chested and Red-rumped 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**

Elegant 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