

# Musk Lorikeet

**FAMILY:** *Loriidae*

**GENUS:** *Glossopsitta*

**SPECIES:** *concinna*

**OTHER NAMES:** Musky Lorikeet, Green Keet, Green Leek.

## Description:

The Musk Lorikeet is a large dark-green lorikeet which shows little sexual dimorphism. General plumage is a dark green with bright red lores, forehead and patch between eyes and side of neck. Crown is blue with bronze nape and mantle. Yellow patches on sides of breast. Underwing coverts yellow-treen; tail green with outer feathers having orange-red markings. Eyes orange and bill black with a coral tip. The legs are green -brown. Females are generally a little duller than males and also have more yellow on the underparts. Immatures are duller than adults, especially the red on the forehead and neck. Eyes are brown and the bill is black/brown.

Musk Lorikeets are very gregarious birds and are most often encountered in large flocks around flowering stands of eucalypts. Strongly arboreal, Musks are not easily discouraged from leaving a food tree. Feeding is rather a chaotic activity, with much chattering and excitement whilst groups of birds fly back and forth. These birds stay in pairs within flocks as well as at night in a roosting tree.

Length: 220mm.

## Subspecies:

None.

## Distribution:

It is suspected that the Musk Lorikeet's range has strongly declined since European settlement. It is now found in south-eastern Australia (incl. Tasmania), but is most common in Victoria and is increasing rare north of Brisbane (QLD).

## Habitat:

Eucalypt forests and woodlands. Avoids rainforest and wet sclerophyll forests.

## Diet:

Mainly nectar, supplemented with pollen, fruit and seeds.

Specialised diets have been developed for lorikeets in captivity. These are pollen and nectar substitutes and a number of reputable brands are now available. Essentially, these come in two forms; a wet mix (nectar substitute) and a dry mix (pollen substitute) both of which are essential. Although these diets are designed to provide the essential requirements for lorikeets, they must be substituted with other foods such as fresh fruits (apples and pears, stone-fruits, most citruses, banana, melon etc.) and seed. You will find that certain fruits are preferable to others at particular times of year (eg. citrus is preferred in summer).

## Breeding:

August-January.

The usual nesting site is a tree cavity or hollow limb.

Only the female incubates the eggs, but both parents are involved in rearing the young.

In captivity Musk Lorikeets will breed in both logs and wooden nesting boxes. Logs should be around 60-80cm in height with an internal diameter of about 20cm. The entrance hole should be near the top and have a diameter of about 8cm. Boxes are equally acceptable. Their dimensions should measure around 25cm x 25cm x 30cm, with an entrance hole of around 8cm. The preferred nesting material is wood dust or shavings. Shavings should not be too coarse so as not to allow the eggs to become buried in the nest material.

### **Courtship Display:**

A courting male will bob and hop with his neck arched as he approaches the female. The pupils of his eyes may become dilated. The bonding is strong between pairs and they are often seen sitting close together engaged in mutual preening.

### **Sexual Maturity:**

Most birds do not breed until their second year. There are exceptions to this, however, with birds having bred at the age of 1 year.

### **Clutch:**

2 white rounded eggs (25mm x 20mm). Incubation period: 24 days. The young usually fledge at around 60 days.

### **Mutations and Hybrids:**

There are no records of natural mutations in this species.

Musk Lorikeets have hybridised with the following species: Rainbow Lorikeets, Purple-crowned Lorikeets Scaly-breasted and Little Lorikeets.

### **Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds**

Musk Lorikeets may be housed in suspended cages of around 60cm x 60cm x 80cm without any problem. They will also readily thrive and breed in a larger mixed aviaries. These birds are not aggressive and can be housed with a variety of species including doves, finches, neophemas, princess parrots and other lorikeets such as purple-crowned lorikeets. Best breeding results are achieved with just one pair per aviary.

### **Species Specific Problems:**

Because lorikeets have specialised diets (part of which is liquid) and a very short gut-passage rate (and hence produce large volumes of liquid faeces) they are very susceptible indeed to bacterial and fungal infections of the digestive tract. This means that in order to avoid disease a high standard of hygiene is essential. Similarly, aviaries and feeding stations should be constructed in such a way as to minimise the opportunity for birds to foul their foods.

Fungal infections tend to manifest themselves as slimy or cheesy blobs inside the beak, throat and crop although milder cases may not be as easily detected. Bacterial infections, on the other hand, are usually detected by means of examining the faeces. Faeces of an infected bird may have either a (too) large liquid component or (more commonly) is discoloured and tends to be green. In less virulent infections the bird may just seem lethargic and disinterested in foods or toys etc.

Other problems encountered in lorikeets include feather plucking of nestlings by their parents (unavoidable when encountered except by removing chicks for hand rearing) and psittacine beak and feather disease. The latter is an incurable condition which is

transmitted through the faeces. The disease prevents proper feather formation and feather loss and causes the beak to become weak and crumble. Birds carrying this disease are best destroyed as it is debilitating and inevitably leads to death.