

Scaly-breasted Lorikeet

FAMILY: *Loriidae*

GENUS: *Trichoglossus*

SPECIES: *chlorolepidotus*

OTHER NAMES: Green Lorikeet, Green and Yellow Lorikeet, Green Keet, Green Parrot, Green Leek, Greenie.

Description:

Medium to large lorikeet with like sexes. The general body plumage is green. The crown and sides of head emerald green tinged with blue. Feathers of back of neck, throat and breast yellow, broadly edged with green (gives a scaly appearance). The tail is green with the base of outer tail feathers being marked with orange red. Lower flanks, thighs and undertail coverts green strongly marked with yellow. Underwing coverts orange red. Eyes orange-red, bill coral red and legs grey-brown. Females resemble males but are somewhat duller

Immature birds are duller still than adults with a shorter tail, brown eyes and a brown bill with yellow markings.

Scaly-breasted Lorikeets are nomadic and often occur in mixed flocks such as with Rainbow Lorikeets to which they are similar in size and behaviour. Scaly-breasted Lorikeets are essentially arboreal.

Length: 230-240mm.

Subspecies:

None.

Distribution:

Coastal areas and associated highlands from Cooktown (QLD) to Wollongong (NSW). An introduced population occurs near Melbourne (Vic). Nomadic flocks frequently penetrate inland to the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range, where they usually prefer riverine woodland.

Habitat:

Most types of moist coastal forests, including rainforest and melaleuca and banksia scrub.

Diet:

Mainly nectar, but also pollen, seeds, fruit and ripening grain.

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:

May-December.

The usual nesting site is a tree cavity (often at great height) lined with a layer of wood dust. Only the female incubates the eggs, but both parents feed the young.

In captivity the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet will breed both in logs or boxes. Logs should be around 60cm in length with an internal diameter of around 20cm internal diameter and an entrance hole of around 10cm near the top. However, for convenience it is best practise to use boxes as nesting receptacles. This is because lorikeets generally are particularly messy nesters and it will be necessary to replace nesting material with fresh material between (or sometimes during) broods. Boxes should be around 25cm x 25cm x 30cm and suspended vertically. the preferred nesting material is wood-dust or shavings. Shavings should not be too coarse so as to prevent the eggs from becoming buried in it.

Courtship Display

The male approaches the female stretched to his full height with his neck arched and pupils dilated. He then hops along the perch making full circles. During this process, he may utter a musical "coo".

Sexual Maturity:

Scaly-breasted Lorikeets become sexually mature at 18 months of age.

Clutch:

2-3 white oval eggs (20mm x 26mm). Incubation period: 22 days. The young usually fledge at around 40 days.

Mutations and Hybrids:

Mutations in this species include: Blue, Olive, Jade and Cinnamon.

Scaly-breasted Lorikeets are known to have hybridised with Rainbow, Purple -crowned and Musk Lorikeets. They are also known to have hybridised with the Ornate Lory (*Trichoglossus ornatus*)

Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds

Scaly-breasted Lorikeets may be kept singly or in pairs in a medium sized 50cm x 50cm x 65cm suspended cage. Clearly however, larger cages offer more room to fly and choices for the inclusion of a nesting box etc. Although these birds usually spend the night in a nesting box, it is good practise to provide larger aviaries with some form of shelter (partially covered roof and sides) to offer some protection from the elements.

Scaly-breasted Lorikeets are generally intolerant of other birds and it is therefore best to house them in separate pairs. They will however, share an aviary quite peacefully with other larger lorikeets such as the Rainbow and Musk, but it is unlikely that they will breed under these conditions. The best breeding results are obtained when these birds are housed in breeding pairs.

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 lorkeets 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.