

Superb Parrot

FAMILY: *Psittacidae*

GENUS: *Polytelis*

SPECIES: *swainsonii*

OTHER NAMES: Barraband Parakeet, Scarlet-breasted Parrot, Green Leek.

Description:

Large brightly coloured parrot generally seen in small groups, pairs or small parties. The male is green overall with a bright yellow forehead, throat and cheeks. A broad red band on the breast and blue shoulders. Tail green above, black below. Bill is pink and eyes yellow-orange. Females are duller in colour than males and lack the yellow and red colours. She has red flecks on the thigh feathers and a bluish tinge on the cheeks. The underside of the tailfeathers are tipped with pink and eyes are yellow.

Immature birds resemble adult females, but with brown eyes.

The Superb Parrot lives in small flocks which disperse in pairs to breed. They forage both in trees and on the ground and is often active in the early morning and late afternoon. On hot days, it spends most of its time loafing in shady crowns of trees.

Length: 400mm.

Subspecies:

None.

Distribution:

Restricted to interior New South Wales.

Habitat:

Forest and woodlands (esp. River Red Gum), box or mixed box and White Cypress Pine woodlands and cereal crops.

Diet:

Seeds, nectar, blossoms, fruit, insects and their larvae and spilled cereal grains.

Breeding:

September-December.

The usual nesting site is tree hollow, generally at great height. The female incubates the eggs and the male attends and feeds her during this time. Both parents are involved in rearing the young.

In captivity, aviculturalists have had mixed success in breeding Superb Parrots. Some pairs have been known to produce many broods whilst others cannot be induced to breed. These birds will breed both in boxes or logs. A box should be 60cm x 20cm x 20cm and suspended (at an angle) in the aviary well before the commencement of the breeding season. Similarly, a nesting log should have an internal diameter of about 20cm and be around 80cm-1m in height. The preferred nesting material is wood shavings.

Sexual Maturity:

Full adult plumage is attained at about 7-10 months.

Clutch:

4-6 white rounded eggs (28mm x 24mm). Incubation period: 20 days. The young usually fledge at around 35-45 days.

Mutations and Hybrids:

The skin of a Lutino Superb Parrot is held in the Australian Museum. Aside from this specimen, there are no other recorded mutations for this species.

The Superb Parrot has hybridised with the Princess Parrot, the Crimson-winged Parrot, Regent Parrot and the Australian King Parrot.