

Swift Parrot

FAMILY: *Psittacidae*

GENUS: *Lathamus*

SPECIES: *discolor*

OTHER NAMES: Swift Lorikeet, Swift-flying Parakeet, Swift-flying Lorikeet, red-shouldered Parakeet, Chink.

Description:

Small to medium parrot with little sexual dimorphism. Plumage is generally green. Blue crown, red face with yellow lores and borders of face. Ear coverts light blue. Tail brown tipped with blue and red underneath. Tips of shoulders and inner webs of tertiaries red. Outer edge of flight feathers blue edged with yellow. Beak is horny white in colour. The female is similar to the male but generally duller in colour. The iris is said to be yellowish in the cock and brownish in the hen. Immature birds are duller than adults with yellow-green undertails.

There is some variation in colouration between individuals, with some having splashes of red on the breast.

Resembles lorikeets in its behavior (noisy, active and conspicuous) and flight. This species is entirely arboreal, coming down to the ground only to drink and is mostly encountered in small parties rather than large flocks.

Length: 245mm.

Subspecies:

None.

Distribution:

Breeds in Tasmania and on some of the Bass Strait islands in summer but migrates to south-eastern mainland states for the winter. Mainly in Victoria, but is found north to Mackay (Qld) and west to Adelaide (SA).

Habitat:

Forests, woodlands, suburban parks and gardens.

Diet:

Nectar and pollen, occasionally supplemented with vegetable matter insects and insect larvae.

Breeding:

October to December. Usual nesting site is a high tree cavity (5-18m height) and breeding is often communal. Only the female incubates the eggs, but both parents participate in rearing the young.

Courtship Display:

Males front a female and bows several times before approaching and feeding her (by regurgitation).

Sexual Maturity:

Swift Parrots probably become sexually mature at around 12 months of age.

Clutch:

3-5 eggs. Incubation period: 20 days. The young usually fledge at around 42 days.

Mutations and Hybrids:

No records.

Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds

As a minimum, a single tame bird could be housed in a small cage provided it measures around 600mm x 600mm x 800mm (approximately). Birds kept in such a situation should not be confined to their cage and be given ample opportunity to exercise, however.

Swift Parrots will perform and look much better in aviaries. These need be no larger than around 1.5m wide x 3m long x 1.8m high and lined with a medium grade mesh. Few people have had the opportunity to keep this species. However it is apparently quite amicable and can be kept in a colony. Suitable birds would probably include lorikeets, *Neophemas* and Princess Parrots.

Species Specific Problems

No records. However, considering the dietary requirements of this bird it is at risk from enteritris if high standards of hygiene are not maintained.