

# Turquoise Parrot

**FAMILY:** *Psittacidae*

**GENUS:** *Neophema*

**SPECIES:** *pulchella*

**OTHER NAMES:** Turquoise Grass-parakeet, Turquoise Parrot, Turquoise Grass-parakeet, Beautiful Grass-parakeet, Red-shouldered Parakeet, Chestnut-shouldered Parakeet.

## **Description:**

Small parrot displaying little sexual dimorphism. Male's forehead, face and cheeks bright electric blue. Underparts yellow with green tinge on flanks and sides of breast. Upper parts green with chestnut-red patch on shoulders. Bend of wing bright turquoise blue. Flight feathers edged in bright turquoise blue. Tail green, outer tail feathers broad and tipped with yellow.

Females resemble males but the forehead and face are a paler blue, lores are pale yellow, front of neck and breast green. Lacks chestnut-red patch on shoulders.

Immature birds resemble but are duller than the adult female. Immature males have a darker blue face than females and a faint reddish patch on the inner wing. They also usually show a creamy stripe on the underwing (as do adult males).

The Turquoise Parrot is usually found either in pairs or small parties. It, like other Neophemas, is quiet, unobtrusive and forages almost entirely on the ground. Roosts and shelters in trees and drinks daily at dawn.

Length: 220mm.

## **Subspecies:**

None.

## **Distribution:**

Erratically from south-eastern Qld. to northern Vic. mainly west of the Great Dividing Range but extending to the east coast in some places.

## **Habitat:**

Open eucalypt woodland (especially with a grassy understorey and rocky outcrops).

## **Diet:**

Seeds of various (native) grasses and herbaceous plants.

## **Breeding:**

Is often determined by rainfall and food availability, but generally August- December. The usual nesting site is a small tree cavity at varying heights. Sometimes nests will be encountered in fallen logs, stumps or fence-posts. The hen incubates the eggs but is attended by the male who also contributes to rearing the young. This species may produce several broods in succession if conditions are favourable.

### **Courtsip Display:**

This is similar to that of other *Neophemas*. The male sits in front of the female and stretches to his full height with the tail feathers fanned and wings slightly opened to reveal the blue shoulder patches. He accompanies this with quiet chirruping. This often followed by courtship feeding.

### **Sexual Maturity:**

These birds mature at 9-12 months of age.

### **Clutch:**

4-5 white elliptical white eggs (24mm x 20mm). Incubation period: 18 days. The young usually fledge at around 30 days. After fledging, the young are often associated with the parents.

### **Mutations and Hybrids:**

Some cockbirds are known to have orange patches in the centre of the abdomen. In well marked individuals this extends upward towards the lower breast, and downward to the vent.

Hybrids have been bred between this species and the Scarlet-chested, Elegant and Blue-winged 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 is 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.

### **Species Specific Problems**

Turquoise 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

