

Western Rosella

FAMILY: *Psittacidae*

GENUS: *Platycercus*

SPECIES: *icterotis*

OTHER NAMES: Stanley Rosella or Parakeet, Yellow-cheeked Rosella or Parakeet.

Description:

Quiet, unobtrusive small to medium sized rosella. Like other rosellas, the sexes are similar. The male's head and entire underparts are red with yellow cheeks. Feathers on the back and wings black, broadly edged with green or a mixture of green and red. Underwing coverts and flight feathers blue, rump and upper tail coverts green or grey-olive (sometimes edged with red). Central tail feathers bronze-green washed with blue, outer tail feathers blue edged with white. Eyes brown, bill pale grey, legs grey.

The Western Rosella feed mostly in treetops and to some extent on the ground. They usually fly short distances, from one tree to another, rather than over open expanses. Like other rosellas, it lives in pairs or small parties which may congregate into large flocks in winter periods.

Length: 260-300mm.

Subspecies:

None.

Distribution:

Confined to far south-western Australia.

Habitat:

Most kinds of open forest, woodland, heath, farmland and orchards.

Diet:

Seeds, nuts, fruits and insects and their larvae.

Breeding:

August-December.

The usual nesting site is a tree hollow .

Courtship Display:

This is typical of the Rosellas and essentially consists of fronting the female on her perch, squaring the shoulders (drooping the wings slightly) and wagging or shaking the tail. Often, this is followed by courtship feeding.

Sexual Maturity:

Western Rosellas reach sexual maturity and are capable of breeding at around 12 months of age.

Clutch:

3-7 white eggs (26mm x 22mm). Incubation period: 19 days. The young usually fledge at around 35 days after hatching.

Mutations and Hybrids:

There is a distinct inland race which differs in plumage details (see above). This species is known to have hybridised with White-cheeked and Crimson Rosellas as well as Red-capped and Mulga Parrots.

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.

Western Rosellas usually perform 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.

As a general rule, rosellas are not compatible with other birds and are best kept to themselves.

Species Specific Problems

Western Rosellas spend part of their feeding time on the ground and hence are therefore susceptible to intestinal worms and fungal infections. These are relatively easily dealt with however simply by maintaining a high standard of hygiene.

Enteritis may also become a problem if the bird is fed large quantities of greenfood. This is particularly so if greenfood is not removed at the end of each day