

# Princess Parrot

**FAMILY:** *Psittacidae*

**GENUS:** *Polytelis*

**SPECIES:** *alexandrae*

**OTHER NAMES:** Princess's Parrot, Alexandra Parrot, Queen Alexandra Parrot, Queen Alexandra Parakeet, Princess of Wales' Parakeet, Rose-throated Parakeet, Spinifex Parrot.

## Description:

Medium to large parrot. Male has light blue crown and nape with forehead and sides of head pale blue-grey and pink chin and throat. Mantle, back and wings pale olive-green, wing coverts bright green. Underwing coverts blue- violet. Central tail feathers green washed with blue near tips, outer tail feathers blue-grey edged with pink. Breast and belly blue-grey tinged with green and yellow. Eye orange, bill coral red and legs grey.

Adult females resemble the male, but the crown is a grey-mauve and rump and upper tail coverts grey-blue. Her wing coverts are duller and greener and the central tail feathers are shorter than those of the male. Immatures resemble the adult female.

The Princess Parrot is one of Australia's most elusive and least known parrots. It is tame and unobtrusive in its general behaviour and is mostly a terrestrial forager.

Length: 400-450mm.

## Subspecies:

None.

## Distribution:

Widely but erratically distributed across interior northern Australia.

## Habitat:

Arid woodland and scrub, especially Mulga, spinifex.

## Diet:

Seeds of grasses and shrubs.

## Breeding:

May occur at any time and is often loosely colonial.

The usual nesting site is a tree hollow, generally a riverine eucalypt but sometimes a casuarina away from water. The nest is usually lined with wood dust.

In captivity, Princess Parrots prefer to nest in a medium sized box. The preferred nesting material is either a potting mixture or fairly fine sawdust/ wood shavings. Our experience is that these birds do not nest in logs as a rule.

### **Courtsip Display**

Male Princess Parrots often make short flights around a prospective partner, bowing as they land beside them. Following this, the feathers on the head are ruffed (and may also be raised to a very small crest) whilst the body plumage tightens. With wings partly opened, he then begins to rush from one side of the perch to another whilst chattering. During this procedure the pupils are contracted.

In reply, the female usually crouches down, ruffs the head plumage and makes a soft call. This is followed by the male feeding the female and copulation. Males often continue to feed the females frequently throughout the day.

### **Sexual Maturity:**

18-24 months of age.

### **Clutch:**

4-6 glossy white rounded eggs (28mm x 22mm). Incubation period: 21 days. The young usually fledge at around 42 days.

### **Mutations and Hybrids:**

There are several mutations for this species. These include: Blue (recessive) , Lutino (recessive) and Albino. A Red Princess is currently being developed in Australia.

Princess Parrots have hybridised with the Superb Parrot, Regent Parrot, Crimson -winged Parrot and the Indian Ringneck.

### **Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds**

Breeding pairs or individual birds are best kept in a medium to large aviary. The former should measure at least 1.5m x 2m. Regardless of size, cages or aviaries should be supplied with a range of perches. Princess Parrots are essentially quite peaceful and will readily share their aviary with a range of other species including grass parrots, Turquoise Parrots (and other Neophemas), Indian Ringnecks, Pheasants, Doves and Quail just to name a few. They may also be kept in flocks.

### **Species Specific Problems**

These birds are known to suffer from scaly face mite from time to time. This is easily treated with Aristopet Scaly Face and Leg Treatment.

Because these birds spend quite a bit of time on the ground, they are also susceptible to intestinal worms and coccidiosis. Turning over the soil on the aviary floor often will reduce the incidence of these problems.