

Psittacula krameri manillensis

Of the many species of parrots available to aviculture in Australia, the Indian Ringnecked Parrot is one of the most popular birds represented in parrot collections, certainly the most common of the foreign parrots. They have proved to be extremely hardy and reliable breeders.

Looking back over some 30 years of keeping this species, there are not many parrots that we could compare with this lovely Asiatic species. Whether the climate be dry, wet, hot or cold it does not seem to affect their breeding performance. We have seen them housed under all types of conditions, from dark dingy aviaries to large spacious cages completely open with no protection from the weather, but they always battle on. Certainly a lot of our native birds would not last long if they were housed under similar conditions.

Sexing

As with most Asiatic species, the Indian Ringnecked Parrot is extremely difficult to sex under 2-2¹/₂ years of age, unless surgically sexed. Otherwise, it is a waiting game until black and pink feathers begin to appear, forming a ring around the neck of the cock. The hen remains completely green showing just an indentation where the neck ring should be. Adult plumage is attained at three years of age.

The Indian Ringnecked Parrot looks its worst when moulting and if you are not familiar with this process, you would possibly wonder if something was dramatically wrong with its feathers. Within days, tail feathers drop and pin feathers appear everywhere and the bird looks a total wreck. However, within a few weeks, new feathers replace the old and they are back to their immaculate condition. It is surprising how quickly the cock colours during this moulting period. One week no colour, then completely coloured the next.

Housing

Single pairs should be housed in open flights, one third being covered, varying in overall length from 4.8 metres to 6.6 metres (16 feet to 22 feet). However, experience has proved 4.8 metres (16 feet) in length is generally ample. We have found that the longer the flight, the more speed youngsters get up when first leaving the nest. A branch of leaves or similar placed at each end of the flight prevents damage to heads or wings, on contact with the end wire. Youngsters soon learn the limits of the flight and thereafter there is no problem.

Feeding

Diet includes a basic seed mix of 2 parts grey-striped sunflower, 1 part budgerigar mix, 1 part hulled oats. Boiled corn or corn on the cob are fed when young are in the nest, this being continued until they lose interest in feeding on it, usually about two months after fledging.

Green food is provided daily with milk thistle and/or oats in head being completely consumed, stalk and all.

They seem to eat a variety of foods from seeds, most fruit and vegetables and will be the first to try such commercial products as dry dog food or parrot pellets. We believe they would find food and survive where most other birds would starve.

Breeding

This species is very easy to breed and people who have difficulty in our opinion, either do not have a true pair, or are simply not trying. Even if nest logs are not provided during the breeding season, we have seen hens digging holes in the earth floor in a desperate bid to form a nesting chamber.

Being such free breeders and long lived birds, one would wonder why they have not saturated their own market.

The 420mm (16.5 inches) long Normal green cock India Ringnecked Parrot is a most handsome bird, especially when displaying to his hen, stretching and bowing with eyes dilating. Noises like motor vehicles, lawn mowers etc. passing the aviary usually sets the cock off into a display and with uncoloured birds this is often a guide to their sex. Only the cock displays.

Hollow logs, hung vertically, are used for nesting. These measure 900mm (3 feet) long with an inside diameter of 200-250mm (8-1 inches) with an entrance hole, 75mm (3 inches) in diameter, 150mm (6 inches) from the top. An inspection opening is made 230mm

(9 inches) from the bottom. These inspection openings are certainly a timesaver as regular checks can be

made on incubating progress and it is easy to remove young birds to be closed rung without removing the log from the wall. Nestboxes should be about 230mm (9 inch square) x 600mm (2 feet) high with a 75mm (3 inches) diameter entrance hole.

Four eggs is a normal clutch, however, five is not unusual Incubation lasts 21-24 days and the young spend approximately seven weeks in the nest before fledging.

Indian Ringnecked Parrots are excellent parents, rarely letting young die.