

and grass stems, plus silverbeet, spinach, apple, pear, grapes, and sliced carrot are all relished. These greens and fruits can be varied on a daily basis.

Once the female has started laying her clutch of eggs I suggest the diet be increased and varied with the addition of a mixture comprising hard field peas, wheat, milo, maize, and safflower seed soaked in water for 24 hours with an anti-bacterial solution added at the rate of half a teaspoonful to one pint of water. As the young grow it is wise to increase the amount of soaked seed to cope with the (obvious) larger dietary needs. Prior to feeding, the soaked seed must be thoroughly rinsed and drained. I suggest you feed only enough of the mixture that will be consumed during the day. The soaked seed is more easily digested by the young birds after regurgitation by their parents.

Fresh clean water should be available at all times in a container that is large enough for the birds to bathe in freely – as rosellas delight in such activity – which is most beneficial for their well-being.

### Summary

Like all the Australian rosellas the Green Rosella is both an interesting and hardy parrot. I hope that aviculturists who keep this species make every effort to breed them and that others, too, will take an interest in this rosella.

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### Acknowledgement

Map: John E. Buchan, Glen Waverley, Australia.  
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## ROSELLAS; A U.S. VIEWPOINT

by Blue Wrigley,  
Rio Linda, CA



# The Green Rosella

*Platycercus caledonicus*

**T**he Green Rosella, also known as the Tasmanian Rosella, and sometimes called the Mountain Rosella in Australia, is the largest of the *Platycercus* family. It is found in its natural habitat in Australia, mainly on the island of Tasmania, hence its name, and on occasions in the state of Victoria, which is across the Bass Straight Sea, separating mainland Australia from Tasmania.

The Green Rosella is the largest and rarest of the Rosellas. Its average size is approximately 13 inches (340mm),

including the tail. It's coloration is a lemon/yellow colored head and neck with a red/scarlet patch above the upper mandible, with the cheek patches being a deep blue. The back has green-black feathers, the wings are black with blue inner-flight feathers, outer coverts are bright blue, inner coverts are jet black. The tail is blue-green and the underside or belly is yellow, and sometime splashed with orange patches. These orange patches are more predominate in the hen and can extend upwards towards the breast area.



A pair of Green Rosellas. The sexes look almost identical but sometimes the hen will have a little bit of orange color on the abdomen edging up into the breast. Look at the bird on the left.

Photo courtesy Blue Wrigley



## Uncommon in the USA

There are not many pairs of these birds in this country because of the cost, the uncertainty of breeding, and, at times, the aggressiveness of their nature, so most aviculturists have not included them in their aviaries. This is unfortunate because they are a magnificent member of the rosella family. Another reason for their lack of popularity is that they are the least colorful of all of the birds in this group. It is sad to see that not all, but a lot of breeders, like to breed only the eye-catching, colorful birds that sell commercially.

## Feeding

Our birds are fed a mixture of various seed that is sprouted/soaked 12 months of the year. This is broken up into the following approximate percentages:

- Sunflower 20%
- Canary 20%
- Parakeet 30%
- Oats/Groats 10%
- Safflower 10%
- Buckwheat 10%

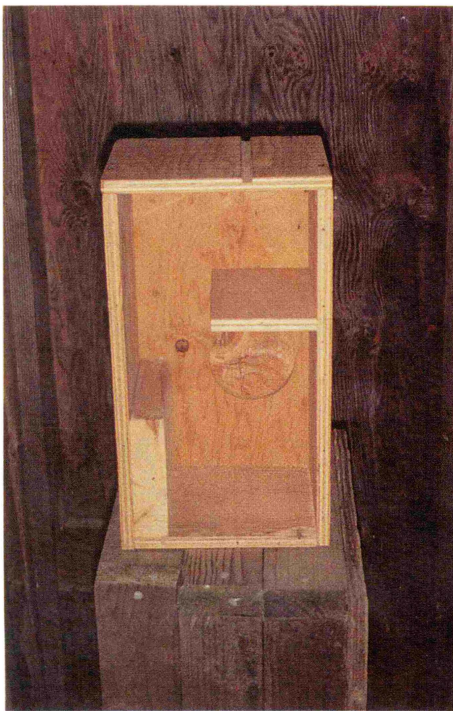
We also add two cups of boiled rice, finely grind/chop-up various fruits and vegetables and mix these with frozen peas and corn, and then add and thoroughly mix this combination with the seed mixture. Vegetables used are carrots, yams, turnips, rutabaga, green cabbage, red cabbage, and spinach. The fruits are apples and pears - hard, not soft. In two gallons of sprouted seed we add 8 cups of the fruit/rice/vegetable mixture. We also add 1 oz. of wheat germ oil to this mix. You can use just about any vegetable or fruit that is in season to mix with the seed. This mixture is fed daily. We have found that with the fruit/vegetable mix being so fine, the birds tend to eat this first, thereby eliminating any possibility of spoilage. All of our birds love honeysuckle vine. If there are vines around a flight, they are immaculately trimmed by them.

## Breeding

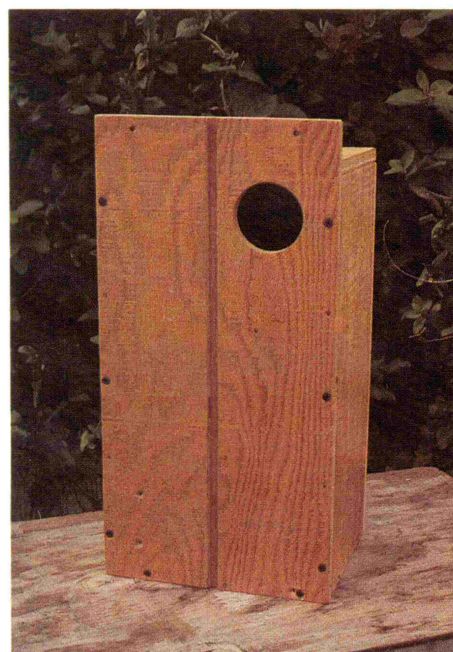
### Male Aggression

Breeding these birds requires patience and persistence, and if I do say so, a little luck. The most important thing to

Photos courtesy Blue Wrigley



*Inside the nest box just below the entrance hole there is a wooden platform that keeps the birds from jumping right down onto the eggs. It also keeps the nesting chamber darker.*



*The nest box used by Blue Wrigley has the entrance hole offset rather than in the middle.*

remember with the Greens is to observe your birds to make sure there is no excessive aggression from the male to the hen. These Rosellas are so hard to purchase or acquire, that it would be criminal to lose one because of incompatible pairing or lack of observation. Excessive aggression can most times, and I say most times because you can always find a rogue bird in any species, be resolved by placing the male in the adjoining flight to the hen and allowing both birds to become familiar with each other. After one to two weeks, introduce the male into the hen's flight. Always do this in a non-breeding time of the year. Allow the pair to "grow to each other" before the hormones kick in for breeding.

If the male shows too much aggression, resolve this by cutting back the flight feathers on one wing. It is remarkable how soon he will adjust to "one wing flight." He will not be as fast, nor will he be able to maneuver as well compared to the hen. This will allow the hen to escape his amorous aggression. This method is successful on most occasions, although there is always the exception to the rule. I had a pair of Greens that had been compatible together for 2-3 years, and the male attacked the hen and removed half of her upper mandible. She survived, and he never attacked her again.

### Long Flights

At our aviaries, we like to give the birds a flight of 12 to 17 feet in length, with a width of at least three feet. Hookbilled birds do not hover or fly straight up, so flight length is more important than width. As with all rosellas, never house pairs next to each other unless you have a solid barrier between them. I made a simple and foolish mistake when I built a section of 14 flights with a safety walkway/service area down the middle of it, giving me seven flights per side. I had barriers between each of the side-by-side flights but, unfortunately, all of the pairs of rosellas could see other pairs across the walkway from them. That year was a wasted season as the males preferred to challenge each other across the safety area, rather than pay attention to their mates.



## Nest Boxes

We have the best success in breeding our large rosellas in a nest box measuring 12 x 9 x 22 inches deep. The entrance hole is not set in the middle of the box, it is offset. Instead of it being at 6 inches, it is 4 inches from one side, and 2 inches from the top. Directly under the entrance hole is a platform measuring 9 x 7 inches (this is 10 inches from the top of the box). This gives the birds access to the nesting area without allowing them to jump directly on any eggs or chicks. It also keeps the nesting cavity darker. At the bottom of the box, we attach three pieces of 2 x 6 wood, 9 inches long. This reduces the actual interior of the box bottom to approximately 9 x 6 3/4 inches.

The reduced nesting area/cavity allows the hen to sit tighter and hopefully produce a higher percentage of fertile eggs, and consequently, more hatched babies. The material used is 80% pine shavings and 20% sterile river sand. The sand helps retain humidity and dampness after the hen bathes. Both the shavings and sand are thoroughly mixed prior to being placed in the nesting cavity.

## Nesting

In Northern California (where we live), the Green Rosella starts to examine the nest box around the end of March, and usually produces only one clutch of eggs. Greens are not as easy to predict as most other Rosellas. They have been known to breed one year then miss one or two years. Other pairs will breed annually. The clutch size is normally 4-5 and the eggs are generally more rounded than oval. Incubation period varies from 19-23 days, but averages out 21 days. The weather in northern California is relatively mild, but these birds can handle extremes in weather if acclimated, so don't be alarmed if they make moves towards the nest box during cold weather. The babies generally fledge at 5-6 weeks and the parents continue to feed them for another 3-4 weeks. Most Greens do not become sexually mature until their second or third year, but as always, there are exceptions to the rules and I have heard of birds producing at 10 months.



Photo courtesy Blue Wrigley


*The Green Rosella is the largest and the rarest rosella in American aviculture.*

## De-worming

As with all of our rosellas, our Greens are de-wormed four times a year. Because of the number of birds that we breed, it is not practical to catch each bird physically and de-worm them. We use the following method and we have never yet, touch wood, lost a bird to worm infestation. We de-worm in early spring, just prior to breeding season, and in early fall. We remove all sources of drinking water completely for 24 hours. We then give the birds a mixture of 1/2 teaspoon of either Tramisol or Levasole, sheep/animal drench, powder to a gallon of water. This is left for them to drink for two days. After two days of worming mix, regular water is supplied. We then feed the birds extra helpings of the ground up fruit/vegetable mix to help clear their systems. This complete procedure is repeated in two weeks so, for example, you de-worm March 1st and March 15th then again on October 1st and October 15th.

## Conclusion


Finally, if we are to continue to see this majestic rosella rebound and grace the aviaries of American aviculturists, we all need to diversify the gene pools we have by exchanging blood lines with one another. Holding onto and hogging the market are sure ways to spell the demise of this bird in this country.

Blue Wrigley is a native Australian who has been in aviculture for approximately 40 years. He started with finches in his homeland and graduated to lorries and rosellas. He and his wife, Sharon, now breed Grass Parakeets, Rosellas, Princess of Wales, and Red-rumped Parakeets in northern California at S & B Aviaries. 

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"Never thought that I'd own a bird. Dogs are more my style, but then my girlfriend Sylvia and I saw this yellow bird in the pet store in the mall. It was kinda fun to watch. It climbed all around the cage and every time I came near, it stretched out it's neck and made this funny "Rrrrrroow,, Rrrrrroow" sound and made it's eyes real small. I must have stood there watching that bird for an hour before they finally kicked us out of the store at closing time.

Two weeks later Sylvia gave me that bird for my birthday. I named her Sunshine and we've been best friends ever since...well, second to Sylvia of course. Just like my girlfriend, Sunshine listens when I need to talk and she makes me laugh, however, she doesn't expect me to buy her a ring.

I do what I can to be sure Sunshine is happy and healthy. That's why I feed her Sun Seed Vita Hookbill Fruit & Veggie Formula. As my next best friend she deserves nothing but the best...



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