



# the Blue-rumped Parrot

*Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus*

by Martin Hoogerwaard, the Netherlands

**T**he Malay Blue-rumped Parrot is also known as the "Little parrot." True to its name, this 7.5 inch (18 cm) sweetheart is dimorphic in coloration and a real "find" because, while abundant in nature it is very scarce in aviculture. There are few breeders of the Blue-rumped in Europe and even fewer (perhaps two) breeders of this little bird in captivity in the US. I have been very fortunate to keep and breed this delightful species, which boasts a genus unto itself, having three subspecies. These are: *P.c. cyanurus*, *P.c. pontius*, and *P.c. abbotti*.

## Description

I will give the description from observing birds in my own flock, as sometimes differing from that which you may find in ornithological books.

The male Blue-rumped Parrot measures about 18 cm. and its weight is between 65 and 86 grams. The mature male has a blue head with a grey sheen. The body is olive green with a blue-grey sheen. The male's back, between the shoulders, is black. The wing coverts are outlined in yellow-green, giving a scalloped effect. The male also has a rusty-red wing spot;

and the long feathers of the wing are green. The underside of the wings are blue with red. The tail is green, with yellow-green edges on the upper side and yellow-green on the underside. The cock's upper mandible is red and his lower mandible is grey-brown. The iris is a pale yellow and the legs are grey-green.

The hen has an attractive warm brown head with some olive green on the ear area. Her back, between the shoulders, is green, and her body is also green. Her upper mandible is a warm brown and her lower mandible is grey.

Young Blue-rumped look like the hen, except that their head color is greener and the iris is dark. Young males have a blue sheen to the head.

## Subspecies

There are three subspecies of the Malay Blue-rumped Parrot: the first being *Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus*; the nominate, is the smallest of the subspecies.

The second subspecies, *Psittinus cyanurus pontius* also looks like the nominate, except that it is a few centimeters larger.

The third subspecies is *Psittinus cyanurus abbotti*, and in this bird the

male is more uniformly blue, with more green on the crown and around the eyes. His mantle and back are green, his rump and upper tail coverts are green and his entire underparts are greenish-yellow. The outlining on the wing coverts is yellow, and this bird is the largest of all the tribe.

The name for *Psittinus cyanurus abbotti* came from the research worker Dr. William Abbot, who lived from 1860 to 1936. He sailed his own boat to small islands in the Malay archipelago, where he accomplished some impressive ornithological research and discovered many previously unknown species of parrots.

## Distribution

*Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus* ranges from southwestern Thailand and Tenasserim to southern Burma, continuing south through the Malay Peninsula to Borneo and Sumatra, Indonesia.

*Psittinus cyanurus pontius* is found in the Mentawai islands if Siberut, Sipora, and North and South Pagi, located west of Sumatra, Indonesia.

*Psittinus cyanurus abbotti* is native to the islands of Simuele and Siumat, off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia.

The *Psittinus cyanurus* is plentiful in all locations listed, with the exception of Borneo where it is rare. It is said to be a common sight in the peninsular provinces of Thailand. In Tenasserim it appears to be a migrant seasonal visitor. In Malaysia it favors mangrove forests by the water's edge.

## Habitat

The Malay Blue-rumped Parrot lives mainly at lowland altitudes and inhabits wooded forests. But it also frequents plantations where it wreaks havoc with the palm-oil nut crops. This parrot is a swift flier. It is noisy in flight, but very quiet while feeding, drawing no attention to itself through sound or movement. The native diet of this species is fruits and blossoms, plucked from the treetops.

One place where you can observe the Blue-rumped Parrot in the wild is in Thale Ban National Park, in south Thailand, where it borders Malaysia.

This park encompasses 196 square kilometers, in a rainforest area of small mountains, the largest of which is 756 feet high. Here there are many rivers fed by the bountiful rains which empty into the Andaman Sea.

Besides a great number of bird species, there are other animals to be found in the Park, such as tapirs, elephants, monkeys, snakes, and lizards. In the fields, wildflowers grow in abundance and these attract many butterflies and exotic insects. This park is worth keeping in mind if you ever find yourself planning a trip through Thailand.

### **Social Structure**

What we know of the Malay Blue-rumped Parrot in the wild is that it is usually found in pairs. Young birds sometimes flock together in large groups. This species is often found in the company of *Psittacula longicauda* (the Longtailed Parrot), with whom they habituate the same foraging areas.

### **Nesting**

*Psittinus cyanurus* goes to nest between February and May, in Thailand and Malaysia. On Borneo, they nest between June and September. A typical clutch is three eggs. Incubation is about 25 days. The nesting cavities they select are always at the very tops of trees, from which they forage for seeds, fruit and flowers.

### **In Captivity**

The Malay Blue-rumped can be fed a mixture of small seeds (canary, millet, oats, buckwheat, safflower, hemp, sunflower), millet sprays, leafy greens, and seeding grasses, sprouting pulses, beans (mung, lentil, etc.), corn, carrots, celery, squash, zucchini, peas, a variety of fresh fruits, pecans, boiled peanuts, and pine nuts (but not walnuts). The babies can be handfed on the same formula as is used for the Asiatic species.

These birds are sometimes found, although rarely are they bred, in captivity, the world over. In captivity they lay a clutch of 3 to 5 eggs and incubation is about 26 days. The young fledge the nest in about six weeks and will wean to solid food in about eight weeks. 