

Blue-crowned Hanging-parrot

(*Loriculus galgulus*)

by Ron Kasper, San Diego, California

This family consists of 13 species of hanging-parrots including the Vernal, Ceylon, Philippine, Blue-crowned (also called Blue-topped), Maroon-rumped, Sula, Moluccan, Sangihe, Orange-fronted, Green-fronted, Green, Yellow-throated, and the Flores Hanging-parrot. But this article will feature only the Blue-crowned Hanging-parrot.

Distribution

Members of this genus are found in southern and south-eastern India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Borneo, the Philippines, and some Indonesian islands. Fewer are seen in Singapore and Malaysia today but these are popular cage birds that are sometimes taken from nests in their indigenous countries.

The Blue-crowned Hanging-parrot is found in southern Thailand, western Malaysia, Singapore, Sumatra, and associated islands, and Borneo and associated islands.

Habitat

Blue-crowned Hanging-parrots frequent the forests, forest edges, secondary growth, swamp and riverine forest, bamboo patches, mangroves, wooded gardens, coconut groves, and plantations. They are probably more abundant in carefully logged forests than in the primary forests.

Food

There are very few records but these birds are typically frugivorous, feeding on wild figs of many species, nectar, buds, oil-palm fruits, and perhaps on small insects.

Breeding

The Blue-crowned is the most common species available in the U.S. although still scarce. Typically

three eggs sized 0.74 to 0.65 inches are laid. The hen incubates while the male is responsible for feeding her.

In Aviculture

Caging

In captivity, a minimum of 70° F. is desired. A preferred cage size is about 6 x 3 x 6 feet although we use much smaller cages.

Diet

A typical captive diet consists of grapes, bananas, apples, pears, beets, cantaloupe, watermelon, canned sweet potatoes, a dry or liquid mixture of lory nectar at all times. I use a blend of canary and finch seed, as Cockatiel seed seems too large for their beaks. Hangers have voracious appetites and can consume an apple in a day if split in two. Vegetables include cut up pieces of corn on the cob, which they have a real fondness for. We have noted an interesting trait with the birds – they will favor one type of fresh fruit or vegetable for a while then reject it for a few days and eat an alternate food.

Hanging-parrots are basically fruit eaters in the wild and also appreciate fresh flowers like hibiscus for the pollen and twigs to use sap to clean their feathers. Because of their diet they are somewhat like softbills in cage care. They do squirt fecal matter and I use acrylic sides on the cages. Strict hygienic care is necessary as they are prone to fungal ailments due to diet and the matter that is discarded.

I have been told they like baths but I do not provide them with that during the winter but they do like to keep themselves clean and will be seen preening themselves frequently. Interestingly, because of their diet

of fruit, I suppose, they have a sweet fruity scent that is rather pleasant.

Captive Breeding

Prior to breeding, the pairs are given a wide assortment of fruits, vegetables, mealworms, lory dry or liquid mixtures, insectivore mixtures, and canary/finch seed mixture, and egg food. Artificial light is not needed for reproduction.

We use parakeet nesting boxes attached to the outside so we can monitor progress and note any problems. Several inches of pine shavings are placed in the box. The females have a unique characteristic of carrying nesting material under their wings. Partially covering cages with towels to maximize privacy is helpful.

The hen will begin to sit when the last egg is laid.

At about two weeks of age, the babies are usually standing in much fecal material regardless of how strict the hygiene is (again, hygiene is a must with this species). At this point they are taken and handfed to weaning. Often, the female will set up another nest.

As with any exotic species of bird, patience is important. Some have many clutches while a pair I have set up now has an interested female but uninterested male.

At about 1-1 1/2 years of age the young males begin to color up. However, in the Conservatory, weaned birds are DNA sexed and banded, which allows us to know the gender at a very young age. This helps us to plan where specific birds are most needed among Conservatory members. This also helps in preventing the very significant problem of inbreeding.

Conclusion

Hanging-parrots are not difficult to breed but they are difficult to obtain. Through our Hanging-parrot and Fig Parrot National Conservatory, we hope to bring people together to preserve these feathered jewels. They are the only variety of parrots known to hang upside down for great stretches of time and to sleep in that position – and usually with one foot.



A bonded and proven pair of Blue-crowned Hanging-parrots. Male on left.



At right, a better view of the blue crown on the male. In the bottom photo a good light shows off the hen's bright red on her back and rump.



Photos by Cindy Kulp

Twenty years ago or less, they were a common site in pet stores and often purchased because of their peculiar hanging position. But proper diets were often neglected or the messy nature of a good diet probably led to the species becoming less popular.

Hanging-parrots have a soft, almost flute like chirp thus being a quiet species that can be kept and bred in a home.

Hanging-parrots should not be kept as pets, though, as most handfed babies lose their tameness soon after weaning.

We promote, through our conservatory, the controlled breeding of these birds as there are few left in the U.S. We have conservatory members in Europe and Canada, though, who are having success raising many other species of the Hanging-parrot genus.

If you have Hanging-parrots or Fig Parrots or would like to learn more about our conservatory, please email:

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