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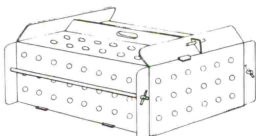
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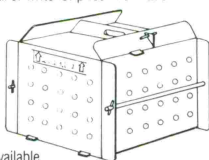


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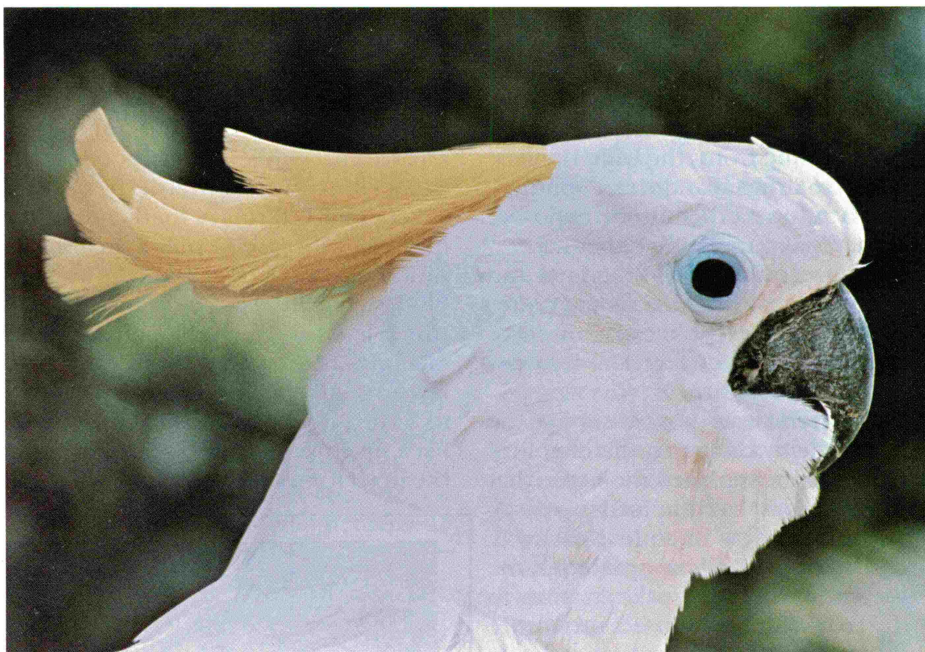
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Portrait of a sulfur-crested cockatoo. This photo was an honorable mention winner in the 1985 Watchbird photo contest, color print category, adult birds. The photographer is Tim Schexnaydre of Convent, Louisiana.

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Cockatoos

by Richard Moroz
Parrotise Aviaries
Saskatoon, Sask., Canada

Cockatoos are one of my favorite birds for many reasons. They are the easiest of all hookbills (larger hookbills) to breed *if* you have a compatible pair. Some make better parents than others. Most will breed with pleasure if given the opportunity and the proper conditions. The old myth about having to have a large flight is just that. They have bred in 4' x 4' cages (some in even smaller cages), in every type of surrounding from the kitchen to a busy welding shop. Usually the young should be taken from the parents and raised by hand after they are a few weeks old except in the case of the smaller types (rosebreasted, goffin, bare-eyed). They seem to be far better parents than the

larger types. I have also found that it doesn't matter if they are tame or not.

There have been many cases where the male has ripped the lower mandible of the hen in the heat of passion or if he is ready to breed and she is not. You must make sure that both of the birds are of breeding age and ready to go to nest. The nest box should be a comfortable size with an opening just large enough for them to enter as they love to chew and it seems to help if they can enlarge the opening a little themselves. Nesting material can be of a wide variety of material from peat moss to wood chips. In most of my boxes I use soaked peat and sometimes I will mix in cedar shavings. This is the general rule

for most birds of mine. There is no greater joy than to be the proud parents of any type of baby but to have accomplished the task and have the privilege of saying that you have bred and raised one of the cockatoo or larger parrot family brings a feeling of pride and joy to one's soul. Every time I bring another bird into the world I feel as if I have accomplished a great service to mankind and to the animal world and have helped a little for the damage that man has done to the birds' natural world.

Cockatoos as pets are among the most loving of all the parrots. Looked after properly, treated with the best of care, fed the proper diets — these, mixed with a lot of attention and tender loving care, will result in a friend and loyal companion for many, many years.

Parrots are very long lived. They easily become part of any family and can be passed on from generation to generation. When you purchase a cockatoo for a pet follow a few basic rules.

Remember that you must buy it from a breeder or a reliable pet shop. Most pet shops will tell someone that the bird you are looking at is young. About two years ago I was in a pet shop in a city in Alberta. A middle-aged man was looking at one of the smaller cockatoos. The owner stated that it was a female and very young — about six months old. After the man had left, I asked the pet shop owner how he knew the bird was a female and that I was interested in it for breeding and he stated that it was about six years old, its mate had died, and the owner wanted him to sell the remaining bird.

Not all pet shops are dishonest but it is a "buyer beware" market out there. Get to know the pet shop before you buy and, after you have picked out your bird, think about it for a day or two.

After you purchase the bird that you want, give it as much attention as you can. Try to pick it up near a weekend or close to a couple of days off. This way the bird will have time to adjust to you and its new surroundings. Learn everything you can about its diet and natural foods and if it is a wild-caught bird or a hand-raised one. Buy your mix from a feed store that knows what you want or get in touch with a local breeder. Most would be more than happy to sell you the quantity of feed that you need or refer you to someone who can. Never trust a cockatoo with your home when you are out. Even the tamest and most trusted bird will someday start chewing at wood and it is always something valuable! Don't take a tame bird outside

unless it has clipped wings or has a leg chain on. Very few are trained to return to the person who has taken them out. Never leave a pet bird outside unguarded on a perch or the ground. Predators like cats and dogs have caused broken legs and wings and even death in the few short seconds that it took to run in to get something. If you want your bird trained to do specific tricks, get the advice of a professional trainer or someone who has some experience in that line. Remember that it is easier to train a bird to do something than it is to untrain one. For talking there is a need for a lot of attention and patience. Once a bird has learned to talk, it can and does pick up new words, especially the ones that it doesn't need to know! Take your time. Remember that you don't have to do it all in one day — the bird will be with you for a long time.

Before I could recommend which kind of cockatoo would be best for someone to choose, I would have to know what the owner would want the pet for: talking, intelligence, size, appearance, etc. For talking and intelligence, I would say, without a doubt, the goffin or bare-eyed. For size, I would recommend a Moluccan or medium sulfur. They also have a great ability to talk but have less learning power. The true greater is probably the most majestic and proud looking of them all. It is a very big bird and also is very rare and expensive.

All cockatoos make very lovable pets once tamed. They need all the attention that you can give them and then a little more. Smaller cockatoos are within a reasonable price range, goffins around \$600, bare-eyeds around \$800, and as the size of the bird increases so does the price.

For those interested in a true greater sulphur, there are very few of them around. There are a couple of other types that are sold as true greater when they aren't. It takes a trained eye to tell for sure in artificial light but the best way is to look at the ring around the eye. On a true greater it is *white* without a trace of blue. A greater on the retail market is worth about \$4,000 (about \$2,500 wholesale). The reason that I have mentioned the greater to the extent that I have is that I have run into several people who have purchased what they believed were true greater when, in fact, they weren't. In one case, a bird that I sold as a medium to a fellow for \$800 was resold a couple of years later as a true greater for over \$2,500 to an unsuspecting buyer. The seller knew full well what he was doing! ●

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