



# Lineolated Parakeet

Written and photos by Dr. Slobodan Ivić

## Distribution and Habitat

Lineolated parakeet can be found in southern parts of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, western Panama, also in all the states in Central America, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, in southern parts of west Colombia, in parts of the Andes in north-west Venezuela, in north-west Ecuador and in central Peru. Also, the presence of these birds was recorded in Bolivia as well. Dense mountain forests are specific for these areas. Lineolated parakeet can be found in the mountain areas to an altitude of 2,000 meters. During winter time they can be seen in lower altitudes

searching for food. These birds spend most of the day on the ground. After sunset, they seek shelter in the treetops of the high trees, mostly in the openings. It is very hard to spot them in the trees due to different shades of green and black spots on the feathers.

Subspecies, *Bolborhynchus lineola tigrinus*, can be found in South America, along the Andes mountain range, at altitudes between 1,500 and 3,000 m, from northern Colombia and northwestern Venezuela to northwestern Ecuador and the central part of Peru.

## Anatomy / Appearance

The Lineolated Parakeets are small birds, with an weight from 1.6 to 2 ounces (47 to 55 grams) and 6 to 7 inches (16 to 17 cm) in length (this includes the short tail which is 6 cm in average). These birds have a harmonious anatomical structure. Dominant colours are different shades of green, inwrought by black mottles which can be shaped like black spots or stripes. There are two subspecies: *Bolborhynchus lineola lineola* and *Bolborhynchus lineola tigrinus* which has more visible black stripes and darker green feathers and dark green stripes.

The head is evenly rounded. The eyes are big, round and clear. Featherless ring around the eyes is gray while iris is dark brown. The forehead is yellow-green. The feathers on the neck and back are green. The sides of the chest and hips are olive-green, and each feather ends with greenish-black trim. The ends of the feathers on the back, upper wings, neck and upper tail are black. Shoulders on the wings are also black. The wings are 10.5 cm in lengths. They are firmly pinned to the body, and the tail is wedge-shaped. Tail bone is yellow-green and the underside of the wings is blue-green. Upper tail is olive-yellow with large black spots. Under tail is also green-yellow with considerably less black spots. The beak is horn-color; cere is bright-pink color. The average beak length is 1.2 cm. The upper jaw completely overlaps the lower and together with the surrounding feathers creates the impression that the mandible does not exist because it is impossible to see. The legs are flesh-colored, light pink. The nails are black.

## Gender Differences

One of the key challenges that impose to breeders is to distinguish birds by gender. At first sight it is very difficult to distinguish the male from the female bird. After careful observation, males are identified through more clearly marked black points (spots) on the body, wings and the top of the tail.

Males and females can be distinguished by medium primary feathers of the tail. The primary feathers of the tail and under tail have black marks along the axis of the feathers. Two middle tail feathers are slightly elongated and needle-shaped. Male birds have last 1.5 cm of these feathers almost completely black and female bird have only ends of feather black (tips of the tail). On the under tail, on the top of each feathers, there is a pattern in the form of a diamond-shaped dots, which starts from the hips. In addition, the male bird often has a slightly larger shoulder spots and wing markings. With some females, the distance between rows of black wing patterns is smaller. In fact, only the tail drawing represents



sexual dimorphism. These differences relate only to the birds of green and blue shades. With other birds, gender cannot be distinguished in this way.

There is a possibility to determine the gender measuring the width of the ilium of the sexually mature birds, or females who have already been through one reproductive cycle. However, all of these methods are unreliable, and the only reliable method for gender determination is DNA analysis, especially if the bird has color mutation (lutino, mauve/slate, cremino...).

## Selection of Partners

For all readers who have access to a spacious aviary, I recommend acquiring more birds from different breeders, in order to avoid blood relation among birds. This way, the birds will choose partners on their own. I also recommend you to buy young and ringed birds from a recognized and experienced breeder. The ring will provide the information of the origin, age, and it will ease your monitoring and documenting all the relevant behavior modifications, especially if you have many birds in the same space. This way, recognition of mating pairs is much easier. After you have recognized the couples that have been formed, I recommend that you place them in the separate aviaries. The couples of Lineolated parakeet will successfully produce offspring in aviaries of 100 x 80 x 50 cm. For successful breeding, apart from adequate space, a necessary condition is the bird's age. As soon as the young bird gains



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new feathers it looks the same as its parents. This can be a big issue for young breeders. With time, they will gain the timbre of their voice, the feather intensity and shine, respectively. The appearance of adult birds is acquired after six months, and after one year young bird will reach full sexual maturity.

### Nest Boxes

The nest boxes should be placed in the highest spot of the aviary, but only when the birds reach maturity. The boxes should be made of proper wood. Also, it is advisable not to use glue while constructing them. The boxes must maintain suitable microclimate—constant temperature and humidity of air and the floor during the period of laying eggs and incubation. Optimum dimensions of the nest box are 15 x 15 x 30 cm. It is best to position the box in the dark and sheltered part of the aviary, in order to prevent any disturbance by other birds or visitors. The entrance to the box should be circular, around 5 cm in diameter. It is necessary to put a thin floor of sawdust

in the nest box. They usually do not make the nest where they will lay the eggs. On the other hand, as a consequence of long term lying, the floor becomes compressed in that place and a shallow dent is created which is used for eggs. I recommend that the breeder make a nest-shaped dent that will help the birds in laying the eggs. They like digging in the sawdust, especially in the corners of the box. This way they redecorate the interior of the nest themselves, and the floor becomes truncated pyramid and the eggs are put on the top. This can be dangerous, because the eggs can roll down from that nest to the corners, which will cause their cooling. While the breeder notices this, the eggs will be completely unusable.

Most often there are four to six eggs in a box, and they are laid every two days. The eggs are regular oval with a long diagonal 21.5 mm the shorter of 17.5 mm. The incubation period lasts from 20 to 23 days, and hens can produce up to three clutches a year. However, my personal experience showed that although all the eggs are fertilized, each following clutch has less living hatchlings. I think that producing a larger number of clutches exhausts both parents. This is not in accordance with the natural life cycle of the species, and that is why I do not recommend it. The male is in the nest box or very close to it. If the male is in the nest during the breeder control, it will protect the eggs or the hatchlings steadily from the curious breeder, as well as the female. The hen will be patient and will almost peacefully wait until you finish nest control and establish the number of fertilized and non-fertilized eggs. If the hen notices that the egg is not fertilized during the incubation period, she will reject it herself covering them with sawdust or pushing them in the corner of the box. Likewise, there are no unpredicted movements in the box during the ringing of the hatchlings. The male feeds the hen, all the time



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she spends in the nest, and she warms and feeds the young. They are very good parents. The young bird leaves the nest after four weeks, sometimes even later, and three weeks after leaving the nest they can be separated from the parents. Unlike other parrots, even if the young stay in the same aviary with the parents, they can live independent life without any bad relations with the parents. They often sleep together in the same box, which is very rare among other parrot species. The parents are not aggressive towards their offspring, not even when they enter a new mating and upbringing cycle. After the young bird leave the box, the nests are almost clean and the sawdust does not have to be changed.

### Problems in Raising

Breeding the Lineolated parakeet is not easy. Here are some problems that you may face while breeding this specie. First, they often put the seeds into the water dish, so you have to change water every day, sometimes even a few times a day. The other problem the breeders can encounter is ringing. The tarsometatarsus of Lineolated parakeet is 5 to 6 mm long, and the lenght of the ring is 4 mm. If the birds are smaller or if the ring moves vertically, the damage of the skin and further complications is inevitably.

### Ringed

The birds must be ringed at very young age with the ring of 4.5 mm in diameter. It must be noted that this is a legal obligation. The ring of these dimensions can rarely cause problems. Lineolated parakeets are on the CITES II list B.

### Color Mutations

Apart from the basic natural green that can be seen in the wild, using genetic knowledge numerous mutations have been created. There are several lovely color mutations in the Lineolated Parakeets. These are dark green, cinnamon, lutino, creamino (cream albino), cobalt, turquoise (sky blue), different shades of grey. In this species, as with most species, the lutino and creamino mutations are sex-linked and the blues are recessive. The mauve or slate is a double dominant dark factor. Here are officially recognized classifications:

- Green (natural color—not mutations)
- Green, dark factor
- Green, double dark factor
- Turquoise
- Turquoise, dark factor
- Turquoise, double dark factor
- Turquoise-purple, dark factor
- Green Greywing, sex-linked, single factor
- Green Greywing, sex-linked, single factor, the dark factor
- Green Greywing, sex-linked, single factor, double dark factor
- Turquoise Greywing, sex-linked, single factor
- Turquoise Greywing, sex-linked, single factor, the dark factor



- Turquoise Greywing, sex-linked, single factor, double dark factor
- Green Greywing, sex-linked, dual factor
- Green Greywing, sex-linked, two-factor, the dark factor
- Green Greywing, sex-linked, two-factor, two dark factors
- Turquoise Greywing, sex-linked, dual factor
- Turquoise Greywing, sex-linked, two-factor, the dark factor
- Turquoise Greywing, sex-linked, two-factor, two dark factors
- Misty green, double factor
- Misty turquoise, two-factor
- Lutino
- Turquoiseino
- Greywing lutino, fully bonded single factor and double factor
- Greywing turquoiseino, fully bonded single factor and double factor

Some of these terms are too long and complicated. Breeders often use simpler terms. Thus, for example, we have a green bird, the dark factor we call dark green and dark green double-factor we call olives.

The Blue series is marked the same as the green, but without the blackish look in the body color of the darker factors or the yellowing. Feet and beak are the same as in the greens. The Blue mutation are: aqua blue, cobalt and the mauve.

### Training and Behavioral Guidance

Because of their modest life requirements and their pleasant behavior, these birds are very interesting to a wide range of animal lovers. People choose these birds as pets mainly because they do not require large living space and they are not aggressive.

These birds are static most of the day. However, as with any animal, it is important to guide their behavior in early stages of life, in order to prevent any undesirable behavior which may occur later. Training and behavioral guidance will help your pet be the kind of companion you want it to be. Parrots are likely to discover their beaks as a method of „disciplining us” once they are out of the „baby stage”. Most of them never really develop any major destructive issues in that area. However, it is recommended that the owner provide their pet birds with plenty of „healthy” chewing opportunities (bird toys, natural wood branches, etc.) and training is necessary to teach a companion bird what items are „off-limits”. [1]

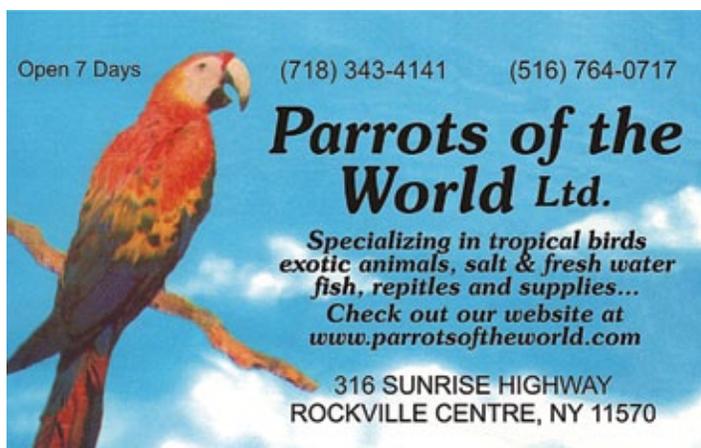
### Social Life

These birds are very sociable and they gladly accept the presence of other birds. Lineolated parakeet will not show any signs of aggression towards another bird of the same gender. In fact, these birds can sleep in the same box. They often preen and feed each other.

They can live freely in larger aviaries with other bird species which are not aggressive. These peaceful birds are fairly easy to breed and I have heard of them being bred in mixed aviaries with other exotic birds (Java sparrow, Society finch, Gouldianfinch...), canaries, and other parrots that are not aggressive (Turquoise parrot, Bourke's parrot, Budgerigar).



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Aggression can manifest itself in two cases. First, when a new bird is brought to the flock. They can become slightly aggressive until the hierarchy is established. This problem is usually quickly resolved and without body injuries. The other problem can occur when two female birds choose the same nest box to lay their eggs in. The conflict manifests itself through a fight and breaking each other's eggs. This problem is easily resolved simply by separating birds in different nest boxes. This is why I recommend breeding separate couples from the beginning. One of the advantages of this breeding method is that you can gain certain percentage of birds of the pre-planned colors, of course if you are familiar with the bird genetics.

Since they do not have hard beak, and are not destructive, they can be kept in wooden aviaries. They are great acrobats, and like climbing. They only fly when they have to. The flight is slow and it seems clumsy. This is why the aviary should be abundant in long and numerous perches that will provide them with lots of movement. Lineolated Parakeets have an

unusual way of walking. They turn almost parallel to the perch and put one foot in front of the other. They prefer climbing up and down their cage using the cage bars, and spend a lot of the time on the floor of the cage. What is also fascinating is how inquisitive these little birds are, and they will pick objects and food up with their feet and inspect it just like the big parrots do. The perches must be placed in such a manner that they do not interrupt these rare and clumsy flights. When they sleep the tail goes up and the head and breasts down. They often hang upside down like bats, and they can take food and water from that position.

When they are frightened, they stiffen and look like they are stuffed. They pretend to be invisible. The color of the feathers mildly fades. This characteristic is, together with mimicry, the other reason of hard noticing them in the natural habitat. When very scared, Lineolated parakeet has high pitched voice, and in these situations they often run or fly in uncontrolled manner. This will alarm the other birds from the flock and they will also vocalize. These voices are not very pleasant.

They sustain both high and low temperatures very well, even when the water in the water-dish freezes. It is very important, at that moment, that they have insulated box, where they can find shelter and cover their feet and toes with the feathers.

### Medical Records

When provided with good conditions they can live 12 years and more. A rich and various diet will surely influence their lifespan and the quality of life. They have very good immune system, and I almost never had to treat them. The only health issue I have noticed is a defect, due to a disease, appearing on

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the nostrils. However, even if you do not treat the bird, it will live normally. The size of claws should be monitored, and cosmetic surgery should be performed occasionally. Due to the uncontrolled growth and inadequate perch diameter, the claws can be deformed. Bigger claws present a danger to the bird. When frightened, and trying to escape, the bird can entangle claws in the wire mesh, resolving in sprain leg.

In the past few years, this species gain popularity and reached real expansion among numerous breeders. Many groups have been formed on social networks, allowing fans and breeders to exchange information and experience.

They are sociable, tolerant towards other birds, and they make bonds to people. They adapt easy to house conditions. If you provide them with care they can be easily tamed. If you dedicate them enough energy, patience and love they will know to appreciate that and they will respond with unselfish love, a lot of unusual acrobatic skills that will capture yoReferences:

Reference:

1. <https://www.beautyofbirds.com/lineolatedparakeets.html>

