



Male Australian King Parrot



The Australian King Parrot is the largest and one of the most beautiful of the many parrots found throughout Australia. They are sexually dimorphic with the male being mostly red and the female predominantly green. They need large flights for breeding.

# The Australian King Parrot

by Bill Rattray  
Garden Grove, California

In the age of specialization, I decided on a group of very colorful parrots called king parrots. Starting in 1982, I have worked with three species of the king parrots. These include the Australian King (*Alisterus scapularis*) from eastern Australia, the *moszkowskii* subspecies of the Green-winged King (*A. chloroperus*) from New Guinea and the Amboina King Parrot (*A. amboinensis*) from several Indonesian islands including Amboina in the southern Moluccas.

King parrots are naturally tame and confiding, hardy, non-destructive and the quietest of the mid-sized parrots.

These endearing qualities make this parrot highly prized by parrot enthusiasts who are ready for a beautiful bird which will not cause complaints from the neighbors.

The Australian King Parrot is not a shy bird and is commonly seen in nearby fields, parks and gardens in Australia. It is the largest of the broad-tailed Australian "parakeets," measuring 17 inches in total length. The adult males have a brilliant red head in comparison to the adult females. A bright, pale green scapular bar above the wings can be seen in the adult males.

I have been a bird hobbyist for 25 years, ten of which I have bred king parrots. Most of the flimsy literature which is available on breeding king parrots would discourage even the most avid aviculturists. But the truth is that the Australian King and the other kings are as easy to breed as any of the other Australian parrots, once you allow them to settle down with the correct conditions.

I place one pair of king parrots per aviary. The aviaries are eight feet long, three feet wide and four feet in height. I have bred king parrots in



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\*\* Indicates 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.

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please call that club's state coordinator.

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Las Vegas, Nevada  
Bally's Casino Resort

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Salt Lake City, Utah  
Little America Hotel

cages six to 16 feet long without any noticeable change in productivity. The cages are suspended three and a half feet above the ground. This is done to eliminate bacteria, fungi and worms. Three gang perches are placed at each end of the aviary. The male seems to think that any perch the female is on is his! This gives the female an opportunity to give way to "his majesty", thus avoiding stress.

Four feet of roof space at each end of the aviary is completely covered so rain does not enter the food dishes or soak the nest boxes. Each aviary has solid partitions along the sides so there is no visual interaction between the pairs. A male may think that the female in the next cage is prettier than his wife if he could see her. Sec-lusion is very important for the successful reproduction of king parrots.

Each aviary is designed so there is no need for anyone to enter them. All feeding and watering is done from outside the aviary. All feeding dishes are slid through service slots at one end of the aviary so the birds' territory is not violated. This is especially important during the actual breeding season. The birds become quite tame when you do not enter their domain.

I use three feeding dishes that are spaced vertically on top of each other so that the lower dishes cannot become fouled by the birds. Cleanliness is next to godliness when it comes to breeding birds. Clean drinking water, floors, perches and feed dishes are of paramount importance! I use eight inch square stainless steel cake pans which are washed every day and replaced with clean ones. I keep two sets of pans. One set is in the wash while the other is in use.

I have an automatic watering system which allows the birds to touch a release valve and obtain a drop of water. These are waterers "without a bowl," as I feel bowls of water can be contaminated five minutes after cleaning with dunked food and and defecation. This way there is no bacterial build-up from open dishes of standing water.

The nest box used for king parrots measures four feet in vertical length by one foot wide and one foot deep. Clean pine shavings are used for nesting materials. Each nest box is placed outside of each aviary. A safety aisle encloses the complete area where the nest boxes are hung in case any bird chews through a nest and escapes. A double safety is provided, utilizing a draft screen on the safety

gate door.

The diet for all my kings is made up of a variety of foods. A total seed diet will not produce large, healthy birds. Besides a complete food of pellets, I give my kings boiled pigeon mix, additional beans, apples, oranges, guava, pomegranates, carrots, kale and Swiss chard. To this I also offer pyracantha berries, catoneaster and fuschia flowers. All of my kings are primarily on a pellet diet. Not only do the birds look better, but the keeper has less mess to clean up.

I feel it is best to acquire young stock of king parrots for breeding. Often with older king parrots, you are acquiring someone else's problems. Kings will generally reproduce beginning around 2-1/2 years of age. On rare occasions, a younger bird will nest successfully. I had an 18-month-old female Green-winged King Parrot nest with an older wild-caught male and produce a normal brood of four youngsters.

I am very careful to use unrelated stock in my breeding program. This is extremely important as related stock may cause infertile eggs, dead-in-shell problems or weak babies.

The Australian King Parrot will generally nest in the spring and summer months. The most active months are from February to July. A clutch consists of four to five white eggs and hatches in approximately 20 days. Incubation times can vary depending upon the weather or how tightly the eggs are incubated. I generally allow my king parrots to rear their own babies. There is no problem in cross-fostering between the different species of king parrots. I have often had a nest containing a baby of each species — Australian, Green-winged and Amboina King Parrots. They are generally very good parents. On some occasions, hand-feeding is done and when they become adults they will often alight on your shoulder. They are delightful birds

Of the three species of king parrots I reproduce, the Australian King Parrot has the mellowest disposition, while the Amboina King Parrot is the most temperamental.

These exquisite and beautifully colored parrots can be reproduced quite successfully with a great deal of patience, peaceful surroundings, a good maintenance diet and a clean environment. It can be quite a sight observing 20 to 30 juvenile king parrots in the large holding aviary at the end of the year. ●