

# breeding the Red-rumped Parakeet

by Gerda Miller  
Thousand Oaks, California

The Red-rumped Parakeet is a fine choice for the bird breeder who would like to move up from raising budgies. There are a few reasons for this opinion. First of all they are beautiful birds. The male and female can easily be distinguished from one another, so pairing is quite easy. The male Red-rump is green and blue on the head and wings, with a yellow chest, and of course the distinctive red on the rump. The female is much duller in color, being an olive green with no red on the rump.

They are quiet and can be raised easily in the city without any trouble

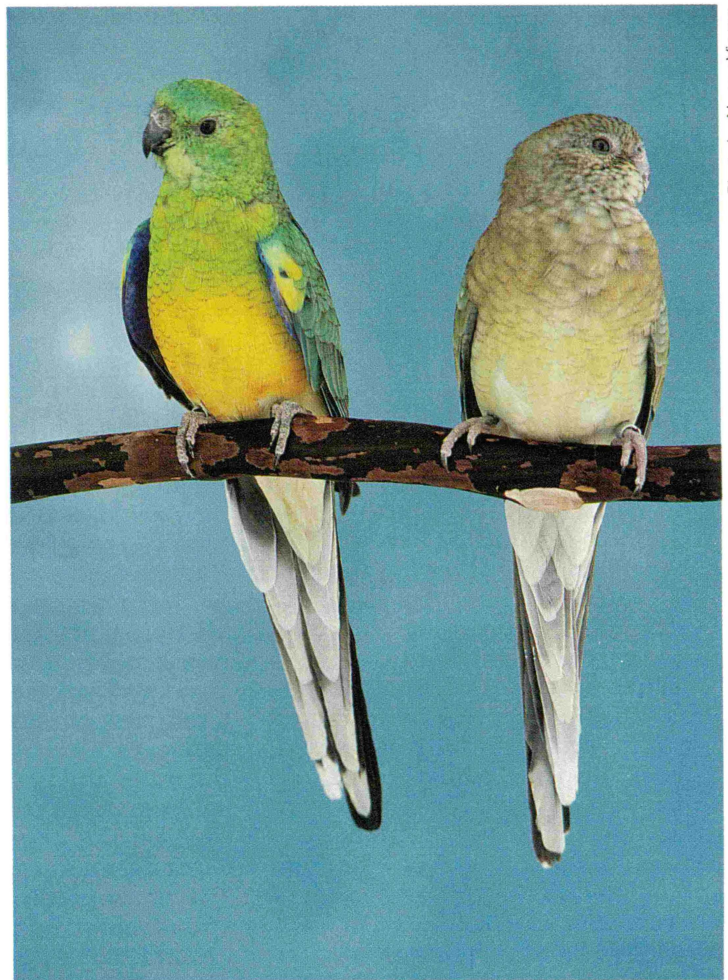


Photo by Nancy Vigran

*Red-rumped Parakeets are quiet, dimorphic and easy to raise, making them a good species for any bird enthusiast.*

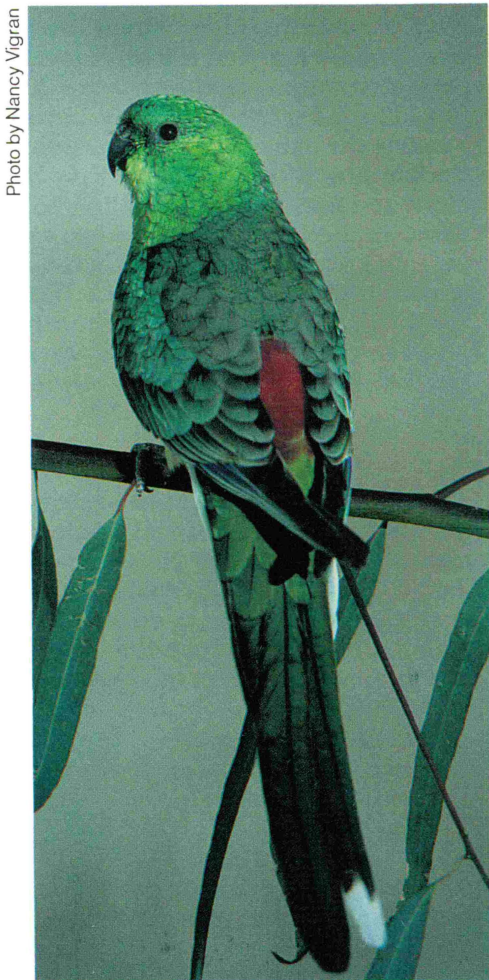


Photo by Nancy Vigran

*The Red-rumped Parakeet is aptly named as males have a vivid red patch across the rear.*

from neighbors. They are easy to raise and make good foster parents for other birds in their category. Their cost is reasonable, being about \$50.00 each from a breeder.

Here are a few tips to finding the best breeding stock possible. It is important to buy your birds in early autumn so that your stock can be properly acclimated to their new surrounding and, of course, to their new mates. Buy your birds from a reliable breeder. Finding a reliable breeder can be helped greatly through your local bird clubs or a veterinarian who specializes in birds. It's a good idea to look at the condition of the cages of the breeders from whom you consider buying your stock. They should be clean! You should buy mature birds of about 9 to 10 months old. Another very important tip is to make sure your birds are of unrelated stock.

The birds should be healthy. The eyes of a healthy bird are clear and their feathers should be shiny with no signs of plucking. A broken tail feather or clipped wings are perfectly

fine. These will not affect the breeding capability of the birds. There should not be any signs of a runny nose or of uneven breathing that might be signs of a cold or congestion. The beak of both the male and the female should show no sign of overgrowth and should be straight. This is important for the feeding of the brood as both parents will feed the young. The beak should also be free from any scales. If the breast bone sticks out, this can also be an indication of a sick bird.

Now that you have found your new birds, you are ready to take them home. I feel that it's a good idea to quarantine any new birds which I bring home for a short time. If there is any sickness in these birds, you don't want it to spread to your present stock.

Their cage should be about 3' wide by 6' high by 6' long with a wired flight, plus draft and rain-free sleeping and nesting area. Except in extremely cold areas, these birds can normally be wintered outside without the need for special heating. The

bottom of the cage should be covered with clean sand. These birds seem to enjoy a little stroll on the ground, so keep the cage bottom clean.

The nest box should be the size of a peachface lovebird box but deeper; 10" wide by 10" long by 15" deep with the entry hole on the high part of the box. The nesting material should be a combination of peat moss, shavings and eucalyptus leaves mixed together. I like to use 3 to 4 inches of this mixture in my boxes.

The breeding season starts about February. The female usually lays four to five eggs. The eggs hatch in 17 to 19 days, and the babies will stay in the nest for four or five weeks. I recommend only allowing the pair two clutches a year, so as not to overbreed. Overbreeding will cause you to have weaker babies.

I like to provide small hookbill mix, Petamine, canary seed and mixed parakeet seed to my birds along with carrots, apples, wheat bread and some soaked seed. It is also very important to provide cuttlebone, a mineral block and gravel. The food should always be fresh. Any sign of mildew can cause illness in your birds. Fresh water should also be given each day.

If you notice any sign of distress, your bird should be brought into the house and kept warm (90-95°F). I have found that a fish tank with a wire screen on the top works quite well as an infirmary. I put a heating pad on low heat, with a towel on top, *under* the bottom of the fish tank. You should not have a perch in this tank. I have found that these tanks can be cleaned easily and thoroughly.

If the bird is not eating dry seed, a little soaked seed should do the trick. The seed should be rinsed well and refrigerated from 24 to 30 hours, then rinsed again.

Once the bird is feeling better, remove the heat gradually. Put the bird in a wire cage in the house to make sure the bird is well. Acclimate the bird to the outside cage on a sunny day. Keep a close watch for any signs of distress.

These birds are best raised with only one pair per cage, but can easily be caged with finches. I think you will enjoy the caring for and raising of these interesting birds. I have had a great deal of joy and success with these lovely birds. Good luck to those who will take up this endeavor. ●

# Those Wonderful Neophemas

by Joe Atkinson  
Clements, California

**Editor's note:** *The Turquoise Parrot this article refers to is Neophema pulchella. In American aviculture, it is more commonly known as the Turquoise Parakeet.*

*Neophema* is the scientific genus name given to a group of small, Budgie-sized parakeets from Australia. Neophemas are quite beautiful, all being grass-green except one member, the Bourke's Parakeet. The Bourke's Parakeet is light brown with a soft pink chest and belly and large, dark eyes. These large, dark eyes give them the ability to see better at twilight time than other grass parakeets, thus earning them the name of the Night Parrot in their native Australia. The grass-green Neophemas, who spend most of their time on the ground, have been given the nickname "grass parakeets."

Grass parakeets are not considered difficult to raise, in fact, some members are quite good breeders. However, like all birds we attempt to raise in captivity, they have their special requirements. This article is by no means the last word on raising grass parakeets. Birds seem to know when their keepers are thinking too highly of themselves and will show us just how little we do know.

In any new undertaking, trial and error is the best rule of thumb. Grass parakeets are no exception. Over the years, I have certainly made my share of errors and hopefully I have learned a few things along the way. I hope this article will smooth the road for you and help you have an enjoyable time with your grass parakeets.

## Flights And Nest Boxes

Grass parakeets will reproduce in just about any size flight, from 2'x 3' indoor setups to the largest outdoor flight. Because they will not normally colony breed, it is best to have only one pair per flight, so large outdoor flights are not practical for the serious breeder. In California, grass parakeets are kept outside in flights that are two feet wide by four feet high by

six feet long. Four feet of the flight should be covered, containing the feeding and nest box area. The remaining two feet of the flight should remain uncovered, allowing the birds access to any available sun. Nest box privacy is essential. Therefore, if you have side-by-side flights, you must place partitions in the flights which will provide adequate privacy. Weather is usually not a major problem, but cold wind can be. Many breeders prefer to cover their flight with plastic neoprene during stormy weather.

In the wild, grass parakeets are cavity nesters, using hollow tree branches and hollow tree trunks which are their preferred nest sites. I have used natural nest boxes made from hollow logs and the birds loved them, but these natural nests are difficult to clean and impossible for banding the baby birds. The common Budgie box works great, is easy to clean and easy to repair. Fill the box three inches deep with pine shavings, and pack it down smooth. Grass parakeets like to dig in their nest box. With the shavings packed smooth, you can tell if your birds are working the nest box in preparation for nesting.

Nesting takes place in the spring and throughout the summer. The clutches are usually three to five eggs in number but can go as high as eight. Grass parakeets will stop nesting on their own in late summer and should be encouraged to do so. However, in indoor setups where light and temperature are controlled, they will nest all year. In outdoor setups, leave the nest boxes up all year because on cold winter nights they will use them for sleeping.

## Diet

Grass parakeets will do well on most diets that are well-rounded and balanced. I use a dry seed mix of white millet, canary seed, oat groats, black sunflower seeds, safflower seed and powdered vitamins. On the