

## Bloedel Bird of the Month – The Australian King Parrot



The Australian King Parrots' home is the humid forest uplands of Australia's east coast.<sup>1</sup> They are medium sized, long-tailed birds with a small beak.

It is easy to tell the sex of the adults.<sup>2</sup> Males are bright red on the head, front and lower body. They have green wings and a blue back. Females have green heads and back. Their lower body is more orange than the males.<sup>3</sup> There are other minor differences between the sexes, such as the beak colours and the male having light green wing stripes and brighter yellow irises.



### Adult Male Colours

Head: Bright Red  
Chest: Bright Red  
Back: Dark Blue  
Wings: Green with Pale Stripes  
Iris: Bright Yellow  
Beak: Reddish upper with black tip, black lower.



<sup>1</sup> <https://reptilepark.com.au/animals/birds/king-parrot/>

<sup>2</sup> Males and females are clearly different in appearance; they are 'sexually dimorphic'.

<sup>3</sup> Humans have three types of cone cells in their retina and see the colours described above. Many birds have four cone cell types, where the extra type allows them to distinguish ultraviolet wavelengths. When seen in ultraviolet light, some feathers on King Parrot wings have a yellow glow. See:

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Alisterus-scapularis>



#### Adult Female Colours

Head: Green  
Chest: Green/Orange  
Back: Green with  
Blue seen  
below wings  
when flying  
Wings: Green  
Irises: Pale Yellow  
Beak: Grey/Black



Juveniles have a dull yellow beak, unlike adult females.<sup>4</sup> They look like females until they are 6 months old. Then the male's head begins to turn red. It has adult colours at about 16 months, but it needs 14 more months to reach complete adult plumage. Males mate aged about 3 years. Females are sexually mature after one year.<sup>5</sup>

The Latin name of the Australian King Parrot is *Alisterus scapularis*, where 'Alisterus' is the genus name for King Parrots. There is a smaller Australian King Parrot subspecies, *Alisterus scapularis minor*, about 5 cm/2 in shorter in length; that lives at the northern limit of the range in North-eastern Queensland.<sup>6</sup> The two other King Parrots in the *Alisterus* genus are the Papuan King Parrot (*Alisterus chloropterus*) from New Guinea and the Moluccan King Parrot (*Alisterus amboinensis*) from Indonesia. Usually 'King Parrot' refers to the Australian King Parrot.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.parrots.org/encyclopedia/australian-king-parrot/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/card-australian-king-parrot.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.beautyofbirds.com/australiankingparrots.html>

## Breeding

King Parrots lay three to six eggs (average 4) on a bed of decayed wood-dust at the bottom of a deep hollow in the trunk of a tree. Often the entrance is high in the tree but the eggs are near the ground.<sup>7</sup> The female incubates alone for about 20 days, but both parents feed chicks. The young fledge when they are around 5 weeks old.

## Diet

King Parrots mostly feed on the seeds of trees and shrubs, mainly eucalypts (gum trees) and acacias. They also eat other seeds, fruit, berries, nuts, nectar, blossoms, leaf buds, insects and their larvae.<sup>8</sup>

## Statistics<sup>9</sup>

Length	43 cm/17 in
Average Lifespan	25 years
Average Weight	250 g/8.8 oz
Talking Ability	Some <sup>10</sup>
Trainability	Yes, if tamed



Male King Parrot



Female King Parrot

<sup>7</sup> [http://aviculturalsocietynsw.org/articles/Interview\\_JoeSarah\\_King-Parrots.htm#.XJMLth7mUn](http://aviculturalsocietynsw.org/articles/Interview_JoeSarah_King-Parrots.htm#.XJMLth7mUn)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.australiazoo.com.au/our-animals/birds/native-parrots/australian-king-parrot>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.exoticwings.com/info/Polytelis-Parakeets/Alisterus-Scapularis/Australian-King-Parrot.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziybSikMPzY>