

Bare-eyed cockatoo

Cacatua sanguinea Indonesia

Also known as the little corella, short-billed corella.

Bare-eyed cockatoos are medium sized white cockatoos with short white recumbent crests. The eye rings are blue extend well below the eye revealing a blue bulge below the eye. There is a small pink patch between the eyes and nares. They may be confused with the smaller Goffin's cockatoo. The undersides of the flight feathers are yellow.

Bare-eyed cockatoos are common and found in large flocks throughout much of northern and central Australia. They inhabit riverine woodlands near grasslands and agricultural areas. They also invade cultivated areas and damage crops. In the non-breeding season they may gather in huge flocks of 20,000 or more birds and range widely through grasslands in search for food. Because of this behavior they are often killed as crop pests. They feed in trees and on the ground, feeding on seeds, crops, fruits, berries, buds, flowers and nuts and insect larvae. They are most active in early morning and late afternoon.

Length is 14 to 17 inches. Weight is 300-430 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks.

Bare-eyed cockatoos probably live up to 50 years. Precise data on life span of the average Bare-eyed cockatoo is poorly documented. Many succumb to disease or injury rather than living for their potential lifespan.

Bare-eyed cockatoos breed readily in captivity. Breeding age can be as young as 3 years but is more typically 4-6 years. Breeding life span is not precisely known.

Personality - Bare-eyed cockatoos are intelligent, inquisitive birds and largely underrated. They are often passed over due to their relative homely

appearance for the more beautiful moluccan or umbrella but in general are intelligent and have exceptional personalities. They are gentle, playful and affectionate and make very good pets. Bare-eyed don't often speak well. They are not so loud, demanding and possessive as the larger white cockatoos.

Activities – Bare-eyed cockatoos are inquisitive and love to chew objects in their surroundings but are not as destructive as other cockatoos. They should always be provided with toys, blocks of wood or branches that they can chew. In order to ensure safety companion cockatoos should not be allowed unsupervised freedom in the home as they often encounter toxins or dangerous items. Young cockatoos should be socialized to many people and exposed to a variety of situations such as new cages, toys, visits to the veterinarian, handling by friends, wing and nail clips, etc. to avoid fear of novel situations. They need to have some space for exercise.

Dietary needs - Cockatoos should be fed a formulated (pelleted or extruded diet) as a basis for good nutrition. Kaytee Exact is an excellent staple diet for cockatoos. The pink eye ring subspecies should be fed a restricted diet to prevent obesity. The diet should be supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and psychological enrichment. Feed approximately 1/3 cup of Kaytee Exact and 1/3 cup of fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Monitor food intake. Overfeeding leads to pickiness, selective feeding and wasteful throwing of food. Bare-eyes are somewhat predisposed to obesity.

Special requirements - Adult and juvenile bare-eyed cockatoos are efficient in utilization of calories and are picky eaters. Try to ensure that the food that they eat is nutritious and avoid feeding large quantities of high fat seeds such as sunflower and safflower. Vitamin supplements are not needed for birds that are eating a formulated diet.

Birds on an all seed diet need a vitamin/mineral supplement. Ideally the vitamins should be provided in a soft food rather than in the water as water with vitamins and sweeteners are a good growth medium for bacteria and can lead to bacterial disease. Vitamins and minerals which are added to seeds are often lost when the birds shells the seeds. Over time, this can lead to deficiency disease.

Grooming - Routine bathing or showering is vital to maintaining good plumage and skin condition. Birds can be misted and allowed to dry in a warm room or in the sun, or gently dried with a blow drier. Care should be taken not to clip the wing feathers excessively as cockatoos often fall and injure themselves. Clip only the primary flight feathers and only enough so the bird will glide to the floor. Bare-eyed are better flyers than Moluccans and Umbrellas and a few more feathers should be removed.

Identification - All companion and breeding birds should be individually identified to assist in recovery if lost and assist in maintenance of medical and genealogical records. Many breeders apply closed leg bands when chicks are young. While they present a slight risk of entrapment closed bands are preferable to no identification, especially for breeding birds. Microchips, which can be implanted into the muscle or under the skin, are a reliable means of identification but require electronic readers to verify identification. Tattoos may be used but often fade or become illegible with time. Footprints may have some application in identification.

Sexing Bare-eyed cockatoos can often be sexed by eye color when mature but the eye color is not reliable. The eyes of a mature female are red while the eyes of the male are dark brown or black. Juveniles of both sexes will have brown eyes. Sex of breeders should be confirmed by surgical sexing or DNA sexing.

Housing - Bare-eyed cockatoos are very active and should be provided the largest cage that space and budget allows. Ideally the cage should provide room for flight. Durable cage construction is not as critical with Bare-eyes as with larger cockatoos as they are not such strong chewers. Many are adept at opening cage latches. Locks or escape proof latches may be necessary on cages. The cage should be as large as possible but must allow at least enough room to fully spread the wings. Ideally the bird will have an outdoor cage as well to allow playtime in the fresh-air and sunlight.

Breeding – Bare-eyed cockatoos can be difficult to breed in captivity. In North America Bare-eyed cockatoos breed predominantly in the winter and spring. Clutch size is typically 2 to 3 eggs. One inch by one inch by 14 gauge-welded wire is a good choice for cage construction. A suggested size is 4 feet wide by 4 feet tall by 6 feet long suspended 4 feet above the ground or floor.

Nest Box - Double entrance boxes are often used to reduce the chance of the male trapping the female in the box. Grand-father style wooden boxes can be used and Bare-eyes often to like a deep, narrow nest. Size should be approximately 12" x 12" x 24" or 12" x 12" x 36".

Incubation period is approximately 24-26 days. Chicks will usually fledge at approximately 10 to 12 weeks of age. Bare-eyed cockatoos are relatively easy to hand-rear. Most hand rearing formulas can be used successfully. Kaytee Exact Regular hand rearing formula is a good choice.

Aggression

Male cockatoos frequently become aggressive toward their mates. Cage construction and management should take into consideration techniques to reduce mate aggression. Clipping the wings of the male prior to the breeding season will help the female to escape in case the male becomes aggressive. Aggressive behavior may occur in compatible breeding pairs.

Bare-eyed cockatoos are not as noisy as the larger cockatoos however when breeding cockatoos, noise and proximity to neighbors must be considered. If housed outdoors cockatoos often call at night especially during a full moon. In southern states outdoor caging must be protected from opossums to prevent exposure to the parasite *Sarcocystis falcatula* which can result in a fatal lung infection.

Common diseases and disorders

- Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (Common in the wild population but rare now in captive cockatoos)
- Proventricular Dilation Disease
- Feather-picking
- Poor eating habits
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Sarcocystis
- Mate aggression
- Toxicity, ingestion of metals

Conservation Status - Bare-eyed cockatoos are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species but only because of the listing of almost all parrots. Their population is large and stable and they are often killed as crop pests. Australia does not allow exports of native wildlife. Bare-eyed cockatoos are relatively uncommon in the United States.