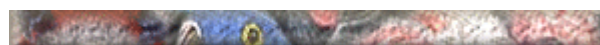




Dr. Susan Clubb, DVM, has written profiles on several species. In these profiles you will find information on where each species originates from, Scientific Names, Description of each species, Behavior/Aviculture, Diet, Breeding information, and Common Diseases And Disorders.

Happy Learning



~ Blue-headed Pionus ~

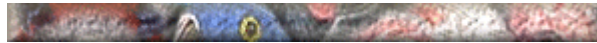
Pionus menstruus

Central and South America

Also known as the Blue-hooded parrot, Red-vented parrot.

Blue-headed Pionus are one of the most popular and well known of all Pionus parrots. They are medium, stocky bright green parrots with deep blue heads and black ear patches. They are named for the bright red under-tail coverts which are actually a hallmark of Pionus parrots. Primary and secondary flight feathers and tail feathers are green. The beak is black with red side patches.

Blue head Pionus are the most common and widespread parrots of South America. They have a very large range including Coast Rica and Panama and most of the Amazon Basin. Found primarily in lowland tropical forests ranging up to 4500 feet elevation. Also found in plantations, clearings with trees and secondary growth. Generally gregarious when not breeding and often found in large gatherings especially when roosting. They nest in tree cavities. They eat various tree seeds, new leaves, palm fruits, berries, pods, fruits, acorns and buds. Occasionally cause crop destruction, especially corn and citrus crops.



Subspecies;

P. m. menstruus - East of Andes from Venezuela to Bolivia and east to the mouth of the Amazon.

P. m. reichenowi - Eastern Brazil - Blue is deeper and more extensive and the beak is horn colored.

P. m. rubigularis - Costa Rica and Panama - Smaller, duller blue and some have red on throat.

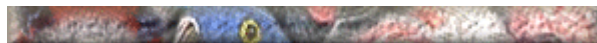
Length is 9 to 10 inches. Weight is 230-260 grams.

Eyes of juveniles are brown while eyes of adults are orange-yellow.

Most juveniles have relatively little color compared to adults and may have some red on the forehead. The eyes of both juveniles and adults are dark brown.

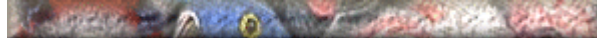
Blue-headed Pionus can probably live up to 35-45 years or more.

Little is known about their life span in captivity. Breeding age is approximately 3-5 years.



Personality - Blue-headed Pionus are popular and make very good pets. They typically don't speak well. They are intelligent, inquisitive birds but are sometimes shy. Mature birds, especially males may become bonded to one person and aggressively protect that person from other people including other family members. They are relatively common in captivity but captive bred birds are not frequently available. They are active by nature and may become overweight if closely confined.

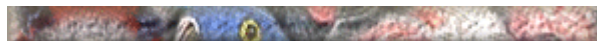
Activities - Blue-headed Pionus should always be provided with toys, blocks of wood or branches that they can chew. In order to ensure safety companion Pionus parrots should not be allowed unsupervised freedom in the home as they often encounter toxins or dangerous items. Young Pionus parrots should 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 - Pionus parrots should be fed a formulated (pelleted or extruded diet) as a basis for good nutrition. Pretty Bird High Protein or Daily select is an excellent staple diet for Pionus parrots. They should be fed approximately 2 heaping tablespoons to ¼ cup of pellets. They will tend to waste less food if fed small sized pellets such as Pretty Bird Daily select small. The diet should be supplemented with the same volume of fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and psychological enrichment. Monitor food intake.

Overfeeding leads to pickiness, selective feeding and wasteful throwing of food. Pionus parrots should be fed little to no sunflower or safflower seeds or seeds should only be given as treats. Vitamin supplements are not needed for birds that are eating a formulated diet.

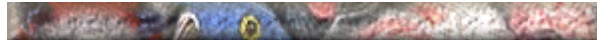
Birds, which are fed only seeds, will need vitamin and mineral supplementation to prevent deficiency diseases. Preferably vitamins should be added to soft food rather than putting in the water as this dilutes the vitamins, water soluble vitamins break down rapidly and water with sweetened and vitamins is a good growth medium for bacteria. Vitamin added to the outside of seeds is usually lost when the bird shells the seeds.



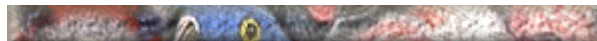
Grooming - Routine bathing or showering is vital to maintaining good plumage and skin condition. Birds can be misted and allowed to dry in a warm room or in the sun, or gently dried with a blow drier.

Care should be taken not to clip the wing feathers excessively as Pionus parrots often fall and injure themselves. Clip only the primary flight feathers and only enough so the bird will glide to the floor. Blue-headed Pionus are heavy bodied and care must be taken

not to cut too many feathers. Excessive wing clipping can result in injuries from falling.

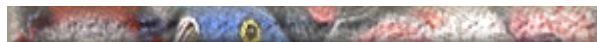


Identification - All companion and breeding birds should be individually identified to assist in recovery if lost and assist in maintenance of medical and genealogical records. Many breeders apply closed legs bands when chicks are young. While they present a slight risk of entrapment closed bands are 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 Blue-headed Pionus are monomorphic (sexes are not visually distinct). Surgical sexing or DNA sexing must be used to confirm sex of breeders. Males are generally larger and have deeper and more extensive blue than females and have larger heads and beaks.

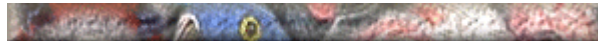
Housing - Blue-headed Pionus are very active and should be provided the largest cage that space and budget allows. Ideally the cage should provide room for flight. Durable cage construction is not as critical as it is for macaws and cockatoos. Locks or escape proof latches may be necessary on cages. Ideally the bird will have an outdoor cage as well to allow playtime in the fresh-air and sunlight.



Breeding - Blue-headed Pionus are moderately difficult to breed in captivity. In North America Blue-headed Pionus breed predominantly in the spring and have a limited breeding season typically from February or March to June or July. Clutch size is typically 3 to 4 eggs. One inch by one inch by 14 gauge welded wire, or 1" X ½ " welded wire is a good choice for cage construction. A suggested size is 4 feet wide by 4 feet tall by 6 to 8 feet long suspended 4 feet above the ground or floor.

Nest Box - Grandfather style wooden boxes can be used. Size should be approximately 10" x 10" x 18-24".

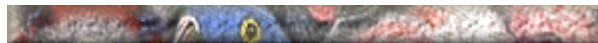
Incubation period is approximately 24-26 days. Chicks will usually fledge at approximately 8 to 10 weeks of age. Blue-headed Pionus are difficult to hand-rear from the egg. For best results they should be initially fed by the parents or fed very often in the first week. Pretty Bird 19/12 or 19/15 hand rearing formula is a good choice.



Aggression

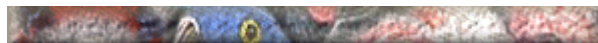
Male Blue-heads are occasionally aggressive toward their mates. Clipping the wings of the male prior to the breeding season may be necessary in aggressive individuals to help the female to escape in case the male becomes aggressive. Males in breeding condition can be very aggressive to keepers. They will often approach the keeper and flare the tail in an aggressive posture.

Blue-heads are moderately noisy when in breeding season. When breeding Pionus parrots, noise and proximity to neighbors must be considered.



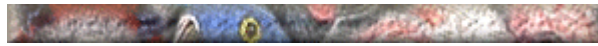
Common diseases and disorders

- **Pox virus infection (Primary disease of imported birds)**
 - **Feather-picking**
 - **Aspergillosis**
- **Vitamin A deficiency**
 - **Psittacosis**
 - **Poor eating habits**
- **Bacterial and fungal infections**
 - **Mate aggression**
- **Toxicity, ingestion of metals**
 - **Toe necrosis**



Conservation Status -Common, stable- Blue-headed Pionus are listed on Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Wild populations are generally large and locally common but are vulnerable to habitat destruction and have declined in some areas due to capture for export and use for

pets locally in other areas. In the past very large numbers were traded and used locally for pets. Blue-headed Pionus were imported in large numbers into the United States but not commonly breed.



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