

Citron-crested cockatoo

Cacatua sulphurea citrinocristata Indonesia

A subspecies of the Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoo.

Citron-crested cockatoos are small white cockatoos with an orange recurved crest. They can be distinguished from the Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoos by size (citrons are slightly larger), the orange crest and the presence of a large yellow orange ear patch in the Lesser. The underside of the flight feathers are yellow.

Citron-crested cockatoos are found on Sumba Island in Indonesia where they are locally common. They inhabit forest edge, woodland and cultivated areas. They feed in trees and on the ground, feeding on seeds, crops, fruits, berries, buds, flowers and nuts, including immature coconuts. They are most active in early morning and late afternoon. They are usually found in pairs or small flocks.

Length is 14 to 15 inches. Weight is 300-500 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks.

Citron-crested cockatoos can live up to 40 years. Precise data on life span of the average Citron-crested cockatoo is poorly documented. Many succumb to disease or injury rather than living for their potential lifespan.

Citron-crested breed well in captivity. Breeding age can be as young as 2 years but is usually 5-6 years. Breeding life span is not precisely known but is possibly up to 25+ years.

Personality - Citron-crested cockatoos are active, high-energy birds. They are gentle and playful. Citron-crested don't often speak well. They are not so demanding and possessive as the larger white cockatoos.

Activities – Citron-crested 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 diet should be supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and psychological enrichment. Feed approximately 1/4 cup of Exact and 1/4 cup of fresh fruits and vegetables daily. * Monitor food intake. Overfeeding leads to pickiness, selective feeding and wasteful throwing of food.

Due to the difference in water content of fresh foods (fruits and vegetables) and pellets, equal parts of pellets and fresh foods represents only approximately 20% supplementation by dry weight. This will not significantly dilute the nutritional quality of the pelleted diet. Fresh foods provide important psychological enrichment for caged birds.

Special requirements - Adult and juvenile citron-crested 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.

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. Citron-crested 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. Foot prints may have some application in identification.

Sexing Citron-crested cockatoos can be sexed by eye color when mature. 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. The sex of breeders should be confirmed by surgical sexing or DNA sexing.

Housing - Citron-crested 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 as Citron-crested are not such strong chewers as the larger cockatoos. 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 play time in the fresh-air and sunlight.

Breeding – Citron-crested cockatoos breed well fairly well in captivity but are not bred as frequently as Moluccans and Umbrellas. In North America Citron-crested cockatoos breed predominantly in the winter and spring. Clutch size is typically 2 to 3 eggs. One inch by one inch 12 or 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. 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 8 to 10 weeks of age. Citron-crested 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.

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 uncommon 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 - Citron-crested cockatoos are listed on Appendix I on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Their wild population is limited but stable, but is vulnerable to exploitation and habitat destruction. Citron-crested cockatoos are relatively uncommon in the United States.

