

## Ducorps's cockatoo

*Cacatua ducorpsii*

Solomon Islands

Also known as the Solomon Islands Cockatoo, Solomon's corella.

Ducorps's cockatoos are medium sized white cockatoos. They have short white recumbent crests. They closely resemble the goffin's cockatoo but is completely white except the underside of the flight feathers and tail are yellow. They have a pale pink coloration to the crest and blue-eye rings. They are poorly known in aviculture and only became available in the early 1990's.

Ducorps's cockatoos are abundant throughout the Solomon Islands. They are widespread from the coast to mountains in a variety of forest and woodland habitats. They also invade cultivated areas and damage crops. They are wary and shy by nature.

Length is 12 to 14 inches. Weight is 300-450 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks.

Ducorps's cockatoos can probably live up to 50 years judging by life span of similar species. Little is known about their life history in captivity. Ducorps's cockatoos breed relatively well in captivity. Long term information is not available.

**Personality** - Ducorps's cockatoos are intelligent, inquisitive birds but tend to be wary and often nervous. They can make very good pets but can become fearful if they have a traumatic experience.

**Activities** – Ducorps's cockatoos 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 flight.

***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 ¼ cup of Kaytee 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. 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. Ducorps's 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*** - Ducorps's 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*** - Ducorps's cockatoos are very active and should be provided the largest cage that space and budget allows. They should also be supplied

with a retreat to guard against insecurity and fear responses. Ideally the cage should provide room for flight. Durable cage construction is not as critical as Ducorps's 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 play time in the fresh-air and sunlight.

**Breeding** – Initial results would indicate that ducorps's cockatoos will breed relatively well in captivity. In North America Ducorps's cockatoos breed predominantly in the winter and spring. Clutch size is typically 2 to 3 eggs. One inch by one inch by 12 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 goffins tend to like a deep, narrow nest. Size should be approximately 12" x 12" x 24" or 12" x 12" x 36" or deeper.

Incubation period is approximately 24-26 days. Chicks will usually fledge at approximately 10 to 12 weeks of age. Ducorps's cockatoos are relatively easy to hand-rear. Most hand rearing formulas can be used successfully. 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.

Ducorps's 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
- Fear related neurosis
- Poor eating habits
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Sarcocystis
- Mate aggression
- Toxicity, ingestion of metals
- Fearful behavior

Conservation Status - Ducorps's cockatoos are listed on Appendix II on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species but only because of the listing of almost all parrots. Their population is large and stable but future habitat destruction could be problematic. The Solomons islands allows limited exports. Ducorps's cockatoos are relatively uncommon in the United States.