

Gang-gang cockatoo

Callocephalon fimbriatum Australia

The Gang-gang cockatoo is a charming small gray cockatoo similar in size to the Rose-breasted cockatoo. Gang-gangs have a wispy recurved crest that is bright red in the male and gray in the female. Both have scalloping which is faint in the male. Scalloping in the female is yellow orange. Immature are like females with some red showing on head of males at 1 year of age.

Gang-gang cockatoos are found in highland forests of coastal areas of southeastern Australia. They inhabit eucalyptus forests especially along rivers feeding on seeds of eucalyptus and other trees, the larvae of wood boring insects and pyracantha seeds and berries.

Very few birds are in captivity except in zoos and specialized private collections.

Length is 14 to 15 inches. Weight is 250-400 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks. Gang-gang cockatoos and other cockatoo species can be very long lived (probably around 50 years) but precise life span is unknown.

Breeding age is 4-5 years. Hand-reared males may be problematic breeders and preferably should be parent reared to avoid imprinting.

Personality - Gang-gang cockatoos are very tame and gentle by nature. They are relatively quiet except for a pleasant squeaky call. Their rarity outside of Australia makes it unlikely they will be available for pets.

Activities – Gang-gang cockatoos are inquisitive love to chew objects in their surroundings. Their beak was designed for chewing trees and they are very powerful chewers. They are very destructive if allowed to perch on furniture. They should always be provided with toys, blocks of wood or branches that they can chew.

Dietary needs - Gang-gang cockatoos are efficient in utilization of calories as the white and pink cockatoos although they are not likely to become obese. Gang-gang 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 1/3 cup of Kaytee Exact and 1/3 cup of fresh fruits and vegetables daily. They should also be offered 2-3 nuts such as almonds, filberts or macadamias daily. Supplementation with cooked meats may be important for breeders. Provide fresh branches for additional chewing.

Sexing Gang-gang cockatoos are dimorphic as adults. Immature birds of both sexes resemble females until 1-2 years old.

Breeding – Gang-gang cockatoos are difficult to breed in captivity. They require a roomy flight with privacy. Clutch size is typically 2-3 eggs. One inch by one inch by 14 gauge welded wire is a good choice for cage construction. A suspended cage is recommended, suggested size is 5 feet by 5 feet wide by 10 to 12 feet long.

Nest Box – The nest box should be, approx 12” x 12” by 24” or 36” vertical. The act of chewing a wooden nest box may stimulate reproductive behavior.

Incubation period is approximately 27-30 days. Gang-gang cockatoos are difficult to hand-rear and should only be attempted by very experienced hand-feeders. Ideally chicks should be parent reared to avoid imprinting. High-protein, high fat diets may be needed. Gang-gang chicks are often afflicted with rickets.

Aggression

Male cockatoos frequently become aggressive toward their mates. Because of large flights needed for this species, the male should not be clipped as in other cockatoo species.

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

- Feather plucking and chewing is more common in gang-gang cockatoos than virtually any parrot species, especially in females
- Rickets
- Sarcocystis

Conservation Status - Stable – Protected under Australian law. Gang-gang cockatoos are listed on Appendix II on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species but only because of the listing of almost all parrot species. Australia does not allow export of their native wildlife. Gang-gang cockatoos are uncommon in captivity and generally limited to zoos and specialized private collections.