

Grand Eclectus Parrot

Eclectus roratus roratus

Also Known as – King Parrot, Kalanga

Eclectus are unique among parrots in their strikingly dimorphic plumage color. The females are a deep scarlet to bright red with black beaks. The males are brilliant green with yellow-orange beaks. Early ornithologists even considered them different species due to the striking dimorphism. Their feathers have a soft, almost fur like appearance. They are large stocky parrots with short square tails.

All Eclectus parrots are in the species *Eclectus roratus*, however there are up to 9 recognized subspecies depending on the author. Taxonomy is controversial. They are found in Australia, New Guinea and the South Pacific Islands. Females have distinctive differences in the plumage between the subspecies, however the males are difficult to differentiate. The difficulty of identification of males often leads to inadvertent hybridization

Subspecies

E r roratus – Grand Eclectus

E r solomonensis – Solomon Island Eclectus

E r vosmeri – Vosmeri Eclectus

E r Cornelius

E.r. westermani

E.r. riedeli

E.r. polychloros – Red Sided Eclectus

E.r. biaki

E.r. aruensis

E.r. macgillivray

Grand eclectus are found on the Islands of Beru, Ceram, Ambon, Saparua and Haruku in Indonesia. They were imported into the United States many years ago and often bred simply as eclectus so pure Grand eclectus may be difficult to locate. The male is a brilliant forest green. He has brilliant red patches on the sides and under wing coverts, blue bend to the wing and dark blue flight feathers. Males of the different subspecies are very difficult to identify visually. The female Grand Eclectus closely resembles a Vosmaeri but has a narrow, indistinct yellow feather band at the tip of the tail. Her red is slightly less brilliant than the red-sided. Her breast is a lavender-purple which is separated from the red above by a distinct sharp line of demarcation as in the red-sided.

The under tail coverts are bright red. The Grand Eclectus appears to be an intergrade or clinal variation in color between the Red-sided and the Vosmaeri.

Length - 12-14 inches. Body weight - 380-450 grams

Life Span probably up to 30+ years

Age at maturity 2-4 years.

Juveniles have black eyes and variable colored beaks, often brownish or streaked with black and yellow. Adult eye color is yellow in females and more orange in males.

Personality - Eclectus tend to be aloof and independent, much as a cat. They rarely talk well but if given adequate attention can make good companions, especially males. Females tend to be more aggressive however some owners have wonderful relationships with their female Eclectus. Eclectus are not as noisy as many other large parrot species although they can make a very loud, screeching call when alarmed. They can be a very nice addition to a garden aviary. Eclectus have a characteristic, slightly musky smell.

Activities - Eclectus will often appear stoic, especially if nervous, but are interested in activities around them and love to chew. They should always be provided with toys, especially wooden blocks or other toys that can be chewed, and branches from non-toxic trees. In order to ensure safety companion eclectus should not be allowed unsupervised freedom in the home as they often encounter toxins or dangerous items. Young eclectus 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.

Dietary needs - Eclectus do well when provided with plenty of fruits and vegetables. Eclectus should be fed approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of a formulated diet as a basis for good nutrition. The diet should be supplemented with the at least the same quantity of fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and psychological enrichment. Treats maybe given in small amounts especially as rewards for good behavior. Fresh clean water must be provided every day. Vitamin supplements are not needed for birds that are eating a formulated diet. Some breeders feel the colors and flavors in many formulated diets may cause "toe tapping". Exact original diet would be a good choice as it does not artificial colors.

If eclectus are fed a seed diet it must be supplemented with vitamins. Fresh fruits and yellow vegetables are a good source of vitamin A. Vitaminized seed cannot be relied upon to supply adequate vitamins as the vitamins are applied to the shell of the seeds that is discarded by the parrot.

Grooming - Routine bathing or showering is vital to maintaining good plumage and skin condition. The fine feathering of eclectus is especially beautiful when they receive routine baths. Ideally birds should be taken outdoors on a warm day and lightly sprinkled and allowed to dry in the sun. Indoor birds can be misted or bathed in the shower and allowed to dry in a warm room or dried with a blow drier.

Care should be taken not to clip the wing feathers excessively. Clip only enough so the bird will glide to the floor. Usually clipping the first 8-10 feathers from the tip of the wing.

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 - Female eclectus parrots are various combinations of brilliant reds, blues and purples, depending on the subspecies. The beak of the female is black. Males are brilliant green with an orange beak.

Specific housing or care needed - Eclectus should be provided with as large a cage as possible. Appropriate toys should be provided.

Breeding season and clutch size - Eclectus parrots are prolific breeders and many pairs will breed year round. The prominent breeding season is the spring. Females tend to be aggressive toward males and infertility is a big problem especially in older eclectus. This may be associated with female domination of males. There are reports of eclectus breeding successfully until age 28+.

Nest Box - Eclectus breed well in a vertical nest box approximately 18" x 18" x 24". Females may stay in the box most of the time. Pine shavings make excellent nest material.

The breeding cage should be as large as practical but at least 3' x 3' x 6'.

Eclectus are easy to hand rear and will do well on Exact Macaw hand rearing formula. The sexes can be distinguished at a very early age and the down tends to be black in female chicks and grey in males. At about 2 ½ to 3 weeks the head will take on a green or red cast as feathers emerge and tail feathers will begin to emerge verifying sex. Eclectus chicks must be handled very gently to avoid fearful or aggressive behavior.

Common diseases and disorders

- Feather picking
- Psittacosis -Chlamydia (Chlamydia) infection
- Vitamin A deficiency
- Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease
- Polyoma virus infection
- Proventricular dilation disease

- Bacterial infections
- Candida (yeast) infections
- Ingestion of toxins such as heavy metals
- Infertility and female aggression
- Clostridium infection

Many common health problems of eclectus can be prevented by good diet, nutrition and routine health care. Routine veterinary examination (annually) can help you to keep your pet in excellent health and enhance your relationship with your bird.

Conservation Status - Stable, locally common Eclectus are listed on Appendix II of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. They are frequently bred in the United States and are readily available however due to hybridization of subspecies, pure grand eclectus are hard to find.