

Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoo

Cacatua sulphurea sulphurea Indonesia

Also known as Dwarf sulphur-crested cockatoo or Timor cockatoo. Citron crested cockatoo is also a subspecies (*C. s. citrinocristata*).

Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoos are small white cockatoos with a yellow recurved crest. They can be distinguished from medium sulphur crested cockatoos by size and the presence of a large yellow ear patch in the Lesser. The underside of the flight feathers are yellow.

Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoos are found on Sulawesi Island in Indonesia. They inhabit forest edge, woodland and cultivated areas, and are sparsely distributed throughout their range. 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 13 to 14 inches. Weight is 250-400 grams. Males are generally larger than females and have larger heads and beaks.

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

Lesser sulphur-crested breed well in the United States. Breeding age can be as young as 2 years but is often up to 4-6 years, especially in hand-fed birds. Breeding life span is not precisely known but is possibly up to 25+ years.

Personality - Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoos are active, high-energy birds. They are gentle and playful, but tend to be shy. Lesser sulphur-crested don't often speak well. They are not so demanding and possessive as the larger white cockatoos.

Activities – Lesser sulphur-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 a good choice for their staple diet. The diet should be supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables daily to add variety and

psychological enrichment. Feed approximately 1/4 cup of Kaytee Exact and 1/4 cup of fresh fruits and vegetables daily. Monitor food intake in order to prevent obesity. Overfeeding leads to obesity, pickiness, wastage and throwing food. Low fat seeds, such as millet, especially spray millet is a good treat food. High fat seeds should not be fed.

Special requirements - Adult and juvenile lesser sulphur-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 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. Lesser sulphur-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 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. Foot prints may have some application in identification.

Sexing Lesser sulphur-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. Sex of breeders should be confirmed by surgical sexing or DNA sexing.

Housing - Lesser sulphur-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 Lesser sulphur-crested are not such strong chewers as 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 - Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoos breed well fairly well in captivity but are not bred as frequently as Moluccans and Umbrellas. In North America Lesser sulphur-crested 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. 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. Lesser sulphur-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 rare not in captive populations)
- Chlamydophilia (Chlamydia) infections (psittacosis or parrot fever)
- Proventricular dilation disease
- Feather-picking
- Poor eating habits
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Sarcocystis
- Mate aggression
- Toxicity, ingestion of metals

Conservation Status - Vulnerable - Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoos are listed on Appendix I on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. International trade requires both import and export permits. Their wild population is declining due to habitat destruction and trade. Lesser sulphur-crested cockatoos are relatively uncommon in the United States.

