

THE KING PARROTS

AN INTRODUCTION

#1 MOLUCCAN KING PARROT



Moluccan King Parrot
at Brevard Zoo, Florida, USA.
Photo: "Maui"

The Moluccan King Parrot, *Alisterus amboinensis*, is endemic to Peleng Island, Maluku and West Papua in Indonesia. Alternative names are: Ambon King Parrot or Amboina King Parrot. However, these are misleading, as it is found on numerous islands other than Ambon. The sexes are similar in appearance, both having a red head and underparts, green wings (blue in one subspecies), and a blue back and tail.

Described by Linnaeus in 1766, the Moluccan King Parrot is one of the three species collectively known as King Parrots that occur in

Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Indonesia. There are six subspecies:

- *Alisterus amboinensis amboinensis* (Linnaeus, 1766) is the nominate subspecies is found on Ambon and Seram.
- *Alisterus amboinensis buruensis* (Salvadori, 1876) is found on Buru in central Maluku.
- *Alisterus amboinensis dorsalis* (Quoy & Gaimard, 1830) is found in West Papua. This subspecies has slightly darker red plumage .
- *Alisterus amboinensis hypophonius* (S. Müller, 1843) has all blue wings and is endemic to Halmahera in northern Maluku.
- *Alisterus amboinensis sulaensis* (Reichenow, 1881) is found on the Sula Islands.
- *Alisterus amboinensis versicolor* (Neumann, 1939) is endemic to the island of Peleng of the Banggai Island group.

An adult Moluccan King Parrot is 35-40cm (14 inches) in length and has a red head and chest, the outer wings are dull green (except in the subspecies *hypophonius*, where they are blue). The mantle, lesser wing coverts and tail-coverts dark purple-blue. The tail dark blackish-blue, iris orange, and the legs dark grey. The lower mandible is blackish, and the upper mandible orange-red with a blackish tip, except in the subspecies

buruensis, where the entire bill is blackish. Juveniles have a pale-tipped dark-brown bill; greenish mantle, dark brown iris and red tips to the lateral tail feathers. Maturity is reached at twelve months.

Moluccan Kings are usually observed alone or in pairs, and occasionally in small groups. They are not very noisy and are inconspicuous, except in flight. The diet consists of fruit, berries, seeds and buds.



The breeding season begins in February and March, the preferred nesting site being a tree-hollow. There are no reliable breeding observations from the wild, but in captivity a clutch consists of two white eggs which are incubated for nineteen days. Chicks to fledge at nine

weeks.

The Moluccan King Parrot frequents dense cover in the lower and mid-levels of rainforests, but sometimes enters nearby plantations and gardens. They can occur at an altitude of up to 2100m (6900 feet), but more commonly below 1200m (4000 feet) in New Guinea or 1600m (5250 feet) Maluku.

As a result of habitat loss this King Parrot is generally uncommon, but remains locally common on the Sula Islands, Halmahera and Buru. However, the Moluccan King Parrot is not believed to be in immediate danger, and consequently is listed as “Least Concern” on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia