

AGAPORNIS...THE LOVEBIRD FAMILY

Continued from the January edition

#8 RED-FACED LOVEBIRD



The Red-faced Lovebird, *Agapornis pullarius*, is also known as the Red-headed Lovebird and like all, but one, of the other lovebirds native to Africa.

The Red-headed Lovebird is 15cm (6”) in length. The male is bright green, more yellowish in front and underneath. The face and crown are orange-red, with a ring of tiny bluish-white feathers around the eye. The rump is bright blue; the flights are green with darker inner webs. The shoulder, bend of wing and under-wing coverts are black. The wing-edges are bluish; the tail green with a sub-terminal black band, including the two central feathers, above the bar is red. However, this colour is concealed when the tail is closed. The feet are grey; the beak red and the iris brown.

The female’s head is more orange than red, and is less well defined than on the male, as are all other red areas. The edge-of-wing is yellowish and the under-wing coverts are green. Immature birds are a paler version of the hen, but the colour of the under-wing coverts enables the young to be sexed.

Its range includes Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, and Uganda. It also occurs as an introduced species in Liberia. The Red-faced habitat is more inland than coastal, and favours lightly wooded and grassland areas. It avoids dense forest.

The Red-faceds’ nesting habits are unlike those of the rest of the genus, as it nests in arboreal termitaria, or sometimes in a terrestrial mound. The female burrows up to 30cm (12”) into a termite nest and forms the nesting chamber at the end. It is usual for the Red-faced Lovebird to form colonies when nesting.



THE WIDESPREAD RANGE OF THE RED-FACED LOVEBIRD

Map: “Bobarino”

This species has proven difficult to breed in captivity because of its burrowing habit, and the necessity to keep the nesting chamber heated to about 27°C. However, they can be induced to accept a solid block of cork, or a receptacle packed solid with wet peat that has been allowed to dry to a hard state, in which to nest. No material is used to line the nest, the eggs are laid directly on the floor of the nesting cavity.

A peculiar habit of the Red-faced is their preference for sleeping suspended from the aviary roof, rather than in a nest box like the other Lovebird species.

They are fussy eaters and will normally only partake of small millet seed, millet sprays being a particular favourite, they seem little interested in green-food, although most will accept sweet apple. Although small figs are part of their staple diet in the wild, they show no interest in dried figs and little in fresh ones.

Many who have kept the species report it is very nervous, and prone to sudden fright induced collapse.

Reference:

1. Wikipedia.
2. Lovebirds and Related Parrots
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Inkata Press, Melbourne 1979.
3. Lovebirds and their Colour Mutations
Jim Hayward
Blandford Press Ltd. Poole, Dorset 1979