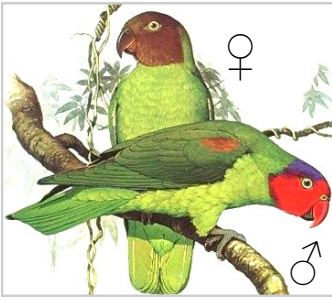


THE RED-CHEEKED PARROT

Geoffroyus geoffroyi



The Red-cheeked Parrot is found in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the tip of northern Australia. There are sixteen subspecies currently recognized. It is a stocky short-tailed predominantly green parrot. It is sexual dimorphic; with the adult male having red cheeks and a mauve nape and crown, while the female is duller and has a brown head.

It is one of the three species in the genus *Geoffroyus*, and was first described by the German naturalist Johann Matthäus Bechstein, in 1811.



Johann M. Bechstein
1757-1822

Both the male and female Red-cheeked have bright green body plumage, a stocky body and a short tail. The adult male has pink-tinged red cheeks and face with a bluish-mauve back and top of head, chestnut wing coverts, blue under-wing, and a coral-pink upper mandible. The female has a brown head and olive-brown cheeks and throat and an all brown-grey beak. Juveniles have an olive tinge to their greenish head. All Red-cheeked Parrots have yellow eyes. Typical body dimensions are: height 250mm (9.8 inches), length 203mm (8.0 inches), and a wing span of 135-155mm (5.3-6.1 inches).

Their swift and direct flight pattern is distinct and similar to that of a starling (*Sturnidae* spp.). Their call is "metallic".

The Red-cheeked Parrot range is Cape York Peninsula, Indonesia, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea and several other islands in the region, where it inhabits subtropical or tropical dry forests, subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests, and subtropical or tropical mangrove forests. They are frequently found along streams.

They usually live in pairs, and small family groups in the non breeding season, and in pairs during the breeding season. There is little known of their courtship behaviour in the wild. They are a shy species, not easily observed except while feeding. When feeding they gather in large groups, and are extremely noisy and conspicuous. Their foot structure precludes walking for other than very short distances as it is primarily adapted for perching.



Photo: Bob Lewis

During the breeding season the female excavates a nest in a rotting tree limb. The usual clutch contains three eggs.

Their beak is designed for eating seeds and fruits, (mainly figs). Blossoms, and nectar are also consumed. The fruit and seeds of the Ghost Gum, *Corymbia papuana*, Weeping She-Oak, *Casuarina papuana*, and Scaly Ash, *Ganophyllum falcatum*, are among those recorded as diet items.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia 

A FURTHER NOTE ON THE RED-CHEEKED PARROT

When resident in Papua new Guinea I was, on several occasions, brought Red-cheeks by the local people, oddly enough each one was male.

Red-cheeked Parrots are very highly strung, and as each bird was in a state of nervous exhaustion by the time I received it, all but one only lived a few days. The surviving bird readily consumed the mixture of fruits, plain cake and dog chow, blended into a thick slurry, that I used for my Singing Starlings, *Aplonis cantoroides*, and Helmeted Friar Birds, *Philemon buceroides*.

This bird survived for about nine months, but on my return from leave in Australia my House Boy explained that it had escaped one day when he was feeding it.

He was most upset about the escape and presented me with a half-feathered baby Helmeted Friar Bird as compensation. "Friar Birdy", as my children named him, had a most engaging personality (even though he was as ugly as sin) and was greatly missed when I finally came home for good.

R.V.C.