

# THE KING PARROTS

## AN INTRODUCTION

### #3 AUSTRALIAN KING PARROT



Adult Male  
Photo: Duncan McCaskill

The Australian King Parrot, *Alisterus scapularis*, is endemic to Australia, where it is found in the humid, heavily forested upland regions of the eastern portion of the continent. They are commonly encountered in eucalyptus wooded areas in, and directly adjacent to, subtropical and temperate rainforest. They feed on fruits, seeds or small insects.

This member of the *Alisterus* family was first described by the German naturalist Martin

Lichtenstein in 1818.

Two subspecies, which are differentiated by size, are recognised:

- *Alisterus scapularis scapularis* (Lichtenstein, 1816)
- *Alisterus scapularis minor* Mathews, 1911.

*s. minor* is found at the northern limit of the species range and is similar in appearance to the nominate subspecies but smaller, being about 5cm (2 inches) less in length.

When adult both sexes are approximately 43cm (17 inches) in length, including the long broad tail. The adult male has a red head, breast, and lower undersides; a blue band on the back of the neck separates the red of the head and green of the back; the wings are green and have a pale green shoulder band; the tail is green, and the rump blue. The male has a reddish-orange upper mandible with a black tip;



Adult Pair  
Photo: Peter Firminger



Juvenile  
Photo: "Max from Australia"

a black lower mandible with an orange base, and yellow irises. The plumage of the female differs markedly to that of the male. She has a green head and breast; a grey beak, with the pale shoulder band being insignificant or absent. Juveniles of both sexes have brown irises and a yellowish beak, but otherwise resemble the female.

The Australian King Parrot ranges from North and Central Queensland to Southern Victoria. They are frequently seen in mixed groups with various rosella (*Platycercus*) species. They are also found in the Australian Capital Territory during winter, the outer western suburbs and north shore of Sydney, and the Carnarvon



Melanin Deficient Male  
Mudgee N.S.W. 2008  
Photo: "Old wombat"

Gorge in Central Queensland.

Some rare individuals have areas of plumage without melanin, this results in the feathers in such areas being orange to yellow. These birds look startlingly different to the more common scarlet and green variety.



**RANGE**

MAP: "Kiwifruitboi"

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia 

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BIRD KEEPING IN AUSTRALIA