

# AGAPORNIS...THE LOVEBIRD FAMILY

Continued from the October edition

## #5 BLACK-CHEEKED LOVEBIRD



**Black-cheeked Lovebird**

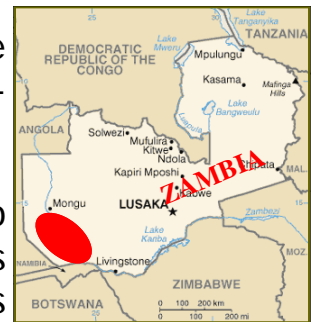
Photo: "joe q" Creative commons

The Black-cheeked Lovebird (*Agapornis nigrigenis*) inhabits a relatively small range in southwest Zambia, where it is vulnerable to habitat loss.

This Lovebird is 14cm (5.5") in length, has predominately green plumage, with a reddish-brown forehead and fore-crown, brownish-black cheeks and throat, an orange-red bib which fades to yellowish-green on the chest, white eye-rings and grey feet. The adults have bright red beaks, while juveniles are similar to the adults but with a more orange-



Distribution of the Black-cheeked Lovebird



Maps courtesy:  
Central Intelligence Agency

brown beak.

The call is loud, with shrieks and chatters similar to those of other Lovebirds. These birds are not as gregarious as other *Agapornis* species, but mated pairs usually perch together. Their habitat is deciduous woodland, where permanent supplies of surface water exist, as the dry nature of their diet means they need daily access to water. In the dry season, they congregate in flocks of up to eight hundred or more.

The Black-cheeked Lovebird is Africa's most endangered parrot. They are restricted to approximately 6,000km<sup>2</sup> in southern-western Zambia, where the wild population has been calculated as being less than 10,000. It has been estimated there is a 20% chance the species will be extinct in the wild within the next twenty years because of the small declining population and continuous habitat loss. This loss is particularly due to the gradual drying out of water sources within its range.

The Black-cheeked Lovebird feeds mainly at ground-level on the seeds of annual grasses, millet, corn and sorghum and other vegetable matter. Insect larvae are also taken.

Black-cheeked Lovebirds are few in number in Australia, but a small, dedicated group of breeders is striving to increase the number. Hopefully they will ultimately succeed in firmly establishing the species, and stock will become more readily available.

Breeding Black-cheeks is more challenging than breeding the other Lovebird species in Australia. This is not only due to the limited gene pool available, but also because they seem to be more sensitive to their surroundings when breeding. It has been a common experience that once a pair is established and proven breeders, success rates are higher if the pair remains in familiar surroundings during future breeding attempts. The clutch size ranges between four and six white eggs. Given the right materials, female Black-cheek Lovebirds create intricate domed nests. Preferred materials include palm fronds (see July edition) and willow bark.

The general care and feeding is the same as the other white eye-ring lovebird species.

Reference:

“Wikipedia”  
Lovebirds and Related Parrots  
By George A. Smith  
Inkata Press  
Melbourne 1979

## **NOMINATIONS FOR THE 2009 COMMITTEE**



At the Annual General Meeting on February 10th, 2009, all positions on the committee will be declared vacant and an election (if necessary) will be held to fill the vacancies. If you feel you can contribute to the administration of the Society, please nominate for next year's committee.

Nomination Forms are available from the Secretary and **MUST** be returned by December 16th, 2008.

**Q:** What is a safe residual spray to rid an aviary of mite and lice?

**A:** Coopex is both safe and effective. Just spray the shelter walls and ceiling, and the perches 3 monthly.