

# PLUM-HEADED PARAKEET

## *Psittacula cyanocephala*

**Description:** Green; head red becoming violet-blue on back of crown, nape and cheeks; black stripes to cheeks and narrow band to nape with adjoining bluish-green band; rump bluish-green; dark red patch to wing-coverts; under wing-coverts greenish-blue; middle tail-feathers blue with white tips; outer feathers yellowish-green with yellow tips; upper mandible orange-yellow, lower mandible brownish-black; iris whitish-yellow; feet grey.

Hen with bluish-grey head and yellowish edging; dark red patch on wing-coverts absent; upper mandible pale yellowish, lower mandible grey.

Immatures with greenish head and often with grey tinge to chin; forehead orange-grey; upper and lower mandible yellowish; both sexes attain hen adult



plumage at 15 months; young cock attains full adult cock plumage at 30 months.

**Length:** 33 cm, wing length 126 - 146 mm, tail length 152 - 225 mm.

**Distribution:** Sri Lanka, Rameswaram Island, India, East of Rawalpindi in

Pakistan and Nepal to Bhutan and West Bengal.

**Habitat:** Open wooded country to 1,500 m; dry and humid savannah with trees; prefers forest bordering cultivated areas; less often in parks and towns.

**Status:** Only common in localities; already disappeared from many areas.

**Behaviour:** Nomadic in pairs or small flocks up to 15 birds; depends on availability of food; regular seasonal migrations recorded in some regions; flocks of several hundred birds gather in fields with ripe grain; prefers uppermost branches of canopy; very approachable; gathers in great numbers at dusk on roosting sites in bamboo or small woods; often noisy until after dark; flight swift and straight; flies with ease through trees;

**Call:** Raucous, chattering cries during flight.

**Natural diet:** Seeds, fruits (figs), nuts, flowers, particularly of *Salmalia*, *Butea* and *Bassia*, pollen and leaf buds; damages crop in fruit plantations and rice fields in some areas.

**Nesting:** Breeding season in India from December to April; from February to May and August to September on Sri Lanka; nests in hollow tree trunks or branches; occasionally also in crevices in buildings; colony breeding recorded; clutch 4 to 6 eggs; egg measures 25.0 x 20.4 mm.

**Aviculture:** Quiet parakeet; initially shy; later confiding; active in aviary; often apathetic in small cage; not particularly hard chewer; inoffensive in communal aviary; however cannot assert itself with larger birds; susceptible to cold, wet conditions.

**Accommodation:** Outside flight 3 x 1 x 2 m with adjoining inside area; minimum temperature 5°C; during acclimatisation 20°C; provide roosting box (22 x 22 x 60 cm).

**Diet:** Seed mix of safflower, wild bird food, buckwheat, some sunflower, various millets, canary seed, oats and hemp; millet spray (also sprouted); fruit (apple, kiwi, orange), greenfood and vegetables (carrot, sweet peppers, cucumber); eggfood and biscuit for rearing; difficult to accustom newly imported birds to varying diet.

**Clutch:** 4 - 6 eggs.

**Incubation:** 23 days.

**Breeding:** Frequently achieved; breeding begins mostly in April; also in winter months in inside flight; clutch 4 to 6 eggs; incubation 23 days; fledging period 6 to 7 weeks; young independent 14 days after leaving nest; hen occasionally aggressive to cock.

**Mutations:** Several mutations have been established; Lutino, Greygreen, Cinnamon, Opaline, Dilute.

**Reference:** <http://home.wanadoo.nl/psittaculaworld/PsittaculaWorld.htm>