

THE STATUS OF AUSTRALIAN PARROTS, LORIKEETS AND COCKATOOS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AVIARIES 1991 – 1994 – 2003

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Introduction

The data used in following article was kindly supplied by Frank Dal Piva of DEH. The amount of time and effort Frank has put into the compilation of this data should not be under-estimated and we are deeply indebted to him.

From the data provided, we are able to provide a continuing analysis of the popularity and breeding results for Australian parrots, lorikeets and cockatoos over a 12 year period from 1991 to 1994 to 2003. Please note that the 1991 data are for the twelve month period ending 30th of April 1991 and the 1994 data are for the twelve month period ending 30th of April 1994. Both the 1991 and 1994 data were collected from all permit holders. South Australian Aviculturists will recall that in 1999 alterations to the Keep and Sell Permit System resulted in a number of species becoming exempt from the permit system, and therefore the data for the 2002/2003 period necessarily reflects only those species still requiring a permit. The unfortunate consequence of this change is that the status of the species exempt from the permit system cannot be determined as aviculturists are not required to forward information on exempt species to the department. Another important change to recognise is the inclusion of data from the Adelaide Zoo for the first time. As seen below, this has a dramatic impact on the apparent status of some of the more rarely kept species, such as the Swift Parrot.



Members are referred to the article **The Status of Australian Parrots, Lorikeets and Cockatoos in South Australian Aviaries 1985 - 1991 – 1994**, published in the June 1995 issue of *Bird Keeping in Australia* for more detailed discussion of the period 1985 – 1994 (copies available from the Editor upon request).

The Australian parrots, lorikeets and cockatoos are a diverse group of birds and, for the purpose of this article only; we have divided them into seven sub-groups purely for ease of discussion.

Cockatoos

The following table shows that, as a group, cockatoos remain birds that are kept by small numbers of aviculturists and relatively little change in the numbers of stock held or permit holders has occurred since 1991.

Table 1: Australian Cockatoos 1991 – 1994 – 2003

Species Common Name	2003			1994			1991	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Glossy Black-cockatoo	2	6	1	2	4	0	0	0
Red-tailed Black-cockatoo	71	204	22	36	117	15	26	89
White-tailed Black-cockatoo	20	45	2	16	40	0	15	47
Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo	28	94	2	27	67	1	22	63
Gang-gang Cockatoo	47	131	11	47	122	11	43	128
Major Mitchell's Cockatoo	459	1177	64	541	1518	129	508	1407

The two notable exceptions to this are:

- The Red-tailed Black-cockatoo has shown an increase in popularity with almost twice as many aviculturists keeping this species in 2003 compared to 1994.
- Stock held of the Major Mitchell's Cockatoo has reduced by almost 25% since 1991, and although it remains the only cockatoo species bred in reasonable numbers, the number bred has decreased by 50%.



Rosellas

In 1994 we reported that the Rosella family had maintained or increased their popularity through the period 1985 to 1994. In contrast, the figures obtained for 2003 showed an alarming reduction in both the number of permit holders and the number of birds held in all Rosella species.

Table 2: Rosellas 1991 – 1994 – 2003

Species Common Name	2003			1994			1991	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Adelaide Rosella	222	502	43	570	1624	254	625	1820
Blue-cheeked Rosella	36	102	13	73	226	39	N/A	N/A
Crimson Rosella	248	474	53	796	1704	182	915	2070
Eastern Rosella	341	904	284	958	2626	525	1060	2992
Green Rosella	15	34	0	23	88	15	25	80
Northern Rosella	75	197	15	82	360	75	52	329
Pale-headed Rosella	120	304	39	319	830	180	303	805
Western Rosella	188	525	101	477	1558	338	470	1367
Yellow Rosella	47	80	8	116	300	38	133	310

In the nine years since 1994 no fewer than five of the nine Rosella species are now held by 60 percent fewer people and seven of the nine species have shown a stock reduction to about one-third of the numbers held in 1994.

Of particular concern are the Green and Yellow Rosellas. The Green Rosella has never been a popular bird in S.A. but today its numbers are lower than ever with no recorded breeding in 2002/2003. Even more alarming is the plight of the Yellow Rosella – here we have 47 people holding 80 birds – this suggests there are a lot of unpaired/single birds out in South Australian

aviaries. Perhaps an ASSA member with an interest in either species could consider writing article to increase awareness of both the Green and the Yellow Rosella, so as to encourage other South Australian aviculturists to start keeping them.

***Psephotus* and Blue Bonnets**

A bright light amongst the general doom and gloom is the status of the Golden-shouldered Parrot, as here we find a species which has significantly increased in popularity in the past few years. Over 60 percent more aviculturists now keep twice as many birds as they did in 1994, in spite of the requirement for a Specialist Permit to keep this species.

Table 3: *Psephotus* and Blue-bonnets 1991 – 1994 – 2003

Species Common Name	2003			1994			1991	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Golden-shouldered Parrot	37	216	18	23	108	25	17	92
Hooded Parrot	211	640	90	485	2249	567	373	1727
Mulga Parrot	149	312	63	569	2012	552	536	2344
Naretha Blue Bonnet	8	21	0	7	20	4	5	6
Red-vented Blue Bonnet	72	154	22	129	410	112	128	324
Yellow-vented Blue Bonnet	41	73	11	214	532	109	242	653



Regrettably, the rest of this group of parrots has not fared so well. The number of birds held of Hooded and Mulga Parrots has fallen by close to 80%!

Stock held of the Yellow-vented Blue-bonnet, as well as the number of permit holders have also declined by 80% or more. The Red-vented Blue-bonnet statistics have reduced to those of 1985, at which time it was considered a target species; unfortunately the last few years appear to have wiped out the progress made in this species from 1985 to 1994. The Naretha Blue-bonnet (picture at left) continues to be kept in low numbers by few people.

Lorikeets

The following table shows that, while the number of people keeping lorikeets has declined, as has the number of birds kept, the degree of the decline is less than the above groups of parrots.

Table 4: Lorikeets 1991 – 1994 – 2003

Species Common Name	2003			1994			1991	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Little Lorikeet	14	28	4	17	39	14	33	87
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	55	145	9	93	322	215	80	356
Red-collared Lorikeet	83	233	65	117	342	60	119	363
Scaly-breasted Lorikeet	49	159	48	87	246	54	104	266
Varied Lorikeet	25	87	9	36	83	27	34	74

The number of lorikeets held has reduced by approximately one third, except for the Purple-crowned (reduction of 55%) and the Varied (increase of 5%).

In 1995 we raised concern at the dramatic decline in the number of Little Lorikeets held from

1991 to 1994 and unfortunately this species has continued to decline in popularity, with a further 28% reduction in stock held since 1994.



Neophemas

Only two species of those listed in 1994 are left on permit: the Blue-winged and the Rock Parrot; Orange-bellied Parrots (picture at left) have been added since 1994. Neither of the former species is faring well and the plight of the remaining four species of *Neophema* now exempt from permit requirements can only be guessed at - especially the Elegant Parrot, which has never enjoyed great popularity.

Table 5: *Neophemas* 1991 – 1994 – 2003

Species Common Name	2003			1994			1991	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Blue-winged Parrot	61	262	115	247	844	217	249	1316
Rock Parrot	27	116	22	43	315	71	28	240
Orange-bellied Parrot	2	13	4					

In 1995 we raised concern at a 40% reduction in stock for 4 of the 5 species of *Neophema* listed (the exception being the Rock Parrot). However since 1994 the number of Blue-winged Parrots (picture to right) held has reduced by 69% and Rock Parrots by 63%.



Polytelis and Ringneck Parrots

With the exception of the Cloncurry Parrot, all species in these two groups are being kept in reduced numbers by fewer aviculturists.

There are only two members of the *Polytelis* genus left on permit, since the Princess Parrot became exempt. The stock of both species has decreased by over 50% since 1994, the Regent Parrot being the worse affected with half the number of aviculturists keeping a quarter of the number of birds.

The popularity of the Mallee Ringneck and Port Lincoln Parrots reduced between 1994 and 2003. In contrast the Cloncurry Parrot is now kept by more aviculturists than in

1994, albeit in lower numbers.

Table 6: *Polytelis* and Ringneck Parrots 1991 – 1994 – 2003

Species Common Name	2003			1994			1991	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Regent Parrot	439	1087	172	951	4183	1021	765	4114
Superb Parrot	436	1146	162	723	2573	506	674	2328
Cloncurry Parrot	112	196	37	92	294	81	88	286
Mallee Ringneck	157	309	26	390	919	150	458	1075
Port Lincoln Parrot	194	417	53	369	868	122	367	815

Anomalous Group

Although this group follows the general downward trend in both numbers of permit holders and stock held, the degree of this decline is not as pronounced as shown in some of the above groups. While never birds kept in large numbers, they maintain their popularity within the select group of aviculturists interested in this sort of bird.

Table 7: Anomalous Parrots 1991 – 1994 – 2003

Species Common Name	2003			1994			1991	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Electus Parrot	31	111	16	52	208	62	34	143
King Parrot	460	1240	178	701	2134	294	712	2000
Red-capped Parrot	56	128	14	146	316	38	146	286
Red-winged Parrot	294	730	101	401	1317	227	395	1162
Swift Parrot	4	20	0	1	1	0	4	5

It is also pleasing to note that the King and Red-wing Parrots are both still being bred in reasonable numbers.



The Best and Worst

Ignoring species such as the Swift Parrot (picture to left) or Orange-bellied Parrot, for whom figures will be unduly influenced by the recent inclusion of stock figures from the Zoo, as well as species kept in extremely low numbers where the addition or loss of only a few birds would cause a dramatic percentage gain or loss (such as the Naretha Blue-bonnet and most of the cockatoo species), the best and worst performers over the last decade are presented in the tables below.

**Table 8: The Best Performers 1994 – 2003.
Species showing a positive growth in numbers and/or popularity**

Species Common Name	2003			1994			Increase (%)	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Golden-shouldered Parrot	37	216	18	23	108	25	61	100
Red-tailed Black-cockatoo	71	204	22	36	117	15	97	4
Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoo	28	94	2	27	67	1	25	3

Given the exceptions listed above, these are the ONLY species to show a positive growth since 1994!

Table 9: The Worst Performers 1994 – 2003.
Species showing the most marked reduction in numbers and/or popularity

Species Common Name	2003			1994			Decrease (%)	
	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk	Bred	Pmt	Stk
Yellow-vented Blue Bonnet	41	73	11	214	532	109	81	86
Mulga Parrot	149	312	63	569	2012	552	74	84
Hooded Parrot	211	640	90	485	2249	567	56	72
Blue-winged Parrot	61	262	115	247	844	217	75	69
Crimson Rosella	248	474	53	796	1704	182	69	72
Green Rosella	15	34	0	23	88	15	59	73

This table includes all species where the number of birds held and/or the number of aviculturists keeping the species fell by **70% or more**. We would have liked to have made the mark at a 50% or greater decline, but this would have included **two-thirds of the species listed in this article**... (If the cockatoo species were excluded, the number of parrots and lorikeets declining by greater than 50% would be closer to **three-quarters** of those listed).

While the situation for the majority of parrot and lorikeet species is grim, the above table gives us some idea of the species declining most rapidly in this state and that, therefore, need most urgent attention.

Note:

Please note that the above data are only as accurate as the information on the returns that permit holders submit to the NPWS. These figures are intended as a guide to the current status of the above species in South Australian aviaries and any other use of the above data should be treated with caution. Also, in the tables within this article, “**Pmt**” refers to the number of Permit holders and “**Stk**” to Stock held.