

INTRODUCTION TO THE *Psephotus* PARROTS

This issue of *Bird Keeping in Australia* features the group of parrots included in the genus *Psephotus*. Some of the species, particularly the Red-rumped Parrot, are extremely common both within aviculture and in the wild. Unfortunately, other members are faring less well, both in aviculture and in the wild.

Psephotus derives from a Greek word meaning “inlaid with pebbles”, a reference to the multitude of colours exhibited by members of this genus. Included in this genus are the “anthill” parrots (so called for their habit of burrowing into termite mounds to create their nests) including the Golden-shouldered Parrot, the Hooded Parrot and the Paradise Parrot. The first two species are endangered in the wild, while the Paradise Parrot is considered extinct. The second group is comprised of the Red-rumped Parrot and the Mulga Parrot, both considered common in the wild. In aviculture the Red-rumped Parrot is exceptionally prolific, especially since the development of many new colour mutations. As a note of caution: good normal coloured birds are becoming extremely uncommon and this species is in danger of progressing down the same road as the Cockatiel and Budgerigar.

While the Hooded Parrot is kept in good numbers in aviculture, many shy away from the Golden-shouldered Parrot, mainly because of its specialised nesting requirements (explained below) and the need for a Specialist Permit to keep this species. It is becoming more popular and, as Nick Bishop’s article has stressed, good numbers of high quality birds in captivity can represent a buffer against extinction should a disaster befall the wild population.

The *Psephotus* group of parrots are relatively easily to keep, thriving on a basic parrot diet of seed or pellets, greens and grit. Apart from being sexually dimorphic, all species share one other feature – they are aggressive. The rule of one pair per aviary must be followed and neighbouring birds should be shielded from one another by either solid walls, double wiring or interspersing of non-aggressive species.

All four *Psephotus* articles in this issue are reprinted from:
<http://www.birdworld.com.au/records/parrots>