General Budgerigar FAQs

Budgerigars Profile

Budgerigar (Melopsittacus Undulatus)

Family: Parrot
Origin: Inland regions of Australia

Size:
Native – 180mm including 95mm tail
Show – 220mm including tail up to 240mm

Description: The name budgerigar is derived from the Aboriginal word betcherrygah (meaning good food). It was later named Melopsittacus Undulatus.

The adult male (cock) and female (hen) are similar birds to look at while the immature birds are duller than the adults.

In the native birds the back of the crown, the sides of the neck and the upper back are barred with black and yellow. The lower back, rump, upper tail coverts and underparts are bright green, and the central tail feathers are green-blue while the under feathers are green with a broad yellow band.

In birds that are used for “showing” they are a much larger bird and have black feather markings and six throat spots on the neck.

With a “green series” bird the mask and cap is yellow and in a “blue series” bird the mask and cap is white. The eyes should have a black pupil with a white iris ring, the tail feathers should be black and the feet a greyish black.

Native budgerigars are migratory birds and move in large flocks to nesting places where food and water is plentiful. It was introduced into England and Europe in 1840 by John Gould.

Several mutations have evolved from the native budgerigars and include “sky blue”, “lutino”, “albino”, “greywing”, “cinnamonwing”, “Pieds”, “violets”, “opalines”, “clearwings”, “yellowface”, “lacewing”, “spangle”, “mottled”, “saddleback”, “crested” and others.

Care: Whether keeping a single budgerigar, or a pair, an ample sized cage needs to be provided for freedom of movement and the cage should also contain at least two perches – branches of edible trees should be used so as to guarantee there is no toxins in the wood.

And a wider rather than a taller cage is better because the birds fly from side to side and not up and down.

If possible, the bird should be taken out of its cage each day and allowed to fly around the house for exercise. If it is able to fly around the home make sure that all the windows are closed, curtains drawn (so it doesn’t crash into glass), no stoves are turned on or hot saucepans on the stove or benchtop (but ideally for safety reasons it’s best not to let the bird into kitchen), and if it can fly into the bathroom the bath should be empty and the toilet seats should be down.

If you are going to be breeding these birds a good-sized aviary with a “flight” attached and sited in a sheltered part of the garden would be best. You also need to be considerate of your neighbours and the council has laws relating to how big the aviary can be built.

If you do not intend to show your birds, then colony breeding may be used in which case you will need to have several nest boxes in the aviary ensuring that two more boxes than there are pairs is supplied.

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If you intend to show the birds, then it is best to join the local club where you will gain much invaluable advice, not to mention new friends.

Each pair of birds should have its own breeding box equipped with a nest box. Strict records need to be kept in a breeding book or on breeding cards. This allows you to keep track of the parents, hatching times and the chicks.

Breeders can then buy identification rings from their club that can then be placed on the chicks' legs from five to 10 days old. Breeders must have these rings on their birds to enable them to show.

Food and water dishes must be cleaned regularly and fresh water must be given daily. Fresh seed and greens must be supplied at all times and husks must be blown off the seed dishes each day. A common mistake made is that people will think the bird has plenty of seed in the food bowl but it's filled with a lot of husks which the bird cannot eat.

Its beak and vent (anus) should be inspected regularly to check that they are clean.

Eats: A good quality budgerigar seed mix consisting of canary, red millet, panicum, Japanese millet and hulled oats is best. Sunflower and safflower may be given in very small amounts, but remember both these seeds are high in fat.

As greens contain essential oils, vitamins and trace elements they should be fed daily. Some ideal foods include chick weed, wintergrass, spinach or silver beet, broccoli, cob corn, apple and carrot. The bird should also have access to a cuttlefish bone and shell grit. NEVER feed avocado as this is poisonous.

For young budgerigars it is important to feed them a wide range of fruit and vegetables, as they get fussier as they grow older.

Features: If selecting a budgerigar for a pet, it should be purchased as soon as it leaves the nest and is able to crack seed and feed itself.

Some people believe that the cock makes the better "talker". Hens can talk but are slower to learn and they can also bite.

A young bird has zebra-like markings that start just above the cere and nostrils and extend over the back of the head. After the first moult (about three months) birds get their adult feathers and barrings disappear. And it's quite simple to recognise a young bird because the white iris ring does not appear until it's six months old.

Call: Healthy budgerigars are happy birds and are constantly warbling and chattering and can imitate many different noises as well as learning to "talk".

Personality:
They make terrific pets as they have great personalities and thrive on human attention. Give plenty of bird toys because they love playing with these, and are easily trained to sit on your hand and to talk.

Golden Cob Bird Profile

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