

Eclectus Parrots in Australian Aviculture

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INTRODUCTION.

Many people would think that the beautiful Eclectus Parrot would be one bird kept in great numbers in Australian aviaries, but this is not the case. Although the large, *E. macolivray* species flies wild in this country up in the far north parts of Queensland, it is very rarely seen in aviculture. The main reason for this is the expensive price tag it carries.

Although I cannot speak for other bird keepers, I personally have seen only around six birds myself in two different avicultural set ups around the state of N.S.W.

To my knowledge, in Australian aviculture the subspecies, *E. roratus*, *E. vosmaeri*, *E.*



A happy pair of *Eclectus polychloros* Parrots in their Australian Aviary

polychloros, *E. solomonensis*, and, as mentioned earlier, *E. macgillivray*, are the only ones



A typical nest-log as commonly used in Australia but seldom used in the U.S. The female looks out from the nest while the male stands guard on top.

kept. Again to my knowledge, the *E. polychloros*, or Red-sided, is the most widely kept at around 80%, with the other subspecies coming in at around 5% each.

Although Eclectus Parrots are most beautiful birds, even the *E. polychloros*, are somewhat expensive to the average Australian bird keeper. And they are very noisy, with a high pitched screech that could pose a problem in most backyard collections, and in this country they are not as easy to breed as some people make out, although some aviculturists do have good success with them.

I would say that less than 8% of Australian aviculturists would either keep a single pair or a few pairs of Eclectus Parrots in their collection. Eclectus Parrots give that extra bit of colour to a collection of parrots, and of course the people who own them always have people admire them for their character and beauty.

HOUSING ECLECTUS

Eclectus Parrots are housed in two types or forms in Australia – conventional aviaries and suspended or noble cages. (Space being the main reason for which way they are housed). Eclectus Parrots are usually housed as single pairs, but are known to be housed in a colony with other Eclectus Parrots or with other larger species of parrots or cockatoos.

DIET

Eclectus Parrots are fed a staple diet of mixed seeds, such as sunflower, safflower, hulled oats, canary seed, and milo, but do need a great amount of fruit and vegetables in their diet.

SUPPLEMENTAL DIET

This consists of fruit such as apple, pear, orange, Kiwi fruit, banana, and vegetables such as corn, mung beans, peas, beans, carrot, spinach, and sprouted seeds, sprouted mung beans, and sprouted corn.

BREEDING

Eclectus Parrots are known to breed in large natural logs, but

many people use either the Z type, or the T type nest boxes. The Z type box has one entry at the top with the inspection door at the side, with the T type box having two entries at the top and the inspection door at the side. All three types, logs, T, or Z boxes, have had reasonable success. Most Eclectus chicks are taken away from the parents at an early age for hand rearing purposes. This allows the parents to start preparing earlier for the next clutch.

PROBLEMS

In Australia we have some problems with worms, such as round, tape, and book worms. These are easily treated with medications, and discouraged by keeping nice and clean environments for the birds. Other problems with the Eclectus Parrots, is of course the noise factor (neighbours may not approve of the high pitched screeching), and the hen bird can get very aggressive towards its mate, and owner when breeding. It is common sense to pair up a slightly older cock bird with an aggressive hen.

LICENSING

In the state of New South Wales, there are some conditions for keeping different type of birds, whether they are native or foreign. (Note: there are some birds exempt from any registration at all). For instance, with Eclectus Parrots, the *E. macgillivray* species, which is native to this country, is on a National Parks and Wildlife Services registration. The *E. polychloros* species, which is native to the Papuan Islands, New Guinea, and the Trobriand Islands, needs not to be on any registration at all. That means people can buy this species from anyone without papers. The other species, which includes the *E. roratus*, found in Buru, Amboina, and Southern Moluccas, the *E. vosmaeri*, found in northern and central Moluccas, and the *E. solomonensis*, found on the Solomon Islands, must be on the Exotic Bird Scheme of Australia.

PERSONAL NOTES

I have always had somewhat of an interest in Eclectus Parrots, and although it took me some time before I was able to purchase some, I now have two pairs of the *E. polychloros* subspecies in my collection. My birds are kept in conventional type aviaries measuring 9ft long x 5ft wide x 6.6ft high. They are kept in a bank of aviaries which also house birds such as Gang Gang, and Leadbeater's Cockatoos, and Alexandrine Parrots. This bank of aviaries has a walkway at the front, (great for easy access for cleaning purposes), has a draining system running in the middle of them, (again for cleaning and drainage purposes), has an automatic watering and sprinkler system, (I believe this to be a must for our Australian weather conditions), and a third of the floor being concrete at the rear, with the other two-thirds being river pebbles at the front. The roofing is the opposite to the floor, the rear section is two-thirds sheeting and the front section one-third open to the elements. Feeding is done with specially designed seed hoppers at the rear of each aviary, but supplementary foods, such as fruit and vegetables etc, is fed in stainless steel containers along the front of each aviary from the front walkway.

CONCLUSION

Although the Eclectus Parrot is not a widely kept parrot in Australian aviculture, I believe it is still one of the most attractive of all parrots. I also believe that in years to come as the high price falls, that it will find its way into more collections around the country. There are some kept for pet birds, but they are normally kept for their beauty and for breeding purposes in aviary collections. After reading this article, I hope I have answered some questions for someone on the Eclectus Parrot in my country, Australia. I would like to personally thank my good friend and fellow aviculturist, Anthony Catt, for his help with information in this article, and for allowing me to photograph his birds. ❖