



Goldie's Lorikeets by Peter Gallimore

Goldie's Lorikeets – *Trichoglossus goldiei* – come from the mountain ranges of New Guinea. They are about 8” in length and are mainly of a green plumage, the back, tail and wings being dark green while the neck and upperparts are lighter green with dark green streaks. The crown is red, which on the females is a slightly smaller patch. At the back of the head there is a dark blue band which again is slightly smaller and also is not quite as bright on the female. The cheeks and ear coverts are vinous-purple with dark blue and black streaks with a small sky-blue patch near the eye, which likewise is not as bright in the female. Having mentioned these differences between the gender it is still recommended that you have DNA sexing performed to be certain that you have a true pair. The call of the Goldie's Lorikeet is quite shrill, but only infrequently made. This call is unlikely to cause problems even with the most close of neighbours.

We house our Goldie's in a heated shed in a cage 4ft long by 18” high and 18” deep. We have kept them in an unheated shed with no ill effects – the reason they are in the unheated shed is that this is where the spare cage is. The nest box is a 7” cube with a half-open front. Although it has been suggested that Goldie's will breed as a trio (2 hens to one cock) we were unsuccessful with our attempts when the hens ganged up and attacked the cock. The nestbox was filled to a level of 2” with sawdust. The birds would then remove as much or as little as they liked in which to get their perfect level. I drilled holes in the bottom of the nestbox to drain out some of the wet droppings and the sawdust is changed at least twice when they are raising chicks. Other keepers of Goldie's have kept them outside in flight aviaries with a dry, draughtproof shelter for many years. The only consideration is making sure that their nectar and fruit doesn't freeze.

Feeding Lories and Lorikeets is a little more involved than with some other birds and you should be aware of this right from the start. We fed ours with a home-made nectar made of SMA - a soya based baby food formerly known as Wysoy - and granulated sugar mixed in warm water. A small amount of Bee pollen, from a healthfood shop, is dissolved in this. This is given in both a gravity tube drinker and poured over either bread or sponge cake. Chopped apple and pear and a few Sunflower seeds are also given. All our food is given fresh each morning with the nectar and soaked bread being replaced in early evening. Nectar must not be allowed to get sour and the drinkers should be cleaned each day. When breeding the quantity of Sunflower seeds is increased – especially in the first few weeks after hatching. Do not be tempted to just top up old nectar – it must be thrown away and replaced. Even though you will be supplying a liquid nectar diet, it is still necessary to provide them with clean, fresh drinking water and bathing facilities will allow them to keep their plumage clean and sleek.

In early Summer a clutch of 2 or 3 eggs are laid (if you are lucky). Both birds incubate the eggs and this takes approximately 3 weeks. On hatching the chicks have a sparse covering of very fine downy feathers, which look almost like fur. This disappears when the real feathers start to come through at approximately 2 weeks, by which time they have their eyes open. Keep an eye on the chicks as we have experienced problems with the parents sitting too tight and this causing splayed legs on the chicks. Some adults are guilty of plucking their chicks. In most cases this is only minor and the young can be left alone, but this can become quite extensive. If caught early enough if this occurs, handrearing may be successful. If you wish to close-ring your youngsters then the correct ring size would be N.

After eight weeks the young will leave the nest. At this stage they are fully feathered and appear to be larger than their parents. They start feeding themselves very soon after fledging, but I would recommend leaving them with the parents for a further four weeks. This is done at this stage as there maybe a little disturbance to the next round of eggs. Young birds will mature slowly and in our experience they take about three years to settle down and breed.

Our birds are very tame and always come up to you when you are near the cages. The pairs are always prepared to walk about on us and mess about with our hair. They are very playful birds and even when they are young they will take time out to chew at my hair and allow themselves to be stroked.

Goldie's Lorikeets are very steady show birds and generally do well.