



Green-cheeked Conures

The Green-Cheeked Conure (*Pyrrhura molinae*) is very similar to the Maroon-bellied Conure (*Pyrrhura frontalis*) and for the purposes of this care sheet both species should be treated in the same way. Green-cheeks are native to west-central and southern Mato Grosso in Brazil. They are also found in northern and eastern Bolivia to northwestern Argentina.

The Green Cheek Conure is primarily green, with a gray breast, dark head, maroon tail and blue flight feathers. However, in recent years they have become available in a variety of colour variants, which are still Green-Cheeked Conures, but have been bred in captivity to produce different colours to the wild type. These variants include Yellow-sided, Cinnamon, Pineapple, and Turquoise. If you see these advertised they are all the same bird and require the same care.

It's average weight is 60 g (3 oz.) The average length (including tail) is 25 – 28cm. In a safe, healthy environment, they can expect to live up to 20 to 25years. One Maroon-bellied in my care is at least 16 years old, he was an adult when I acquired him, and he is still as smart today as he always has been. The only extra care that I now have to do is to trim his beak every few months.

Green-Cheeked Conures are the most commonly available conure and are considered as a good house pet, although they can be quite “nippy” and do demand attention. Some are alleged to repeat a few words, but I have not experienced this. For allergy sufferers, these birds produce little or no dust from their feathers, unlike Cockatiels. Although they are the same size as Cockatiels I believe that they should have a bigger cage and should be let out in the room for daily exercise. Be watchful of them as they have a strong beak and are not afraid to use it on furniture!

Breeding the smaller Conures is comparatively easy. They do well in a flight aviary of at least 2 metres long by 1 metre wide and 2 metres tall. As long as they are protected from wind and rain with a shelter, then they can be kept outside all year round with little problems. The nest box, which should be available all year round for roosting, should be made of plywood that is at least 15mm thick and measure 30cm square and be 45 cm tall. This should be affixed where inspection can be carried out without entering the aviary. A security porch should be included to stop escapes. Several times I have exited the main aviary with a conure climbing down my back. So far, none have been lost as a consequence of having the porch. Protect the wooden framework of the aviary as they will destroy it.

Green-cheeks do well on a diet of mixed Parakeet seeds and a millet mix sold for Budgerigars. The seeds should constitute no more than 50% of the diet. The rest being made up of apple, carrot, soaked pulses and a few well washed green vegetables. Do not give any avocado or chocolate as these are harmful. I also sprinkle a little proprietary eggfood and mineral supplements over the fruit and veg. This is increased when there are chicks in the nest. Oystershell grit and either a Calcium supplement or Cuttlefish bone should always be available.

Green-cheeks have clutches that are typically of 3-5 eggs, which are incubated by both parents. They will hatch after approximately 25-29 days (depending on when the parents start brooding) and will fledge when they are about 7 weeks old, but will need a few more weeks to be totally independent and able to feed themselves. They will be fully mature at 18 months old. During these 18 months they will put on a little extra weight and their colours will intensify. There is no sure fire way of determining the gender of Conures, so the best way of ensuring that you have a true pair is to have them either surgically or DNA sexed. I prefer the latter method as it is less risky to the bird as all is necessary is the removal of a few feathers from the breast.

Green-cheeks, as with all the other *Pyrrhura* conures, have a strong voice, when they choose to use it, but this is not as harsh or far-carrying as that of the larger *Aratinga* species. This should be considered before housing them near to close neighbours. Bonded pairs of conures will make less noise than singletons.