

Bird: Gang Gang Cockatoo

Scientific Name: *Callocephalon fimbriatum*

It is interesting to note that although traditionally linked to the Black Cockatoo group recent biochemical work has shown it to be more closely related to the Galah and white cockatoo group than to black cockatoos. It has been known to hybridise with the Galah, and an example of hybridisation in the wild with an escaped Little Corella has been reported.

Origin: The Gang Gang has a relatively restricted distribution in South-eastern Australia and is mainly found in the higher altitude old growth eucalypt forests. In winter it may move down into lower altitude woodlands and even into settled areas such as Canberra. They were also formerly present on King Island and a rare visitor to northern Tasmania. They have been introduced to Kangaroo Island, South Australia.

Common Names: Red-crowned Cockatoo, Red-crowned Parrot, Red-headed Cockatoo, Red-headed Parrot, Helmeted Cockatoo

Length: 35 cm or 13.78 inches

Wing span: males 9.85 inches, females 10.18 inches

Weight: males 210-334 grams, females 240-305 grams

Body Color: The Gang Gang is dimorphic. The adult male has a distinctive scarlet red head and crest, with the rest of the body slate-grey. The adult female has a dark grey head and crest, with the feathers of the under parts edged pink and yellow. In both sexes, the feathers of the upperparts and wings are faintly edged pale-grey, giving a barred appearance, with females having additional yellow edging to their feathers that increases this barred effect. Young birds are similar to the adult female, with young males differing by having a red crown and forehead and a shorter, less twisted red crest.

Life Span: Gang Gangs and other cockatoo species can be very long-lived (probably around 50 years), but their precise life span is unknown.

Diet:

In the wild: The seeds of the forest eucalyptus and acacias make up most of the diet, supplemented by other plant material and insects.

In captivity: The diet needs to be varied, balanced and interesting. A variety of seeds such as wheat, hulled oats, canary (especially good) and millets are provided as well as a wide range of fresh vegetables and fruit. Animal protein is also needed by way of chicken or chop bones, mealworms or other grubs. *Cotoneaster* berries are particularly enjoyed. Sunflower is generally regarded as



bad for Gang Gang's, causing significant feather and plucking problems. Many pairs seem to have a calcium absorption problem and supplementary calcium in the drinking water is often needed as a minimum.

Grooming: Bathing is good for all pet birds. Use only plain water for bathing; do not use additives because these may irritate the skin and feathers. Some birds prefer spray bottles, showering with their owners, a bowl of water, or rolling in wet greens. All birds may need periodic grooming, such as wing clips to keep it from flying. This protects birds from escaping or hurting themselves, or a mischievous one from doing much harm. You may need to trim the nails periodically to dull the ends, but beaks usually never need trimming.

Proper cage size: Due to the extreme rarity of these birds and the loss of habitat in Australia, the Gang Gang should be kept in breeding pairs in large aviaries with lots of chewing materials; otherwise they start feather picking.

Personality: Gang Gang Cockatoos are particularly prone to boredom related disorders. This can be alleviated by keeping them in pairs or small groups, offering them smaller seeds, and making sure they have plenty of wood to chew on and lots of exercise. When bored, Gang Gang Cockatoos pluck their feathers or their mates' feathers. The Gang Gang Cockatoo of Australia is a lovely aviary bird. If you have the space to keep them, these beautiful Cockatoos are a source of constant delight. Still, the birds are very tame and gentle by nature. They are relatively quiet, save for a pleasant squeaky call. They are inquisitive and love to chew objects in their surroundings. They are very destructive if allowed to perch on furniture and should be provided with toys, blocks of wood or branches of non-toxic trees.

Beak Pressure: Their beaks were designed for chewing trees and are very powerful.

Sexing (how to tell): The adult male has a distinctive scarlet red head and crest, with the rest of the body slate-grey. The adult female has a dark grey head and crest, with the feathers of the underparts edged pink and yellow.

Cost:

They are reported to make good pets but are too rare and valuable to keep except for breeding in the U.S. There are very few sources of Gang Gangs in the U.S, therefore, a Gang Gang baby is typically \$15,000.