



Caique



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Caique

There are two species and five subspecies of the caique (pronounced “kigh-eeek”). In captivity, most commonly found are the Black Headed and White Bellied Caique.

Origin

Caiques are native to tropical South America. They inhabit both tropical forest and savanna where they are more often heard rather than seen because they usually keep to the treetops. They tend to prefer drier areas and seem to avoid the flooded portions of the rainforest. Regardless of species, caiques are uniquely colored with bright green, orange, yellow, black and white feathers. They can range in size from 7-9 inches in height and from 135-180 grams in weight. Caiques are usually not prone to obesity due to their high energy level. The average lifespan of a caique kept in captivity can be anywhere from 30-40 years. It is impossible to visually distinguish the sex of these birds, with DNA testing being the usual method of choice.

General Personality

Caiques are fearless, fun-loving, intelligent, affectionate, comical and energetic parrots. They are extremely agile as they love to run and hop and are often found hanging upside down, flapping their wings and swinging from whatever they can grasp. Caiques love toys of all kinds, but their favorites are foot toys they can wrestle with while lying on their backs! They are extremely energetic birds who LOVE to play. Although not known for their talking ability, most caiques do learn a few words and repeat these words with clarity. They can vocalize at a high pitch, but are not known for excessive screaming. Caiques are capable of a hard bite, so training and socialization are very important to maintain a gentle and loving pet.

Food

Although caiques are not prone to obesity, it is very important to feed a balanced, varied diet. Caiques thrive on diets consisting of pellets, lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, cooked rice, peas, beans and table food. They are good eaters and have a high caloric need. Sunflower seeds are high in fat and should be offered only as a treat. Grit and gravel are not necessary and

should be avoided for most caged birds.

Housing

Your caique's cage should be as large as possible with enough room for the bird to flap its wings comfortably. Natural branches that vary in thickness are a good choice inside the cage as they can relieve stress on your bird's feet and provide great chewing entertainment. To prevent boredom, make sure you have suitable toys and swings for your bird to play with and change them often. A roosting box or sleeping tent is also relished by most caiques. Cage bottoms, food dishes and water containers should be cleaned on a daily basis.

Health Care

Wing trimming is essential for your bird's safety as the loss of a pet bird flying out an open door is devastating. Nail trimming is also necessary for proper grip on perches and a comfortable grip on arms and hands. Most caiques love to bathe whether it be in a dish of warm water, spritzed with a pump sprayer, under a dripping faucet or in the shower with its owner.

THE PARROT CLUB OF MANITOBA meets the 3rd Friday of each month at 7:30 pm at St. Alban's Anglican Church, basement level, 486 Rathgar (off Osborne). Check community announcements or contact the club in case of changes. Several members of the Parrot Club of Manitoba have caique as pets and would be able to tell you how these birds are in the home environment.

Winnipeg veterinarians with an interest in avian medicine are:

Dr. Heather McDonald of Centennial Animal Hospital
Dr. Nancy McQuade of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Carolyn Eickhorn of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Birte Klug of Winrose Animal Hospital
Dr. Andrew Davidson of Corydon Animal Hospital
Dr. C. Skavinsky of Anderson Animal Hospital
Dr. Lisa Sawka of Charleswood Veterinary Clinic