



Parrotlet



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Parrotlets

Origin

The most often-seen parrotlet is the Pacific or Celestial (Forpus coelestis). While there are seven species of parrotlets, only three are kept as pets. Pacific parrotlets originate in Peru and Equador. Approximately five and one-half inches in length and 28 grams, these olive green birds have pink beaks and legs. As with all parrotlets, they are sexually dimorphic. Males have dark cobalt wings, backs, rumps and streak behind the eye. Females are various shades of green with no blue and an emerald green eye streak. The tail is very short.

General Personalities

With their wonderful outgoing personalities, adorable-size, colorful plumage, comical behavior and quiet voice, parrotlets are becoming one of the most sought-after small pet parrots. Although less than six inches in length, be assured that parrotlets are true parrots with all of the virtues and some of the vices. Many learn to talk and they are quite comical either playing with toys or hanging by their beaks and toes. Unlike many large parrots, they have no problem entertaining themselves all day with their toys while their owner is at work or school. When the owner returns, they will chirp a welcome greeting and expect to come out to ride around in a pocket or hide in their owner's hair.

Food

Being very active birds, parrotlets require a lot of food for its size. They eat more than lovebirds and cockatiels so be generous with the food. Parrotlets should eat a good quality small hookbill or cockatiel seed mix, a pellet diet or both. Whether fed seeds or pellets, they still require fresh fruits, vegetables and greens every day. Parrotlets also love whole-grain breads, cooked (dried) beans, potatoes (sweet and white), rice and pasta and should be fed these several times a week. Fresh water, mineral block and cuttlebone should be available at all times.

Housing

Parrotlets are more comfortable in a cage that is longer than it is tall - approximately 14" wide, 18" long and 16" high is recommended. Bar spacing should be between 1/2" and 5/8" as with anything wider a head could get caught. Make sure a lot of perches and toys can be easily placed and removed for cleaning. Natural wood perches are better than dowels and should be installed where the parrotlet will not void into their food or water. Parrotlets may not stick their heads into a closed dish so make sure to avoid dishes with hoods on them. Be sure the cage has a grate on the bottom to keep curious beaks away from dropping and debris.

Health Care

A parrotlet life span is believed to be around 20 to 30 years. Parrotlets are rather hardy birds and if well fed, kept clean should live to a ripe old age. Unfortunately, most meet their demise by accidents so it's important to always keep the bird's wings clipped and not allow them to walk around on the floor. Do not take them outside unless they are in a cage as they can fly even with clipped wings.

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 parrotlets 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