



African Grey Parrot

Also known as the Grey Parrot

Psittacus erithacus

Adult Size	12 – 14 inches long	Life Span	Typically about 40 years, but research has shown that feeding a higher nutritional diet, such as pellets, has increased the lifespan.
Male/Female Differences	The physical differences between male and female African Grey Parrots are very slight thereby making it difficult to determine the gender. Some physical differences that may be present are the shape of the head, with the male having a broader, flatter head and the female having a smaller and rounder head stemming from a slender neck; males are often more round in body shape, while females have an elliptical shape; males have a solid red underside in the tail area, while females have silver tips on the tail feathers; and when looking under the wing, males are darker gray, while females show a light gray. If these physical characteristics are still ambiguous, a small DNA sample may be sent to a veterinarian to determine the gender of the bird.		
Compatibility	While African Grey Parrots are considerably social birds, it is often recommended to have only one bird per cage as they are unpredictable and need ample space due to their relatively significant size.		
Origin	This medium sized parrot is found in the primary and secondary rainforests of West and Central Africa.		
Climate	Generally, these birds are able to adapt to average household temperatures; however, owners must be cautious with regards to extreme temperatures and changes. Additionally, these birds should be kept away from drafty areas.		
Day Cycle	Diurnal (awake during the day).		
Temperature	Ideal temperature ranges from 65 – 75 degrees Fahrenheit		
Lighting	Ideally, these birds should be kept in well lit areas that are able to provide natural sunlight. Often, it is recommended to provide these		

	birds with an additional UVB bulb simulating natural sunlight in order to increase emotional health. Similarly to other animals, these birds should experience a normal day and night cycle.
Humidity	A fairly high humidity level is best for an African Grey Parrot as it mimics its natural environment.
Habitat/Territory	African Grey Parrots are often found throughout lowland rainforests in Western and Central Africa, as well as in forests alongside streams and in gardens. Given their natural environment, these birds love a mild temperature and humidity. Their long history of domestication has shaped them to become wonderful family pets.
Substrate/Bedding	Various types of substrates may be used for these birds depending upon the preference of the owner. Some owners use an aspen bedding to line the bottom of the cage because it is able to hold the droppings and moisture better. Other owners use cage paper so they can monitor the fecal droppings of the bird, which is used as an indication of health.
Hiding Place/Den	Birds are highly intelligent pets that need various forms of stimulation. That being said, it is highly recommended to provide the bird with various toys that offer different playful benefits such as toys with mirrors, toys that they can shred, and other similar things. Moreover, the African Grey does not necessarily have to have a hiding place in the cage; however, they should have a comforting toy or perch that allows them to relax.
Cage Type	As with any pet, it is always recommended to go bigger, in terms of the cage. Typically, the cage size may be measured at approximately 30"W x 30"D x 36"H with bars being no greater than ¾" apart. When looking for proper cages, the rule of thumb is to look for a cage that allows about 1.5 times the wingspan of the bird in order to ensure ample space to spread out and move around. Again, the bigger the cage is the better.
Diet	The best possible diet for an African Grey Parrot would be a mixture that is heavily concentrated on fresh pellets with various mixtures of approved fruits and vegetables. These birds appreciate a wide variety in their diet thereby allowing the owner flexibility in what is being fed.
Supplements	If the bird remains on a seed diet, it is inadvertently lacking proper vitamins and nutrients that may be found in a pellet diet. Because of this, owners feeding a seed diet should give a vitamin supplement in order to ensure the optimal health of the bird. However, if the bird is on a pellet diet, no extra supplements should be added. Moreover, birds should receive some kind of calcium supplement, either through cuttlebones or an actual food additive.
Diet Precautions	While African Grey Parrots appreciate a high quality diet full of variety, they do have some precautions that should be avoided. Some foods that are highly toxic to birds and should be avoided are avocados, caffeine, pitted fruits, and chocolate. As stated, avoid giving high seed diets as they are fatty and nutritionally lacking. Also, ensure that the bird is receiving some kind of calcium supplementation as its lacking nature could lead towards fragile bone structure and potential egg impaction in

	female birds.
Feeding	Fresh food and water should be given daily. These birds typically eat from a food cup that is mounted to the side of the cage.
Water Source	Fresh water should be given daily and should be checked throughout the day in order to ensure that it remains clean and free of debris or food particles. African Grey Parrots typically drink water from a water cup that is mounted on the side of the cage.
Grooming	African Grey Parrots are relatively clean birds that are able to preen themselves; however, it is highly recommended to mist them with a clean spray bottle a couple of times a week in order to keep them happier, brighter, and cleaner. They should also be brought in regularly, about 4 to 6 weeks, to have their nails and wings checked in the event that they need to be trimmed.
Oral and Foot Care	As stated, these birds should have their nails trimmed every 4 to 6 weeks in order proper nail growth. As a supplement to these routine trims, special manicure perches should be placed within the cage. Moreover, various types of perches should be available for the bird in order to avoid foot atrophy, which is a permanent tightening of the muscles within the foot that may make it difficult to walk. Aside from foot care, owners should also be aware of oral care by providing lava blocks, beak conditions, and cuttle bones in order to help wear the beak down. Overgrown beaks should be taken to a veterinarian in order to be filed down.
Proper Handling	African Grey Parrots are highly social and emotional birds that need a fair amount of handling. It is highly recommended to keep the wings of the bird trimmed in order to keep them from flying away and to avoid accidental injury. These birds are highly intelligible and can be easily trained to step up onto the finger or arm of the owner. If need be, a towel should be used to pick up the bird by gently taking the body into the palm of one hand, while the head is being held between the thumb and index finger of the other hand.
Habitat Maintenance	Ideally, the substrate of the cage should be changed out daily, with the bottom tray being washed out and dried; however, the perches and toys should be scrubbed down and disinfected on a weekly basis. Additionally, the base of the cage should also be completely broken down and disinfected at least once a week.
Health Concerns	Because all birds have a highly sensitive respiratory system, they should be kept away from drafty areas and areas that may suffer from drastic temperature changes. They should also be kept away from kitchen areas and other places that may give off various fumes that are toxic to birds. Typically, owners must be highly cautious when using household cleaners and air fresheners around the bird, as well as completely avoiding incense. Moreover, dirty cages and poor diets may lead towards health issues or infections that are difficult or impossible to treat. Owners must also be able to provide the African Grey Parrot with perches that offer a variety of sizes, shapes, material, and diameters in order to avoid foot atrophy, while also giving a variety of toys in order to

fight against potential emotional deficits that could lead towards feather plucking. Another emotional battle that should be acknowledged would be inadequate handling of the bird. Because of their social nature, African Grey Parrots need to be handled as often as possible in a positive environment in order to ensure full and stable emotional health. Nevertheless, having a specialized avian veterinarian is important to have.
