

Sun Conure

(*Aratinga solstitialis*)

Adult Size	10-12 inches	Life Span	20+ years
Male/Female Differences	Sexing conures can sometimes be done by examining the pelvic bones. The pelvic bones may be closer together on a male than a female. That being said, the sex of most conures is difficult to determine by physical characteristics alone and a DNA test will have to be done to know for certain.		
Compatibility	Sun conures are capable of strong bonds and typically mate for life. To achieve the strongest bond between pet and pet owner keep the sun conure alone in its own cage. If keeping multiple sun conures as pets, try bonding with each bird separately before housing them together.		
Origin	South America, specifically Venezuela, Northern Brazil and Guyana.		
Climate	Warm and dry.		
Day Cycle	Diurnal (awake during the day).		
Temperature	Ideally, 62-74 degrees Fahrenheit.		
Lighting	Ideal lighting conditions provide all the rays of the sun without the heat, which can be accomplished in two ways. Because glass window panes block the rays that birds need most, placing the bird near an open window or outdoor aviary will provide the rays needed to convert food to vitamin D. Another option is to purchase a full-spectrum light bulb that provides all the rays a parrot needs to be healthy.		
Humidity	Ambient humidity is ideal.		
Habitat/Territory	Coastal forests.		
Substrate/Bedding	Several types of substrates may be used to line the bottom of the cage for these birds, depending upon the preference of the owner. In some cases, aspen pellet bedding may be used to line the bottom of the cage due to the fact that it is able to hold the droppings and moisture better than other substrates. Other owners prefer to utilize cage paper in order to better monitor the fecal droppings of their birds, which are often used as indicators of health.		
Hiding Place/Den	Birds are highly intelligent pets that need a maximized amount of stimulation; therefore, it is essential to provide these sun conures with various high quality toys. These toys should offer the bird a range of		

benefits such as puzzle toys, toys that are able to be shredded, bells, and other similar things. Additionally, sun conures do not necessarily need a hiding place or den; however, they should be given a comforting toy that allows them to be relaxed. Using mirrors or reflective surfaced toys in a well trained birds catch can result in overly possessive behavior. If one plans on keeping a well socialized caged bird, avoid the use of anything that reflects as the bird will see themselves as something to bond to.

Cage Type

As with any pet, it is always recommended to go bigger with the size of the cage. For these birds, the cage size may be measured at approximately 18" x 18" with the bars being no greater than ¼" 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 allow the pet to spread out. Nevertheless, the bigger the cage, the better!

Diet

For sun conures, the best possible diet is a mixture of high quality pellets, fresh vegetables, and fresh fruits. They also occasionally enjoy nutritious protein sources, such as eggs, to supplement their diet. Sun conures adore having vegetables and fruits in their diets, so it is essential to provide them with smaller bits of these fresh foods. In fact, some owners opt to create a mixture containing frozen vegetables, such as corn, peas, carrots, and lima beans, a high quality pellet, and dried fruits in a sealed container so that it is readily accessible. Additionally, these birds also enjoy whole grain cereals mixed with various legumes.

Supplements

If a bird remains on a seed based diet, it is inadvertently lacking proper nutrients, vitamins, and minerals that may be found in a high quality pellet diet. That being said, vitamin supplements are often recommended in order to ensure a well-rounded and nutrition packed diet for your bird. If the bird is on a pelleted diet, no additional supplements should be added. Furthermore, birds should be given some form of a calcium supplement, either through food additives or cuttlebones. Cuttlebones are a must have for all bird keepers. The additional calcium supplement is crucial to having a strong bird frame.

Diet Precautions

Although sun conures appreciate a high quality diet full of variation, certain foods should be avoided as they are deemed toxic to the bird. Some toxic foods that should be avoided are caffeine, avocados, pitted fruits, coffee, and chocolate. Additionally, high seed diets are nutritionally lacking and may often lead to fatty liver disease. As stated, birds should be given calcium supplementation otherwise fragile bone structures and potential egg impaction may result

Feeding

Fresh food and water should be given daily. Sun conures enjoy snacking throughout the day so a food cup mounted to the side of the cage should be readily available to them.

Water Source

Fresh water in a water cup mounted to the side of the cage should be readily available to these birds. This cup should be changed daily and be free of debris throughout the day.

Grooming	<p>There are various parts of the bird that should be maintained and groomed on a set schedule, more specifically the beak, nails, and wings. Various rough surfaced items, such as beak conditioners, should be provided in the cage in order to help keep the beak nice and trim. Birds should be brought in regularly, typically about every four to six weeks, to have their wings and nails checked. By keeping the nails and wings appropriately trimmed, the overall health and safety of the bird is being accounted for. Moreover, sun conures 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 times a week to keep them happy, bright, and clean.</p>
Oral and Foot Care	<p>As mentioned, these birds should have their nails trimmed every four to six weeks in order to ensure proper nail growth. As a supplement to these routine trims, a variety of special perches should be placed inside of the cage, such as a manicure one. Additionally, various types of perches should be available in the cage to avoid foot atrophy, which is a permanent tightening of the muscles within the foot that may make it difficult to walk. In terms of oral care, various beak conditioners, such as lava blocks and cuttlebones, should be put in the cage to help wear the beak down. In the event that of an overgrown beak, the bird should be brought to a veterinarian for proper filing.</p>
Proper Handling	<p>Sun conures are highly sociable, loving, and emotional birds that need a significant amount of handling and contact. Because of this need for constant affection, it is highly recommended to have the wings regularly trimmed to keep them from flying away and potentially hurting themselves. These birds are highly intelligent and are able to learn tricks given the proper amount of attention and repetition. Moreover, they are able to step up and be held in the hand due to their small size. If need be, a towel may be initially used to help pick them up until they are accustomed to being held.</p>
Habitat Maintenance	<p>Ideally, the substrate of the cage should be changed out daily with the bottom tray being taken out, emptied, washed, and dried; however, perches, toys, and other additional items inside of the cage should be changed out and disinfected weekly. In addition to the extra items, the base of the cage should also be completely broken down and disinfected once a week.</p>
Health Concerns	<p>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. Additionally, highly aromatic things, such as incense and household cleaners, should be kept away from these birds as it can become a highly toxic environment for them. Dirty cages and poor diets are other areas that may be of health concern as it could result into health issues or infections that may be impossible to treat. Moreover, owners should provide their birds with a variety of toys in order to reinforce a healthy and positive emotional health, while also providing different perches to fight against foot atrophy. Seeing that sun conures are highly social pets, it is essential to handle them as much as possible in order to ensure a full and stable emotional health. Nevertheless, having a specialized avian veterinarian is important to have in case of emergency.</p>
