

# Parakeet

*(Melopsittacus undulatus)*



<b>Adult Size</b>	6-7 inches in length, weighing about 1-1.5 ounces
<b>Lifespan</b>	About seven to fifteen years (longer on a healthy diet)
<b>Male/Female Difference</b>	The cere, the fleshy part around the nostrils, which is pink in juveniles, turns a blue or purple in males when they become mature and white or brown in females.
<b>Compatibility</b>	Budgies are highly social animals, and as such compatibility can often depend on the individual personalities of the birds. Very often multiple birds will be compatible, but care must be taken to ensure they accept each other. Also, pairs will pay more attention to each other and tend to shun their owner.
<b>Origin</b>	Inland Australia, budgies are nomadic birds. The common parakeet has been bred in captivity for almost two hundred years.
<b>Climate</b>	Warm and dry.
<b>Day Cycle</b>	Diurnal (awake during the day)
<b>Temperature</b>	Ideal 70-80 degrees Fahrenheit
<b>Lighting</b>	No special lighting is required, but budgies, like all creatures will benefit greatly from natural sunlight and a normal day cycle.
<b>Humidity</b>	Ambient humidity is ideal (60-70%).
<b>Habitat/Territory</b>	Light forest and grassland.
<b>Substrate/Bedding</b>	Aspen shavings (cedar and pine shavings can emit gasses that may lead to liver problems), compressed hardwood pellets, or recycled paper products. Uncolored newspaper is sufficient if changed whenever it is soiled.
<b>Hiding Place/Den</b>	Budgies will enjoy an area high in their cage which makes them feel secure. Soft felt or fleece tents are available, or simply a high perch surrounded by hanging toys.
<b>Cage Type</b>	The rule of thumb for most birds is to have a cage at least half again the length of their wingspan in all directions. For a parakeet this means 18x18x18 inches as a minimum. If you decide on a larger cage make sure that the bird has an area of the cage where it can

feel protected and secure.

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<b>Diet</b>	Pelleted diets are ideal, nutritionally speaking, but many budgies would rather starve than eat them. If you have a picky bird a high quality seed diet that does not contain sunflower seeds is acceptable, or you can attempt to transition your bird slowly onto a pelleted diet. In either case the bird's diet should be supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables.
<b>Supplements</b>	A multi-vitamin supplement is a great way to ensure your bird is getting proper nutrition, especially a seed-only bird. Calcium supplementation is also critical, and can be achieved by adding cuttle bone or calcium block to the cage.
<b>Diet Precautions</b>	Avoid fatty foods or mixes containing fatty foods (like sunflower seeds) as your bird may pick through the mix and eat only those. Lack of calcium supplementation will lead to fragile bone structure and possible egg impaction in females. Do not give your bird chocolate, avocado, coffee, or rhubarb.
<b>Feeding</b>	Feed fresh food and water daily, supplementing the budgie's normal diet with a good variety of vegetables and fruits. Parakeets can be finicky eaters and may take awhile to accept new food items; be persistent and your bird will be healthier in the long run.
<b>Water Source</b>	Some parakeets can learn to drink from a water bottle, which should be kept clean and free of algae. Else, a seed cup filled with water and mounted in the cage is fine, but should be changed daily or whenever soiled.
<b>Grooming</b>	Budgies are very clean animals and will preen themselves and each other (and maybe you too!) meticulously. Misting your bird with a clean spray bottle once or twice a week will help keep their feathers bright and clean. Alternatively, a dish of water can be placed in the bottom of the cage and your budgie may bathe itself.
<b>Oral and Foot Care</b>	Nails should be trimmed monthly, either by your vet or by us at Wilmette Pet. Special 'manicure' perches help to keep nails trim. A variety of perches should be placed in the cage to avoid foot atrophy. Hard lava blocks or beak conditioners as well as cuttle bones should be put in the cage to wear down the beak. If it becomes overgrown it will need to be filed down by your vet.
<b>Proper Handling</b>	Many parakeets can be taught to step onto their owner's finger. However, if allowing your bird out of its cage, the wings should be clipped (by us or by your vet) to avoid accidental injury. If you need to grab your bird, use a towel and gently take the body in the palm of your hand holding the head between your thumb and index finger to prevent your bird from hurting itself.
<b>Habitat Maintenance</b>	Substrate should be changed daily. Perches and the cage itself should be scrubbed down when they become dirty, usually every week.
<b>Health Concerns</b>	Birds have very sensitive respiratory systems and should be kept away from drafty areas as well as kitchens and laundry rooms as fumes from these areas can be enough to kill your bird. Also be careful using household cleaners or air fresheners around your bird's cage. Too cool temps can lead to respiratory infections. Dirty cages or poor diet can lead to crop or intestinal infections. Lack of diversity in perch width in the cage can lead to food atrophy. A specialized avian veterinarian is invaluable, ask us at Wilmette Pet to recommend one!