

LOVEBIRDS - belong to the genus Agapornis. Agapornis = Agape + Ornis, the Greek words for Love + Bird = Lovebird. Lovebirds can be classified as aggressive birds to other birds as well as their own species.

Lovebirds were so named because of the way they snuggle together on a branch or perch often preening each other. I have provided a brief text on each of the lovebirds commonly raised in Australia.

LOVEBIRDS GENERAL:

SEXING:

The great debate. They are very difficult to sex as both sexes look virtually the same. The pelvic bone can help to tell them apart when in "breeding condition". The hens may appear to have a wider pelvic bone area. This is not always a 100% way of telling them apart. It has been said that if you compare the tail feathers, the female's tail feathers "appear" to be all the same length. You would really have to catch and examine them to be sure, then have a known cockbird to compare. The cockbird's tail can have a longer tail feather in the middle of its tail.

As in a lot of other breeds the heads can, if you study them carefully, appear slightly different. The hen's head is slightly smaller when you see them together. The cockbird appears to have a more solid, bigger head than the hen.

I suggest DNA is the sure way to determine sex saves all the guessing.

DIET:

I feed all my Lovebirds on a pellet based diet but also feed them apple, corn, sprouted seed and an assortment of greens. However not all birdkeepers are comfortable with a pellet based diet. So I have included traditional diet below.

They are very similar to Cockatiels to feed. They thrive on Small Parakeet Mix and Millet Sprays. Cuttlefish, Iodine blocks (the pink ones). I have clay /grit blocks available at all times. Fruit and Vegetables are a must to keep them healthy and provide vitamins and minerals. They love apples, broccoli, cabbage, kale, carrots, parsley, and spinach.

BREEDING:

You can breed "en-Colony" or in Breeding Cages (except the Peach-faced)

COLONY BREEDING-

You put several pairs in your aviary (the No. of pairs depends on the size of your Aviary).

Then the birds pick their own mates and therefore you should end up with true pairs.

When you put nest boxes in you must make sure they are all of similar size and design. The nest boxes are a similar size and design to a budgie nest box but they have a perch at the entrance. This is so that the cockbird can sit there and guard the nest while the hen sits its eggs.

Hang them all the same height and the entry holes must also be at the same height and size - to stop fighting. They will all want the highest one! You must always put in more boxes than pairs. i.e. if you have 10 pairs then you put 15 boxes in.

I use Golden Cane fronds as nesting material. The hen will strip the leaves and construct a wonderfully woven nest. Other materials can be used but I prefer green material. The green leaves add humidity in the Nest box. This is paramount to the successful incubation conditions of the eggs.

When a pair is ready to mate, they will select a nest box and the hen starts stripping whatever nesting material is available (palm fronds) with her beak.

She will begin tucking them in her rump feathers, just above her tail, to carry back to the nest. **Note** the Masked Lovebird carries the frond in her beak. The birds then build a nest in the nest box.

The hen will take these into her box and arrange them just the way she wants them. She makes a "bowl" in the back half of the box and a wall of sorts, to separate the front and back of the box, with a little passage way on the right for going in and out. She will keep going back and forth until she either is satisfied with the results or runs out of material.

The bird's protein levels should be upped in preparation for breeding. I always make sure the breeding pair have sprouted seed and sweet corn to boost their protein and calcium levels.

CAGE BREEDING-

This is my preferred method. One pair to a cage

You can use "selective Breeding" i.e. you decide which bird goes with which.

Make sure you introduce your pairs gradually because the Hen could fight and damage the cockbird, esp. if they are not ready to breed or are not compatible. You can use a breeding cage with a removable mesh

slider in between, so they can see each other and communicate through the bars. You need to know the sexes to make sure you have a pair. With one Nest box - which they use to roost in when they are not breeding. This gives them security and warmth, esp. during the winter months.

You can have the nest boxes on the inside or outside of the cage. I prefer the outside.

When they have finished the nest site 5 - 6 Eggs every other day. I have had up to 7. Incubation starts after the 3rd Egg is laid and lasts 22 - 23 days

PEACH-FACED LOVEBIRD: (*Agapornis Roseicollis*)

They originate from South & S.W. Africa and are approximately 15cm

The Peach face is probably the most common of the lovebirds. They are good birds for the beginner breeder. I started with Violet Masked lovebirds and found them to be delightful. So perhaps it is a bit subjective. Hand raised birds can make good pets or companion birds. They are generally not too noisy. They do not make good talkers though. The Peach Faced Lovebird is **not** suitable for colony breeding!

COLOURING:

The Peach Faced Lovebird is mainly apple-green in colour with yellow-green under and rose coloured forehead. The rump is a sky blue. The beak is yellow in colour.

Some of the more common species come in colours such as lutino, blue, olive, cobalt, cinnamon, pied and the list is increasing as breeders enjoy the challenge.



Peach Face Lovebird

MASKED LOVEBIRD:

They originate from N.E. Tanzania.

The Yellow Collard Masked Lovebird In the photo, notice the wide, white ring around the eye. The head should have a solid black "hood" over it, with yellow around the neck, and a red beak. The flights are black.



Yellow Collared (Masked) Lovebird

They were traditionally referred to as Black Masked Lovebirds, but are now often named after their colour. I.e. Green Masked, Blue Masked, Violet, Cobalt etc.

A Blue Masked will have the eye ring and black hood, but a blue body with white around the neck, and a pink beak.



Blue Masked Lovebird

A Dilute Masked Lovebird is very similar. The differences being that the Dilute has more white on the head and body and white flights

Masked Lovebirds can be prone to pluck their youngsters while they are in the nest. They are perfectly hardy and can be wintered outside in a covered aviary, with dry frost-free shelter but don't require extra heat. They can stand low temperatures but damp conditions are another matter and must be regarded as a major health hazard! So in the NQ area the wet season requires a bit of monitoring of the housing.

They love baths and can also be bathed by misting with a fine mist spray bottle. They should be bathed twice weekly to maintain excellent plumage.

I support wing clipping for the following reasons:

1. The freedom of flight tends to negate the baby's dependence on you. This results in a less tame bird.
2. Love birds can't see windows. They fly at very high speeds and can kill themselves flying into the window.
3. A door or window left ajar for a moment allows the bird to escape.
4. The birds can fly to areas of the home that are dangerous to them.

FISCHERS LOVEBIRD:

They originate from S. Kenya & N. Tanzania. They are hardy, easy to house, feed and breed. Another excellent bird for novices to start with.



Fischer Lovebirds

Mainly grass-green in colour, with bright red forehead. The rest of head, face, neck and breast are an orange-red with a faint olive-green suffusion. The beak is red.

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