

Native Range Map



Pied Cockatiel

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Aves
Order: Psittiformes
Family: Cacatuidae
Genus: *Nymphicus*
Species: *hollandicu*



Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Cockatiels are native to Australia and live in the subtropics and temperate regions. They are found over most of Australia except the coastal areas. They are not found in Tasmania.
- **Exhibit Location:** Zoo to You Collection

Characteristics

- Cockatiels are a member of the cockatoo family, displaying their cute little head crests, as well as having their male/female colorings and nesting behaviors.
- Weight: 3-4 ounces; Length: 12 inches from beak to tip of tail
- Adults generally have darker feathers and beaks. Males generally have brighter yellow heads and orange cheek patches, as well as predominant crests.
- In the wild, they are mostly gray in color. Domestic breeding has resulted in color variations known as Pied, Pearl, Cinnamon, Lutino, and Silver.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 12-14 years; **In Captivity** 20-25 years

Behaviors

- Cockatiels can be very docile (calm) and friendly to people as well as to other birds.
- In the wild, they live in groups of about 12 birds, though they will flock in the hundreds after breeding season and where food is plentiful.
- Although part of the parrot order, they are better at imitating whistles than at talking. Some do learn to repeat phrases; the males are generally better at mimicking than the females are.
- Cockatiels communicate vocally with each other quite a bit, alerting other flock members of danger, food, or of their locations.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** bird toys in and out of cage, tree branches with leaves set up in cage, climbing gym, sunflower seeds, steamed yam, pine nuts, daily handling, and demonstrations on and off zoo grounds

Reproduction

- Cockatiels reach sexual maturity at 18 - 24 months of age. This is the only cockatoo species that can breed at such a young age.
- Pair bonding is very strong and they may mate for life. They build their nests in tree hollows about 6 or more feet above the ground. Mating may be immediate or may take up to 4-6 weeks, during which time there will be a lot of mutual preening (feather cleaning). Breeding begins after a rainy season.
- The female will lay an egg every other day for a clutch of between 3-9 eggs. The incubation period is 18-20 days. Chicks leave the nest at about 5-6 weeks and will be totally independent about 2 weeks after leaving the nest. The young reach full size at about 9 months of age.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** wide variety of small seeds gathered from the ground, native grass seed where abundant
- **At the Zoo:** fruits, vegetables, mixed variety of seeds, paradise pellets, greens

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status** none; **CITES Appendix** none. Cockatiels are abundant in their native habitat.
- Farmers can regard large flocks as pests. Some are destroyed under permit.
- The Australian government instituted a strict ban on the export of these native birds in 1894. Consequently, all the cockatiels in the U.S. are from captive bred stock.
- Predators: hawks, eagles, humans

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- Cockatiels are one of the easiest of parrots to breed in captivity and are highly trainable.
- They enter their tree hollow nests tail first.
- The word cockatiel comes from the Dutch word “kakatielje” which means “little cockatoo.”
- Cockatiels were first discovered in Australia in 1770, which was then known as New Holland. (That is where it gets the *hollandicus* part of its name.) The naturalists who first described the bird sailed with Captain Cook on his voyage to eastern Australia.

Sources:

- Dr. Jungle's Animal World, (2005). About cockatiels. Retrieved Oct. 22, 2005, from Dr. Jungle's Animal World Information Resource: Exotic Pets and Animals Web site: <http://www.exotictropicals.com/encyclo/birds/cockatiels/CockatielProfile.htm>.
- Grindol, D. (2001). *Cockatiels for dummies*. New York: Hungry Minds.