

Rainbow Lorikeet

Care Guide for New Owners

Parrot

Lorikeet

Nectar Specialist

Native to Australia

Quick Facts at a Glance

Species	Trichoglossus moluccanus
Lifespan	15 to 25 years with proper care
Adult Size	10 to 12 inches; 2.5 to 5 oz
Activity Cycle	Diurnal; active during the day
Temperament	Energetic, playful, bold, and intensely interactive with their people
Cage Minimum	24x24x36 inches minimum; larger strongly recommended due to activity level
Diet	Specialized nectar diet; NOT seeds or standard parrot pellets
Droppings	Liquid and projectile due to nectar diet; plan accordingly
Noise Level	Moderate to high; chatty and shrieky when excited
Bar Spacing	1/2 inch or less
Legal Status	Legal in Wisconsin; verify local ordinances

Lorikeets Are Parrots With a Unique Specialization

Rainbow lorikeets belong to the order Psittaciformes, making them true parrots. They are members of the subfamily Loriinae, a group of parrots that evolved specifically to feed on nectar, pollen, and soft fruit. This dietary specialization is what makes lorikeet care fundamentally different from virtually every other parrot species, and it is the most important thing to understand before bringing one home.

Rainbow lorikeets are native to Australia, where they live in coastal rainforests, woodland areas, and urban parks. They are enormously active, colorful, and charismatic birds who form strong bonds with their people and are deeply entertaining to observe and interact with. They are also genuinely demanding birds to care for properly, and the droppings situation is something every prospective owner must understand and accept before adopting.

All Parrots Can Be Noisy

Rainbow lorikeets are vocal and energetic throughout the day. Contact calls, excited chattering, and alarm calls are normal. When startled or very excited they can produce loud, high-pitched shrieks. Research the sound of a lorikeet before adopting.

Household Dangers for Birds

Birds have an extraordinarily efficient respiratory system with continuous one-way airflow through air sacs connected to the lungs. This makes them far more sensitive to airborne toxins than mammals. Many everyday household items that humans barely register are genuinely life-threatening to a bird. Every person who brings a bird into their home must understand these dangers before that bird arrives.

Non-Stick Cookware and PTFE (Teflon)

The Number One Household Killer of Pet Birds

Cookware, bakeware, and appliances coated with polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE), sold under brand names including Teflon, release invisible, odorless toxic fumes when overheated. These fumes cause acute respiratory failure in birds within minutes and are almost always fatal. A bird can be dead in under 15 minutes with no warning whatsoever. Non-stick cookware must not be used in any home with a bird. This includes non-stick pots, pans, waffle irons, air fryers, some drip pans and oven liners, and some ironing board covers. Check every appliance and piece of cookware before bringing a bird home and replace anything with a PTFE coating.

Other Airborne Toxins

- Candles, incense, and wax melts: Scented candles, incense, wax warmers, and essential oil diffusers release volatile compounds that cause respiratory irritation and damage in birds. Never use these in a room where a bird spends time.
- Aerosol sprays: Hairspray, air fresheners, spray cleaners, perfume, and spray paint all pose serious respiratory risks. Ventilate thoroughly and keep birds away from any room where aerosols are used.
- Scented plug-in air fresheners: These release compounds continuously and should not be used anywhere near a bird.
- Smoke of any kind: Cigarette, cigar, wood smoke, vaping aerosol, and marijuana smoke are all harmful to bird respiratory tracts. Never smoke near or in the same room as a bird.
- Overheated cooking oils and burning food: Even without PTFE, combustion products from burned food can irritate birds. Ensure good kitchen ventilation when cooking.
- Fresh paint, varnish, adhesives, and treated wood: Off-gassing from new materials can be harmful. Allow full curing and thorough ventilation before the bird returns to any treated area.
- Household cleaning products: Bleach, ammonia-based cleaners, and many commercial sprays are toxic to birds. Use bird-safe alternatives for anything near the cage and rinse all surfaces thoroughly.

Physical Dangers

- Ceiling fans: Always turn off ceiling fans before allowing a bird out of its cage. A bird in flight and a moving ceiling fan is a fatal combination.

- Exposed electrical cords: Birds chew. A bird that bites through a live wire can be electrocuted. Cover or hide all cords in any space where your bird has free flight time.
- Open water: Toilet bowls, full sinks, buckets, and aquariums can trap and drown a bird. Keep these covered or doors closed during free flight.
- Cats and dogs: Even a playful swipe from a cat can deliver fatal Pasteurella bacteria into a bird's bloodstream through a scratch. Never allow unsupervised contact between a bird and any cat or dog.
- Windows and mirrors: Birds cannot distinguish glass from open space. Mark large windows or cover them during free flight to prevent collision injuries.
- Hot surfaces: Birds can land on hot stove burners during free flight. Never allow birds in the kitchen while cooking.
- Small gaps and tight spaces: Birds explore and can get stuck behind appliances or inside small openings where they can injure themselves or cannot be reached.

The Droppings Reality

This Is Not a Minor Point

Lorikeets eat a liquid nectar diet. As a result, their droppings are liquid, frequent, and projectile. They are expelled with force in any direction, often hitting cage bars and walls and splattering significantly. A lorikeet cage requires daily thorough cleaning. Any surfaces near the cage will be affected. Walls, floors, and nearby furniture will need regular cleaning. This is not an exaggeration and it is not manageable with minimal effort. If you are a person who would find this intolerable, a lorikeet is genuinely not the right bird for your household. This is one of the most common reasons lorikeets are surrendered.

Planning your cage placement, the materials around the cage, and your cleaning routine before your lorikeet comes home makes a significant practical difference. A tile or easily wipeable floor surface under and around the cage, a cage with a deep collection tray, and a daily cleaning routine are all part of lorikeet ownership.

Housing and Cage Setup

The minimum cage size is 24x24x36 inches, but given the lorikeet's exceptional activity level, larger is strongly encouraged. These birds need room to climb, flap, and move. Horizontal bars support climbing. Bar spacing should be 1/2 inch or less. The cage must be easy to clean thoroughly every day, which means considering the cage design before purchasing. Cages with removable trays and grates, smooth surfaces without decorative scrollwork that traps mess, and easy door access all make daily cleaning practical.

Perches: Variety Is Essential

Perch quality and variety have a direct impact on foot health. A bird stands on its perches every moment it is in the cage. Providing only one type or diameter of perch causes constant pressure on the same points of the foot, which leads to bumblefoot, a painful and difficult-to-treat bacterial infection of the foot pads.

- Natural wood branches: The best option. Irregular shapes and diameters constantly shift foot position and exercise different muscles. Use untreated wood from bird-safe species such as apple, willow, manzanita, and dragonwood.
- Rope perches: Soft, comfortable, and good for variety. Inspect regularly for fraying, as loose fibers can wrap around toes and cause tourniquet injuries. Replace when significant fraying appears.
- Calcium or mineral perches: Provide texture and help keep the beak slightly worn. Fine as one option among several.

- Nail file or pedicure perches: Acceptable as one perch among multiple options to help maintain nail length. Should never be the only or primary perch, as prolonged contact with an abrasive surface damages foot pads.
- Dowel perches: Limit to no more than one per cage. Uniform smooth dowels provide no variation in diameter or texture and promote foot problems when used exclusively.

Place Perches Thoughtfully

Position perches at different heights throughout the cage. The highest perch is where most birds prefer to sleep, so make it comfortable and secure. Never position perches directly over food or water dishes where droppings contaminate them. Ensure all perches are stable and do not wobble.

Diet: Nectar-Based and Completely Different From Other Parrots

Do Not Feed a Lorikeet Like Other Parrots

Lorikeets cannot eat seeds. Their digestive system is designed specifically for nectar, pollen, and soft fruit. A seed diet causes fatal crop and digestive impaction in lorikeets. Standard parrot pellets are also inappropriate as the primary diet. Lorikeets require a specialized nectar formula designed specifically for their species.

Wet Nectar Diet

A wet nectar formula made from a commercially produced lorikeet nectar powder mixed with water is the foundation of the diet. Roudybush Nectarblend, Nekton Lori, and Passwell Lorikeet Food are among the well-regarded options. Prepare fresh nectar daily and remove any uneaten nectar within a few hours, as wet nectar spoils quickly and causes bacterial and fungal infections if left in the dish. Clean nectar dishes thoroughly at every change.

Dry Nectar and Fresh Food

Many lorikeet owners offer both a wet nectar and a dry nectar powder, which the bird can eat directly or mix with water itself. Fresh fruit and some soft vegetables round out the diet and provide variety and enrichment.

Safe Foods

- Wet lorikeet nectar formula (daily, fresh)
- Dry lorikeet nectar powder
- Mango, papaya, fig, kiwi, and other soft fruits
- Apple, pear (no seeds)
- Melons, grapes (small amounts)
- Corn on the cob, soft cooked sweet potato

Never Feed These

- Seeds of any kind (causes fatal impaction)
- Standard parrot pellets as primary diet
- Avocado (toxic)
- Onions and garlic (toxic)
- Chocolate (toxic)
- Fruit seeds and pits
- High-fat or high-protein foods
- Alcohol or caffeine

Nectar Spoilage Is Dangerous

Wet nectar left in the dish for more than a few hours grows bacteria and mold rapidly, especially in warm weather. Remove all uneaten wet nectar within two to four hours. Clean dishes with hot water and bird-safe dish soap at every feeding. A lorikeet with a bacterial crop infection or yeast overgrowth from spoiled food is a sick bird that needs a vet.

Never Pet a Parrot Below the Neck

Petting a parrot on its back, wings, belly, or vent area mimics the behavior of a mate and triggers hormonal responses. This applies to all parrot species. Chronic hormonal stimulation through full-body petting leads to behavioral problems, aggression, and in females, chronic egg-laying with serious associated health risks. Pet only on the head, cheeks, and around the beak. Never pet under the wings, along the back, or near the tail.

No Nesting Items in the Cage

Do not place nest boxes, cuddle tents, snuggle sacks, or any enclosed fabric items in your bird's cage. When a bird is surrounded on all sides in a tight, cozy space, it registers this as a nest. This triggers powerful hormonal responses in both males and females: egg-laying behavior in females (which can lead to egg binding, a life-threatening emergency) and territorial aggression and frustration in both sexes. A hormonally stimulated parrot is an unhappy, difficult parrot. Comfortable perches at height are all a bird needs for sleeping and resting.

Wing Clipping: Our Position

Boggy's Buddies does not recommend wing clipping as a routine practice. Flight is a fundamental natural behavior, and fully flighted birds are physically healthier, more confident, and more behaviorally balanced. Flight provides exercise that clipped birds cannot replicate, and birds who learn

to fly develop better coordination and emotional resilience.

We recognize that clipping is not the wrong choice in every situation, and we support it in specific circumstances.

Situations Where We Support Clipping

- An adult bird who has been clipped for most of its life and is unlikely to learn to fly safely. For these birds, being suddenly fully flighted without the skills to manage it poses a real injury risk from crashes and falls.
- A hormonal bird who is dive-bombing other birds, animals, or people. Clipping temporarily limits the ability to initiate attacks and can be a safety management tool during a hormonal period.
- Transport, veterinary visits, or other situations where uncontrolled flight poses an escape or injury risk.

If You Clip, Do It Correctly

Wing clipping should only be done by an avian vet or experienced avian professional. Incorrectly clipped birds cut blood feathers and can fall and injure themselves if left without any ability to glide. A correctly clipped bird should be able to glide slowly to the ground, not drop straight down.

Harness Training and Outdoor Time

Supervised outdoor time in a harness offers real benefits: natural sunlight provides Vitamin D3 that indoor lighting cannot fully replicate, and new sights, sounds, and smells provide enrichment that indoor life simply cannot match.

For most birds, the Aviator harness is our first recommendation. It is well-designed, adjustable, and available in sizes ranging from very small to large parrot. The right harness is ultimately the one that fits and that your individual bird will accept. Some birds adapt to other designs more readily.

Harness training is a long process. We want to be completely clear about this. For most birds, the process from first introduction to comfortable wear takes weeks to months of slow, patient, positive work. Forcing a harness onto a bird who is not ready causes fear and trauma that makes future training exponentially harder. The process begins with simply letting the bird see the harness, then feel it nearby, then brief contact, then seconds of wear, and so on. Every bird moves at its own pace.

Never Leave a Harnessed Bird Unsupervised Outside

A harnessed bird outside is still a bird that can be attacked by a hawk, a cat, or a dog. Always supervise directly and never tie the leash to an object and walk away.

Grooming: Nails, Beak, and Wings

Regular monitoring of nail length, beak condition, and wing feathers is part of routine bird ownership. With appropriate perch variety and foraging opportunities, beak and nail maintenance is often reduced but never eliminated.

Nail Trims

Overgrown nails curl under the foot and cause pain and difficulty perching. Check nail length regularly. Trims can be performed by an avian vet, an experienced groomer, or a confident owner who has been shown correct technique. Always have styptic powder on hand in case a nail is cut too short and bleeds. Never attempt nail trims on an uncooperative bird alone.

Beak Maintenance

A healthy beak wears naturally through chewing, foraging, and wiping on perches and mineral blocks. An overgrown, misshapen, or laminating beak requires veterinary assessment. Do not attempt beak trims at home. Beak trims require specialized tools and expertise and a mistake can cause serious injury.

Wing Trims

See the wing clipping section above. Any clipping should be done by an avian vet or experienced avian professional only.

Enrichment

Lorikeets are extremely active and need substantial enrichment. Swings, ropes, climbing structures, shreddable toys, and foraging opportunities all help channel their considerable energy. Many lorikeets enjoy a shallow bath dish or misting and will bathe daily if given the opportunity. Bathing is important for feather condition and is a good enrichment activity.

Common Health Issues

Crop Infections (Bacterial and Yeast)

Very common when wet nectar is left too long and spoils. Signs include regurgitation, crop that feels abnormal, weight loss, and lethargy. Requires veterinary diagnosis and treatment. Strict nectar hygiene prevents most cases.

Lorikeet Paralysis Syndrome

A poorly understood condition affecting lorikeets, sometimes linked to diet. Signs include progressive leg weakness and paralysis. Nutritional balance is critical for prevention.

Feather Destructive Behavior

A sign of stress, illness, or nutritional deficiency. Always warrants veterinary assessment.

Respiratory Infections

Breathing changes, nasal discharge, tail-bobbing. Always a veterinary emergency.

PTFE Toxicosis

Non-stick cookware fumes cause rapid respiratory failure. Remove all PTFE-coated items.

Iron Storage Disease (Hemochromatosis)

Some lorikeet species are susceptible to iron accumulation in the liver from high-iron diets. Use low-iron nectar formulas and avoid high-iron fruits like dark berries as staples. Ask your avian vet for guidance.

Things Every New Lorikeet Owner Must Know

The droppings situation is real and daily.

Liquid, projectile, frequent droppings are a fixed feature of lorikeet ownership. Plan your space, your surfaces, and your cleaning routine before your bird comes home. This is the number one reason lorikeets are surrendered.

Never feed seeds.

Seeds cause fatal digestive impaction in lorikeets. No seed mixes, no seed treats.

Fresh nectar every day, removed within hours.

Spoiled nectar causes serious bacterial and fungal infections. Fresh preparation and timely removal are non-negotiable parts of daily care.

Remove all non-stick cookware.

PTFE fumes kill birds within minutes. No exceptions.

Never put nesting items in the cage.

They trigger hormonal behavior and chronic egg-laying.

Find an avian vet experienced with lorikeets.

Lorikeet medicine has some species-specific considerations. Find a vet with genuine experience before you need one.

This is a 15 to 25 year commitment.

Plan for the full lifespan before adopting.

Questions? We're Here!

Boggy's Buddies is always happy to answer questions. Reach us at boggysbuddies@gmail.com or find us on Facebook and Instagram.