

*E*clectus parrots originate from Australia, New Guinea and other South Pacific islands. Of the ten Eclectus subspecies, the three most commonly seen in captivity are the red-sided (Eclectus roratus polychloros), Vos (Eclectus roratus vosmaeri) and Solomon Island (Eclectus roratus solomonensis). Eclectus have the most pronounced sexual dimorphism of any psittacine: the males are green and the females are red. Scientists who have studied these birds in Australia have determined that this color distinction is related to their sexual roles in the wild. Females spend up to 11 months each season in their nest hollow, and their red color makes them less conspicuous against the tree trunk. However, males differ from females by spending a much larger proportion of their time foraging among the rainforest canopy. Their green color favors reduced visibility to predators against leaves. In captivity, eclectus females generally tend to be more aggressive than males, both in companion bird settings and in aviculture. In breeding situations, a female may sometimes even traumatize her mate.

## Most Common Disorders of Eclectus Parrots

- Feather destructive behavior
- Behavioral problems (screaming, biting, aggression)
- Reproductive-related disease
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Viral infections, such as Proventricular dilatation disease
- Injuries and toxin exposure
- Wing flapping and toe tapping (cause of toe-tapping uncertain; may be normal behavior)

Many diseases can be prevented with regular veterinary care, proper diet and housing. For these reasons, it is important to develop a relationship with a veterinarian who is experienced in avian preventive care, medicine and surgery. For help in finding an avian veterinarian in your area, contact the Association of Avian Veterinarians (AAV) by visiting [www.AAV.org](http://www.AAV.org) and click on “Find a Vet” or contact the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners by visiting [www.ABVP.com/diplomate](http://www.ABVP.com/diplomate).

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# ECLECTUS



Companion Bird Care  
**SERIES**

# What to Expect from Your Eclectus Parrot

Eclectus parrots are in high demand as pets, primarily because of their beauty. They are generally calm in captivity, especially in the presence of strangers. They may exhibit a “pensive” nature when considering novel items or situations in a secure

environment. However, individuals may be playful and rambunctious when they are comfortable with family members. To a greater degree than other companion birds, they may be fearful of anything new.

## Vital Statistics

Body length: 12-14 inches (30-35 cm)

Body weight: 380-450 g

Age of sexual maturity: 6 years

Maximum life span: 20 years

This fear may be reflected in the high incidence of feather picking, especially in timid males.

Both genders have mimicking ability, although the male may be a better talker. There are reports of eclectus parrots developing a nervous habit of “toe tapping” or “wing flapping.” The cause is unknown, but if the birds are otherwise healthy, the condition usually abates with time. There have been some suggestions that this behavior in eclectus may be associated with normal breeding/social patterns. It is useful to consult an avian veterinarian to eliminate disease as a potential cause of this behavior.

## Is Your Eclectus a Male or a Female?

It is easy to determine the gender of an eclectus parrot, not only because of behavioral characteristics, but because the male is bright green and the female is red. Because of the distinct color difference, eclectus parrots were originally believed to be two separate species. They are prolific breeders and the offspring are easy to hand-raise.

## What Should You Feed Your Eclectus?

For a long, healthy life, eclectus parrots should be fed a high quality, toxin-free formulated diet. Supplementation may include small amounts of chopped organic vegetables and fruit and whole grains.

## What Do Eclectus Parrots Do All Day?

Toys offered to eclectus parrots must be free of toxic metals, hooks, sharp objects or small, easily consumed components. Fresh-cut branches from nontoxic trees may be offered. Check with local authorities for recommendations of safe trees. Eclectus need to feel they are a part of the group. They are nosy and interested in what is going on around them.

## Are Eclectus Parrots Tame?

Young, hand-raised eclectus parrots adapt readily to new surroundings and handling procedures. Male eclectus parrots tend to be more docile than females, especially when hand-raised. They should be exposed early in life to novel situations (car travel, hospital visits, playing “peek-a-boo” with a towel, multiple visitors in the household, other household pets) so that they are well-adjusted to these events. The best way to encourage desirable behaviors is with patience and by offering positive reinforcement, often in the form of food rewards. Even with training, all birds are capable of biting under the right circumstances.

## How to Identify Your Bird

Eclectus parrots occasionally escape outdoors, and permanent identification may help to return birds to their owners. One method used to permanently identify your bird is implantation of a microchip, as is performed in other pets. Some birds already have leg bands for identification. Although closed leg bands seldom cause injury, some owners prefer to have them removed.

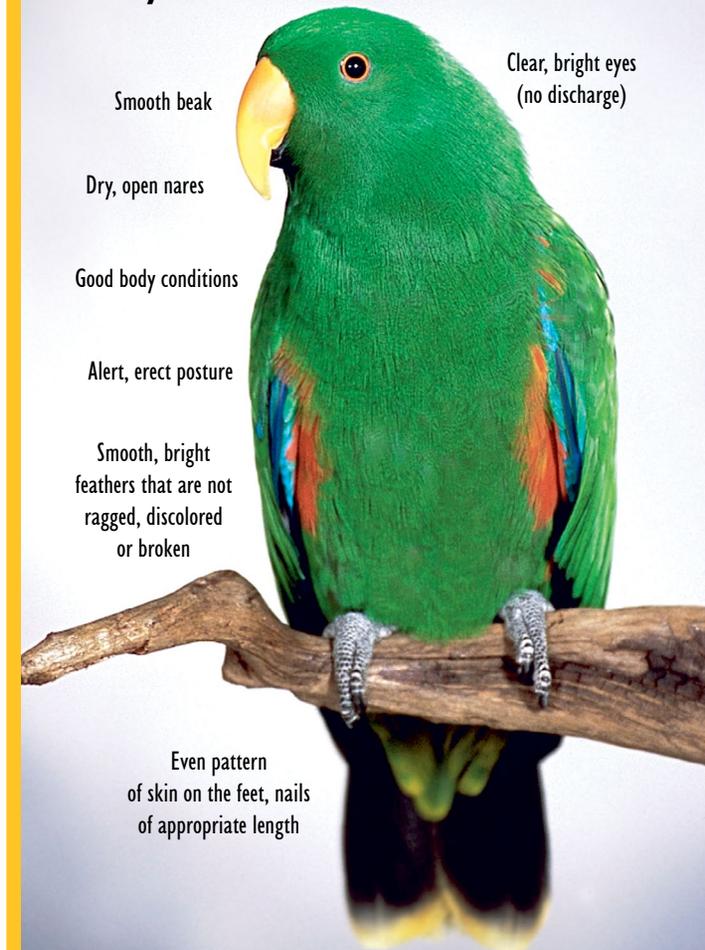
## Should the Wings be Clipped?

The decision to clip wings or allow free flight should be made carefully. Birds allowed free flight benefit from exercise and mental stimulation; however, free flying birds may be injured by hitting windows or ceiling fans or hurt by encountering toxic materials. With careful planning and training, some birds may be allowed free flight in a safe area. The goal of clipping the wings is not to make the bird incapable of flight but to prevent it from developing rapid and sustained flight and to prevent escape. Clipping must be done carefully and tailored to each individual to prevent flight and injuries from falling.

## How to Keep Your Eclectus Parrot Healthy, Happy and Safe!

- ✓ Take your eclectus to your veterinarian after purchase, then once annually for examinations.
  - ✓ Provide stimulating environmental enrichment by offering toys, social interaction and foraging opportunities.
  - ✓ Feed a fresh, high quality, toxin-free formulated diet with fresh chopped fruits, vegetables and whole grains according to the manufacturer’s recommendation.
  - ✓ Provide clean, fresh uncontaminated drinking water and change frequently. Eclectus parrots can be trained to use a water bottle.
  - ✓ Many birds enjoy bathing. Try providing a warm water bath, or gently spraying with clean warm water daily if possible.
  - ✓ Avoid spraying house with insecticides.
- Housing for your eclectus should:
- ✓ be as large as possible.
  - ✓ be clean, secure and safe.
  - ✓ be constructed of nontoxic material (some cages may contain toxic metals, such as zinc).
  - ✓ contain variable-sized perches made of clean, nontoxic, pesticide-free wood or branches.
  - ✓ have easy-to-clean food and water containers.
  - ✓ have perches not placed directly over food or water bowls.
  - ✓ offer opportunities for protected outdoor exposure to fresh air, direct sunlight and exercise.

## What Your Veterinarian Looks for in a Healthy Eclectus Parrot



Clear, bright eyes  
(no discharge)

Smooth beak

Dry, open nares

Good body conditions

Alert, erect posture

Smooth, bright feathers that are not ragged, discolored or broken

Even pattern of skin on the feet, nails of appropriate length

Eclectus parrots are very curious and will investigate anything new in their environment. That is why it is important to prevent their access to:

- ✗ ceiling fans
- ✗ stove tops with hot burners, pans or skillets
- ✗ fumes from overheated non-stick cookware
- ✗ sandpaper-covered perches
- ✗ tobacco and cigarette smoke
- ✗ chocolate, avocado, salt, alcohol
- ✗ toxic houseplants
- ✗ pesticides or chemical cleaners
- ✗ easily dismantled toys
- ✗ dogs, cats and unsupervised children
- ✗ sources of heavy metals, such as lead or zinc (stained glass windows, pewter, some mini-blinds or linoleum)
- ✗ plug-in air fresheners
- ✗ scented candles