



The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)

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Some Wild Notes on the Cloncurry Parrot (*Barnardius macgillivrayi*)

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The beautiful Cloncurry Parrot inhabits an area of about 100 miles square, ranging from [Cloncurry](#) to [Mount Isa](#) and then from about 40 miles south to about 50-60 miles west of Cloncurry in Queensland. This whole habitat is the remains of an ancient mountain range - the hills being cut with numerous creeks which flow only in the wet season. Along these creeks grow the tall timbers which are home to the Cloncurry Parrot. In the wild, the Cloncurry feeds on various nuts which grow on the [eucalypts](#), [mistletoe berries](#), and on the [Nagoorah Burr](#) which flourishes on the creek flats, this last mentioned being a staple of its diet. It has also been seen to take a little nectar from the [gum blossoms](#), and has also been noticed feeding on the sticky beans of the "Turpentine" - the local name for a species of eucalypt which grows to become a 15 foot high scraggly brush.



Cloncurry Parrot
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An aviculturist in the Cloncurry area has said that he has never seen the Cloncurry drink water, and it is true that this parrot can exist for a long period without water, although in severe drought times he would have to drink as there wouldn't be enough moisture in his food. The diet, as can be seen has a fairly high percentage of moisture in it, e.g. the mistletoe berries, etc. It is found that it feeds in the early mornings and late afternoons. Constantly coming and going from permanent water in this area are [Budgerigars](#), [Quarrions](#), [Zebra Finches](#), [Emblema Pictas](#), [Spinifex Pigeons](#), [Diamond](#) and Turtle doves; - the Cloncurry may be present up in the trees, but he is not observed actually drinking as do all the others.

The Cloncurry Parrot usually nests some 50-60 feet from the ground, but nests have been recorded some 20 feet high. They will mostly make use of a spout where a limb has broken off a gum tree, the nest being some two feet down from the opening. The trees in this area are riddled with a species of termite which are inside the core of the living tree, and the Cloncurry's nest will usually be found to be right on one of the nests of these termites. The termites, of course, seal off their nest from the Cloncurry nest. Of interest is the number of chicks in the nest. In aviaries four would be a common number of chicks to rear, whereas in the wild this would be very rare indeed - the number usually being two, and three in a very good nest.

The Cloncurry tends to be a rather sedentary bird within its range and does not migrate as many other parrots do. In fact, within their range there are noticeable differences in the birds, and also having a slightly different call. In the wild state, they frequent the tall timbers along the water courses in flocks of about 12, depending on the time of year. If in the breeding season which is anything from June - October, they segregate into pairs and are very pugnacious at this time. The young ones are driven from the nest as soon as possible and do not stay with the parents. In a good season the Cloncurry will have two nests. They are fairly plentiful in the wild.

The only other parrot which inhabits the Cloncurry's range which has similar feeding habits is the [Crimson-wing](#). All the other parrots are grass feeders so there is no competition from them. Quarrions, Budgerigars, [Galahs](#) and short-billed [Corellas](#) are all found in this area also.

The closest relative of the Cloncurry is the [Mallee Ringneck \(Barnardius barnardi\)](#), but it is some 600-700 miles from the range of the Cloncurry. It is not until you are getting near [Charleville](#) in southwest Queensland that you come across the Mallee Ringnecks. There being no overlap in range, wild hybrids are impossible. Between the range of the Mallee Ringneck and the Cloncurry, the 600-700 miles is open plain country, basically treeless offering no food or nesting facilities for either species, so it is unlikely that they will ever meet, at least in the near future.

Just ending on an avicultural note, it is by no means an easy bird to keep in an aviary, as just like all the Australian Ringnecks they tend to be rather difficult. They are not as free a breeder as say, the [Rosellas](#), but they still have been reared fairly regularly. Their feeding requirements are the same as most Australian parrots. Personally, I feed no [sunflower](#) to any Australian parrot except when they have young ones in the nest, as both sunflower and oats are very fattening. In the aviary it is a great problem to keep the weight of birds down. Sunflower is, however, an excellent rearing food. They are fond of apple, plenty of green food and dry milk arrowroot biscuits (only a small piece each day, but feed two when there are young in the nest).

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