



## *The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)*

*(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)*

*PO Box 248, Panania NSW 2213, Australia*

### **Major Mitchell (*Cacatua leadbeateri*)**

**By Des Dowling**

This is the most beautiful of the Australian Cockatoos. They are highly prized as aviary birds and also as talking pet birds. Their stunning colouring and superb multi-coloured crest make them an outstanding bird in any company.



### **Habitat**

They inhabit mostly dry arid areas of the Australian continent, from Western Queensland and NSW, right across the Northern Territory to the Western Australian coast.

In the wild their numbers have been reduced dramatically over the past 50 years. Scrub clearing, farming and the pet trade has been responsible for this.

### **Diet**

In the wild they have a varied diet including nuts and the fruit of scrub trees, seeds and berries, and the roots of bushes and shrubbery. Insects are also devoured.

In captivity the basic diet is mixed parrot seed but they also like fruit pieces and love wild paddy melons.

### **Breeding**

They normally begin breeding at 4 years and the cock bird can sometimes become aggressive likewise as a pet in captivity they can be the perfect pet for years, talking and friendly, then become savage and biting anything handy. Quail or small birds should not share the Major Mitchell aviary or they will quite literally get eaten for breakfast.

### **Call**

Major Mitchells have a rather pleasant call in contrast to most white cockatoos.

## Sexing

Sexing is easy after about 10 months, as the cock has a black eye and the hen a reddish brown eye.

They normally lay 3 eggs, occasionally 4, and fertility is high. Sometimes with 3 or 4 babies inexperienced pairs will let one die, to lighten the feeding load. Incubation is usually 25 days and the young fledge at 45 to 50 days.

In spring the young birds are highly sought after as pets.

They are relatively easy to breed but need exercise and flying space to avoid becoming too fat. The longer the aviary the better. A single pair per aviary is essential.

They prefer a hollow log for best nesting results, though heavy-duty nest boxes are accepted, but suffer from extensive chewing.

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