

## **RAINBOW LORIKEET – TRICHOGLOSSUS HAEMATODUS – LORIQUEET A TETE BLEUE**

**BIOMETRICS:** Length: 26 - 30 cm; Weight: 100 - 157 gr.

**LONGEVITY:** About 20 years

**DESCRIPTION:** Rainbow Lorikeet is the most striking coloured and noisy bird of the 328 parrot species found over SW Pacific.

Adult has green upperparts, wings and tail. On underparts, breast is orange-yellow, and may show dark barring. Belly is dark blue. Vent is green to yellow. Undertail feathers are dark greenish-yellow. Underwings show orange, yellow-green and dark green colours.

Head is blue. Forehead, crown, face and chin are bright blue. Rear crown and throat are dark blue. Nape is bright yellow, but collar varies from green through yellow to red, depending on each bird.

Strong, hooked bill is red. Eyes are red with narrow dark grey bare eye-ring. Legs and feet are grey. It has adapted feet for perching in trees, with two toes in front and two behind.

Both sexes are similar.

Juvenile has some adult colours at two months, but it is duller, and it reaches its sexual maturity at 18 to 24 months of age.

There are 21 subspecies spread in South-Western Pacific. We can find five main subspecies: **T.h. haematodus**, with brownish-black head and mauve-blue streaking in face. It lives in south Moluccas and Western New Guinea.

**T.h. rosenbergii**, with wide yellow nuchal collar, edged above by narrow red band. Belly is dark purple. It lives in Briak Island in Geelvink Bay.

**T.h. micropteryx**, has generally paler plumage coloration. It lives in eastern Papua New Guinea and Louisiade Archipelago.

**T.h. caeruleiceps** has strongly streaked mauve-blue crown and head sides. It lives in Southern New Guinea, northern most Torres Strait and Queensland in Australia.

**T.h. nigrogularis** has larger size and darker blue streaking on head. It lives in Aru Islands and Eastern Kay islands, Indonesia.

**VOICE:** Rainbow Lorikeet gives sharp, rolling screech, regularly repeated when in flight. When feeding, it utters shrill chattering. When at rest, birds utter regularly soft twittering.

**HABITAT:** Rainbow Lorikeet frequents wooded habitats such as mangroves and coastal plantations, moist forests, Eucalypt woodlands, open woodlands and forest edges. It is also found in urban gardens and parks, and foothills forests.

**RANGE:** Rainbow Lorikeet lives in South Western Pacific, Indonesia, New Guinea, north and east of Australia. In northern Australia, birds are resident year-round, but in south, they are nomadic, searching for food when vegetation changes with seasons.

**BEHAVIOUR:** Rainbow Lorikeets gather in small groups of 5 to 20 birds for feeding. They are very noisy. They feed among foliage, on fruits, insects, pollen and nectar.

It has particular tongue which tip is covered with tiny papillae. It uses it for sweeping up the pollen grain when feeding on flowers. If food resources are abundant, flocks may gather hundreds of birds. They fly above treetops while screeching loudly.

Rainbow Lorikeet travels and disperses for food, and it can be seen out at sea, in transit between islands. It damages orchards and is very active in the early morning and in the late afternoon. It rests in shade in treetops in the middle of the day.

They sleep in communal roosts in large numbers. They are very noisy before establish their positions in roosting trees. They can roost and nest on ground in some islands.

During breeding season, male performs courtship displays. It approaches female with stretched attitude. Then, it bows the neck and bobs its head, hopping along the perch, while it utters a low whistle. During these displays, its pupils dilate and contract continuously. Female will be interested if she is near to nesting. Pairs stay together for life.

Rainbow Lorikeets are very gregarious and mainly arboreal, and they are usually seen in pairs or flocks, even mixed flocks. It comes down to the ground only for drinking.

They are preyed upon by birds of prey and snakes.

**FLIGHT:** Rainbow Lorikeet performs swift, direct flight. We can hear a whirring coming from rapid, shallow wing beats. They fly very high for long distances flights. During short flights, they often twist and turn through treetops.

**REPRODUCTION:** Rainbow Lorikeet nests in hollow in tree, limb or hole. Breeding season occurs mainly from August to January in Australia, but it depends on the place. Nest is relatively high above the ground. It is made by both adults, with straw and wood dust.

Female lays two white eggs. Incubation lasts about 24 to 26 days, by female. During this period, male spends most of time at nest with its mate, and it may feed her.

Altricial chicks are fed by both parents. Young fledge at about 50 to 55 days of age. Then, young birds join communal roost and parents can produce a second brood, sometimes three.

**DIET:** Rainbow Lorikeet feeds on seeds, berries, nectar from flowers, leaf buds and fruits. It plays a major beneficial role in pollinisation of trees and plants. It also feeds on insects and larvae. It can feed upside down. It will fly up to 50 km for food.

**PROTECTION / THREATS / STATUS:** Rainbow Lorikeet is considered a pest in Australia, because it damages fruit trees, and can destroy large part of fruit crops when it feeds on them.

But it is much appreciated as pet, because it can be easily tamed, and it has a fun natural temperament. It has become a tourist attraction in South Queensland.

This species is widely distributed in eastern coasts of Australia. An increasing population derived from escaped birds occurs around Perth.

Text by Nicole Bouglouan

**Sources:**

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PARROTS OF THE WORLD – An Identification Guide – by Joseph M. Forshaw – Princeton University Press – ISBN 0691092516

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow\\_Lorikeet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_Lorikeet)

<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/finder/display.cfm?id=97>