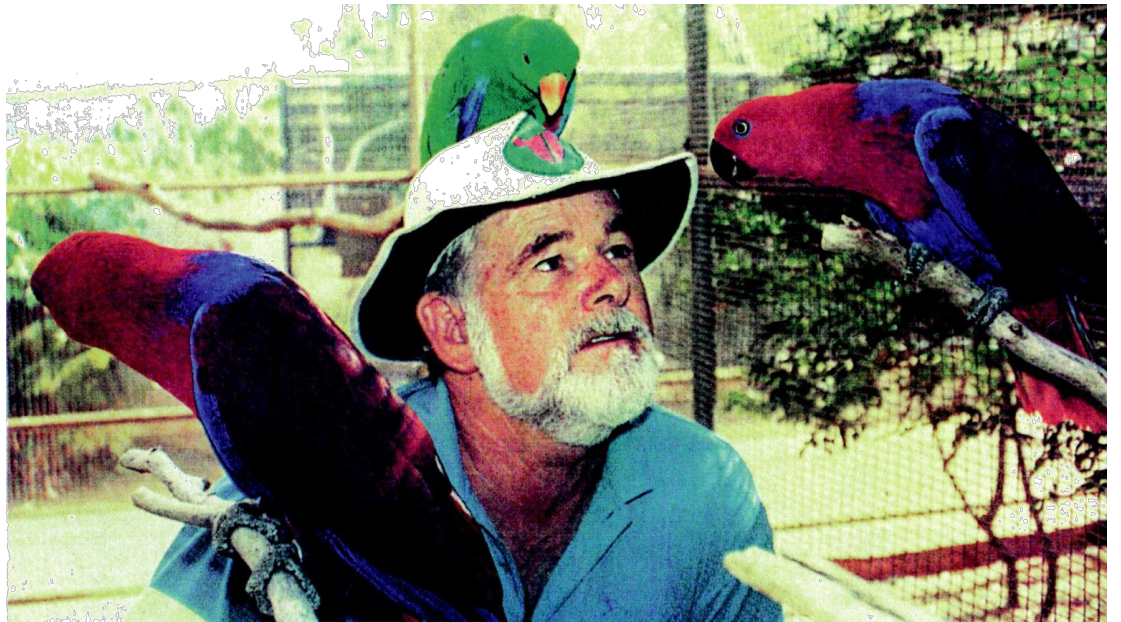


Eclectus Parrots

an experience



Graham Taylor

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Graham F. Taylor
127 North Bonville Road
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New South Wales
Australia

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All enquiries should be addressed to:
Graham Taylor,
127 North Bonville Road,
Bonville 2450, New South Wales,
Australia
Ph. 61 2 6653 4522
Email gftaylor@tpg.com.au

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	7
Photographic Credits	8
Introduction	9

1 Genus *Eclectus* 11

World distribution of <i>Eclectus</i> Parrots	12
1. The Grand <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus roratus</i>	14
2. Vosmaeri <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus vosmaeri</i>	16
3. Tanimbar Island <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus riedeli</i>	20
4. Cornelia <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus cornelia</i>	24
5. Aru Island <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus aruensis</i>	28
6. Biak Island <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus biaki</i>	32
7. New Guinea <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus polychloros</i>	34
8. Solomon Island <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus solomonensis</i>	38
9. Australian <i>Eclectus</i> <i>Eclectus roratus macgillivrayi</i>	40
<i>Eclectus</i> Parrot subspecies identification chart	44
<i>Eclectus</i> Parrot subspecies tail feather identification	46

2 1968 Expedition to Cape York

Early beginnings	53
Departure for Cape York	55

3 Collecting from the wild 101

1969 Information gathering	102
1974 Scouting trip	118
1975 Collecting licence	119
1976 Scouting again and a TV documentary	130
Between 1977 and 1985 Bird watching	138

4 Captive breeding *Eclectus* Parrots 139

Purchasing an <i>Eclectus</i> Parrot	140
Which subspecies?	141
Housing	143
Keeping <i>Eclectus</i> Parrots indoors	154
Diet for <i>Eclectus</i> Parrots	155
Nesting requirements	158
Catching and moving birds	164

5 Keeping *Eclectus* Parrots healthy

Avian veterinarians	167
Preventive medicine	167
Routine husbandry	168
How to recognize a sick bird	168
Action required for sick birds	169

Basic treatment	169
Feather plucking	170
6 Removal of chicks, handfeeding and shipping	
When to remove chicks	173
Brooders	176
Intensive Care Unit	179
Hand feeding	183
Talking to birds	183
Breaking colour	184
Fledglings, when to remove them	186
Future breeders	189
Sale, Permits, Boxing and Shipping	192
After sales	196
7 Companion Eclectus Parrots in the United States	
Housing Companion Eclectus Parrots	198
Feeding Companion Eclectus Parrots	203
Pelleted diets	204
Eclectus behaviour	205
Visiting the veterinarian	207
Keeping your Eclectus Parrot happy	207
8 The Importance of Keeping Records	
1. Nest check Report.	210
2. Young Breakdown Record	212
3. Specimen Report	214
4. Taxon Report	216
5. Sales Report	218
9 Selected Bibliography	221

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INTRODUCTION

The Eclectus Parrot is so distinctively different. The male is a deep forest green and the female brilliant red with deep cobalt blue breast.

These unique parrots were thought to be two separate species when first discovered during the 1700s, today the Eclectus Parrot can be seen in many zoological and breeding collections around the world.

My involvement with these magnificent birds was by accident: the year was 1967, I was living in Sydney, Australia. At that time I was a specialist breeder of Black Cockatoos, the only Black Cockatoo I had not kept or bred at that time was the great Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus*. Little was known about their avicultural requirements in captivity, in fact at that time they had never been photographed in the wild.

Over the next few months I planned a bird-watching trip to Cape York Peninsula, far north Queensland to study these birds in their wild state. I would be joined by an American film producer who was visiting Australia scouting for suitable locations to produce a documentary.

In July 1968 our party of nine; my wife Marcia, our two and a half year old daughter Lisa, two Americans, one German and six Australians, left Sydney in a convoy of five 4-WD Land Rovers for Iron Range, Cape York Peninsula.

During the eight weeks we spent at Iron Range filming the Palm Cockatoos, I began to watch some beautiful bright red and almost iridescent green parrots, sometimes in pairs but mostly in small groups of eight to ten. These birds were of course Eclectus Parrots, *Eclectus roratus macgillivrayi*, the Australian subspecies.

I was so fascinated by these birds that on our return to Sydney I phoned around the bird dealers to see if I could obtain a pair of this Australian subspecies. But only the New Guinea Eclectus (Red-sided Eclectus), *Eclectus roratus polychloros* were available. I purchased a pair and thus began a forty-two-year association with Eclectus Parrots.

Four years later my wife, daughter and I packed up all our belongings and moved 1800 miles (2897 km) to Cairns, north Queensland, to live, and to develop a bird park to house and display Australian parrots and cockatoos.

In 1972 after the bird park had been completed and we had opened to the public I applied for a collecting permit to collect Palm Cockatoos and Eclectus Parrots as well as some other species found in Cape York. These birds would be for educational display and captive breeding programs; I had to wait a further three years before the permit was issued. In the meantime we made plans to return to Iron Range during the breeding seasons to study these birds.

This book includes a chapter on collecting Eclectus Parrots as very few aviculturists have the chance, or the time, to spend in the rainforest to study these majestic birds. I hope this chapter will help all Eclectus breeders to understand a little of the way we should feed, house and breed these birds. From my Cape York diaries covering over a dozen expeditions to the rainforest of far north Queensland from a period between 1968 to 1985, enjoy with me as I relive the trials and tribulations of dusty roads, flooded rivers, cyclones and torrential rain, not to mention the world's deadliest snake the taipan and crocodiles.

One problem that faces all breeders of Eclectus Parrots is accurate identification. This book, and the photographs contained within, will assist in this task. Each subspecies is clearly described and illustrated in a series of photographs.

Up-to-date information, gathered over a number of years from the latest field reports, has been included for each subspecies together with maps showing locations where each subspecies is found.

Information on the rarer subspecies, *Eclectus roratus riedeli* and *Eclectus roratus cornelia* are included. These two subspecies, in particular *Eclectus roratus riedeli*, have recently come into captivity in Europe. Thus all known subspecies are now bred in captivity.

A chapter on companion Eclectus Parrots in the United States by noted breeder and author Laurella Desborough will give an insight into the keeping of Eclectus Parrots as pets.

I do hope this book on Eclectus Parrots is as interesting to you as it was for me in writing it. These fascinating birds have been part of my way of life for the past forty-two years and will always be very special to me.

Share my enjoyment.

Graham Taylor
gftaylor@tpg.com.au
www.eclectus-parrots.com