

## Blue Headed Conure

*Aratinga acuticaudata*

### FACT SHEET

Developed by BirdTricks.com

These delightful birds are ideal in size and have personalities for many homes around the world, and although quite loud for their smaller size, their beautiful plumage sets them apart from most other parrots their size.

They're playful and intelligent, while very social and loving; always craving a close bond with their owner.

#### Are you the right home for a Blue Headed Conure?

- ✓ I have a large, safe space appropriate to house this bird.
- ✓ I understand that this parrot is a long-term commitment.
- ✓ I will provide daily interaction with this bird outside of its cage.
- ✓ The natural noises, screams and sounds of this bird will be acceptable to those in my household as well as my neighbors.

If you were able to say the above statements out loud and in all honesty, you might just be able to welcome this type of parrot into your home.

**Average Size**      14-16 inches                      **Life Span**      20-30 years

**Diet** Their main diet should consist of an organic pellet with a variety of fruits, vegetables, and cooked meats. Parrots love diversity in their meals and will appreciate cooked pasta, beans, brown rice and fresh wheatgrass, sprouts, and non-toxic flowers on a daily basis.

It is important to keep seeds, nuts and other high-fat foods to a minimal amount and not part of the parrot's daily intake. These foods are best given as treats or within food-finding toys to keep your bird motivated and busy throughout the day.

As seed eaters, Conures may require a little more mixtures of millet, seeds, and other grasses they would naturally find on the ground. Things like safflower, grass seeds, mixed millets, and hemp seed can be added to foods to give your Conure as treats for training.

**Feeding** Parrots tend to like to "dip" their food or soak it in their water in order to soften it for eating. It's important to keep their

water dishes fresh and clean to avoid bacteria build up. This should be done daily.

Raw fruits and vegetables are the healthiest for companion parrots, but some can be picky, in which case, you can try cooking these healthy foods in different ways. Such examples include boiling a sweet potato so it's soft for your parrot to eat (wait an appropriate amount of time when feeding cooked foods to your bird for these foods to properly cool).

Discard fresh foods that haven't been eaten in at least 24 hours.

To keep your parrot busy throughout the day, and avoid boredom (which leads to biting, screaming and feather plucking), it's best to provide fun and interactive ways for your bird to eat its meals every day. Such ways include using skewers for fresh foods and various food-finding toys for hard foods, such as pellets.

## **Housing**

An outdoor aviary is ideal for parrots; natural sunlight is essential for their plumage (feathers) and overall health. This can be supplemented with full-spectrum lighting indoors if your climate does not allow for your cage to be outside.

Parrots do best when put in a "high traffic" area in the home where they will get daily interaction.

Because parrots in captivity are more likely to become obese – a flight cage is highly encouraged as a means to properly exercise and stay as healthy as possible while living in captivity.

As with all animals, the larger the cage/habitat, the better. Bar spacing should be no less than 1 inch apart and the proper gauge should be 10g/12g.

A varying diameter and texture of perches is necessary to avoid arthritis and various types of foot sores. The main perches should be made of wood; these are perches your bird will use consistently throughout the day and more often than others. Sandy perches should be placed high in the

cage so your bird will be encouraged to sleep on it at night – this allows your parrot to get trimmed nails naturally.

A metal grate at the bottom of your bird's cage is suggested, as it makes cleaning up after your parrot easier and keeps your bird out of its own droppings.

### **Recommended Supplies**

- ✓ Indoor Cage
- ✓ Outdoor Aviary
- ✓ Cage Liner (newspaper, walnut shells)
- ✓ Organic Pellet
- ✓ Food Finding Toys
- ✓ Treats
- ✓ Mineral Block
- ✓ Variety of Perches & Shred-able Toys
- ✓ Interactive Training Courses & Tools
- ✓ Bird Perch Scale (weighing in grams)

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### **Behavior & Interaction**

Conures tend to live in large flocks in the wild making them naturally very social birds that live interaction, play time and meeting other birds as well as people. Although, like anyone, they can become shy about meeting other people, they tend to come around via proper training and socialization with new places, people and things on a constant basis. They will fuel off of training to learn new behaviors they can show off for their owners and strangers to earn praise and treats.

They use body language as a large portion of their communication and love training and learning new things – anything that stimulates their mind and challenges them to figure out something new.

They require many different types of chewable toys that they can destroy as well as puzzle toys that challenge them to figure out how to get inside of it.

## **Habitat Maintenance**

Perches, toys, and food-finding toys should be rotated regularly and especially if showing wear and tear. Only toys made from all natural materials should be used; any metals such as zinc or lead can be severely harmful to your parrot's health.

Your bird's cage should be changed at least once a week. It may need it more often due to fresh foods and toy parts.

It's recommended to clean and disinfect the bird's cage often, as well.

It's very important to weigh your bird daily to be able to catch on to illness early on. Parrots are very good at disguising illness (as it means the difference of life and death in the wild).

## **Grooming & Hygiene**

Conures need to be bathing regularly, between 3-5 times in the winter months and 5-7 in the summer months is a healthy amount. Most enjoy the natural bath rain outside will provide, so an outdoor aviary to enjoy these times is ideal.

If your bird wants to bathe more often, it is good to encourage it, as it keeps their skin and plumage looking healthy, and can make it easier on allergies to dander.

Bathing can be done in numerous amounts of ways; every bird will have his/her personal preference, so it is best to let your bird try them all to tell you what it likes best. Every bird likes to bathe in the wild; it would be unnatural if your bird refused to ever bathe, as well as unhealthy.

Here are some various ways parrots bathe in captivity:

- An extra bowl for bathing inside the cage (hanging or at the bottom of the cage)
- Misting from a spray bottle
- On a shower perch in a human shower with you (many birds prefer catching the mist off your back)
- Some birds have different water temperature preferences (hot, warm, cold)
- Natural baths in the outside rain provided in an aviary

Clipping flight feathers can be very detrimental to these parrots as they need their exercise and cannot get the proper exercise from simply climbing and walking around. They make very agile, expert fliers and glory in flight. It is a great way for them to get excess energy out before mellowing out to spend time with you.

To determine if clipping is necessary in your household, consult an avian specialist. Nails and beak trimming should be done by a qualified professional, if needed.

### **Signs of a Healthy Parrot**

- Active, alert, social and vocal
- Dry eyes and nostrils
- Eating and drinking regularly throughout the day
- Smooth, well groomed/preened and colorful feathers
- A healthy parrot will likely fly around, parrots refuse to fly when not feeling well when they would normally take flight

### **Common Health Issues**

#### **Diarrhea**

You can tell your parrot has diarrhea by seeing that the fecal part of the stool is not formed.

This can have multiple causes, such as too much fruit in the diet or a parasite. It's best to seek an avian specialist's opinion and sometimes reduce your parrot's fruit intake.

#### **Feather Plucking & Mutilation**

Most parrots pluck due to extreme boredom, an unhealthy diet, or some other related illness. Many parrots pluck because they never bathe and it causes "over preening" where they literally end up chewing the feather to bits in an attempt to get them clean. A parrot on the improper diet can lead to malnourishment, and cause plucking and mutilation as well.

Boredom is the number one factor most parrots pluck. This can be helped by rotating and changing toys in the cage regularly, giving extra attention through social interaction and training, as well as improving diet or amount of space and location your bird is at/in.

It's also important to seek an avian specialist's advice if the plucking is not related to something physical as the listed above. Some parrots begin after the significant loss of something – such as a mate.

### **Proventricular Dilatation Disease**

This disease occurs when the bird is passing undigested foods, showing signs of depression and/or is losing weight abruptly.

It is necessary to consult with an avian specialist if your bird is showing these signs of illness.

### **Obesity**

Obesity is caused by poor feeding, an unhealthy diet and/or lack of proper exercise.

It's important to regulate high fatty foods in the bird's diet and make sure all foods being fed are organically grown, including the pellet mix. It may be a positive idea to introduce flight training into your bird's learning and training schedule to ensure exercise is obtained every day – or that a flight aviary is implemented in the bird's environment.

### **Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease Virus**

Signs leading to this virus are abnormal feather coloration, the loss of feathers and other beak deformities. It's important to be able to tell the symptoms apart from molting and know your bird's molting cycles to avoid confusion.

An avian specialist is required in properly treating this virus in parrots.

### **Red Flags from Your Bird**

- Beak swelling
- Chewed, plucked or soiled feathers/plumage
- A bird who sits on the floor of the cage/habitat (often it will appear fluffy)
- Wheezing, coughing or other indications of trouble breathing
- Runny or discolored stools (aside from diarrhea from fruit or different color from diet)
- Eye or nasal discharge (runny nose or eyes)
- Red or swollen eyes

- Loss of appetite; a bird who refuses to eat or shows no interest
- Favoring one limb over the other

*If you notice any of the above “red flags”, consult your avian specialist immediately.*

**Note: The information on this Fact Sheet is not a substitute for veterinary care.**