



# Animal Pest Alert

## Indian Ringneck Parakeet

NOT NATIVE



male



female

The Indian Ringneck, or Indian Ring-necked Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*), is also called the Rose-ringed Parakeet or African Ring-necked Parakeet. It is not native to Australia but it is widely kept here as a cage bird. The ringneck has significant potential to establish populations in Australia and become a pest so it is important to report any found in the wild.

Australian Ringneck



NATIVE

PHOTO: AVICOLTD / ALAMY

Red-winged Parrot



NATIVE

PHOTO: GRAEME CHAPMAN

Eastern Rosella



NATIVE

PHOTO: DUNCAN ASHER / ALAMY

Red-rumped Parrot



NATIVE

PHOTO: NEVIL LAZARUS

Please report sightings of Indian Ringnecks in the wild - Freecall 1800 084 881

# Indian Ringneck Parakeet

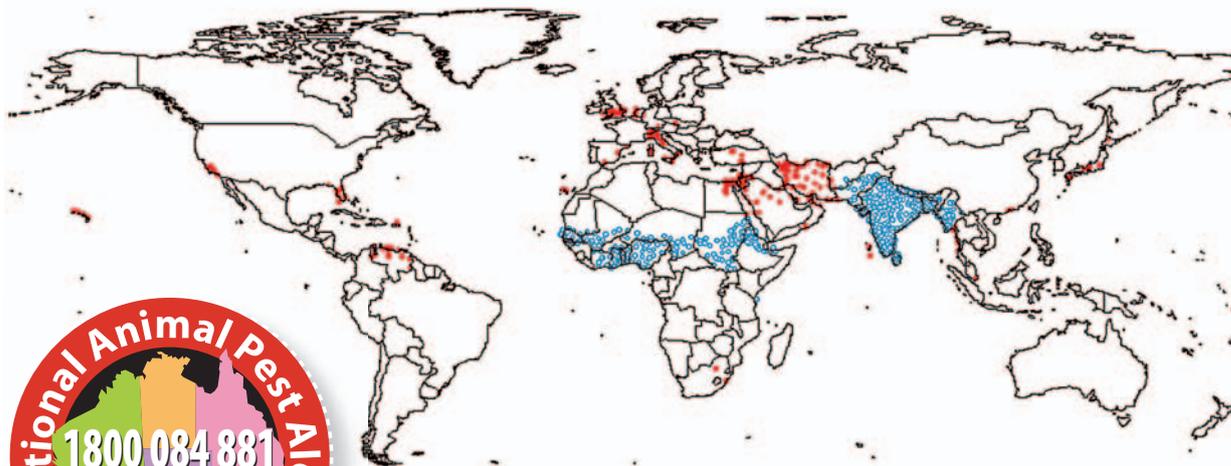


Figure 1. The distribution of the Indian Ringneck including natural (blue) and introduced populations (red).



## Description

The Indian Ringneck is a long-tailed, grass-green, red-beaked parrot, 37 cm to 43 cm in length (body and tail). Male birds have a narrow black and pink collar which is absent from female and immature birds.

Indian Ringnecks are very vocal with a variety of distinctive screeching calls. They can be identified by their typical shrill *kee-ak* call which is unlike that of any native parrot. Their flight is swift and direct with rapid wing beats.

## Mistaken identity

Escaped Indian Ringnecks are often mistaken for native parrots. At least four Australian parrots occur in urban areas where Indian Ringnecks are likely to be seen. These species are of similar size to the Indian Ringneck and have long tails. They are:

- Australian or Port Lincoln Ringneck Parrot (occurs in all states except Tasmania)
- Red-winged Parrot (occurs in northern and north-eastern Australia)
- Red-rumped Parrot (occurs in eastern South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and southern Queensland)
- Eastern Rosella (occurs in south-east South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales and south-east Queensland).

## Distribution

The Indian Ringneck is common throughout much of its extensive natural range. It occurs in sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia from Afghanistan and Pakistan east through India to Myanmar (Burma) and south-east China (Figure 1).

Populations resulting from the escape or release of caged birds occur in Europe, the United States, the Middle East, Japan, Singapore and several island groups including the Hawaiian, Canary, Andaman and Maldivian islands. Many of these populations are expanding in size and range.

## Habitat

Indian Ringnecks occupy a range of habitats including semi-desert, open scrub, bushland, evergreen forest, light rainforest and agricultural land with scattered trees. They also inhabit gardens, orchards, towns and cities.

Introduced populations are found mainly in cities and towns where they rely on rich fruit-bearing vegetation and bird feeders for food. In England these populations are spreading from towns into rural areas.

In Western Australia escaped Indian Ringnecks are often attracted to bird feeders containing seed or fruit put out for other species (Figure 2).



Figure 2. An escaped Indian Ringneck visiting a bird feeder in a fruit growing area near Perth (photo: Colin Daniels).

Please report sightings of Indian Ring



Figure 3. Male Indian Ringneck eating fruit (photo: Philip Mugridge / Alamy).

### Reproduction, food and behaviour

Indian Ringnecks usually nest in tree hollows higher than 3.5 m off the ground, but they can also use holes in rock faces, roof cavities and walls.

They eat a wide variety of foods including cereal grains, legumes, fruits, nuts and blossoms (Figure 3).

Indian Ringnecks are assertive, adaptable and resourceful. Being social birds they are usually seen in small groups but they can form large flocks of hundreds at roosts and food sources. The species is long-lived, commonly surviving in captivity for 20 years.

### Damage by Indian Ringnecks

The Indian Ringneck, like many of its parrot relatives, is a major pest of agriculture within its natural range. Large numbers of ringnecks raid crops and grain storage facilities causing enormous losses. A variety of economically important crops are attacked including barley, sunflower, nuts and fruit such as mango, guava, fig, grape and peach.

Introduced populations eat and destroy fruit as well as damage trees in orchards, vineyards, parks and gardens. They are thought to compete with native species for nest hollows, often occupying them before native birds begin to breed. Large numbers living in parks are a nuisance because of noise and damage to trees.

### Potential to be a pest in Australia

The Indian Ringneck is rated as being highly likely to establish populations in Australia and become a pest of agriculture, the environment and public amenity.

A scientific risk assessment conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Food in Western Australia and endorsed by the national Vertebrate Pests Committee indicates that the Indian Ringneck poses an extreme threat (the highest of four categories) to Australia. Part of the assessment showed

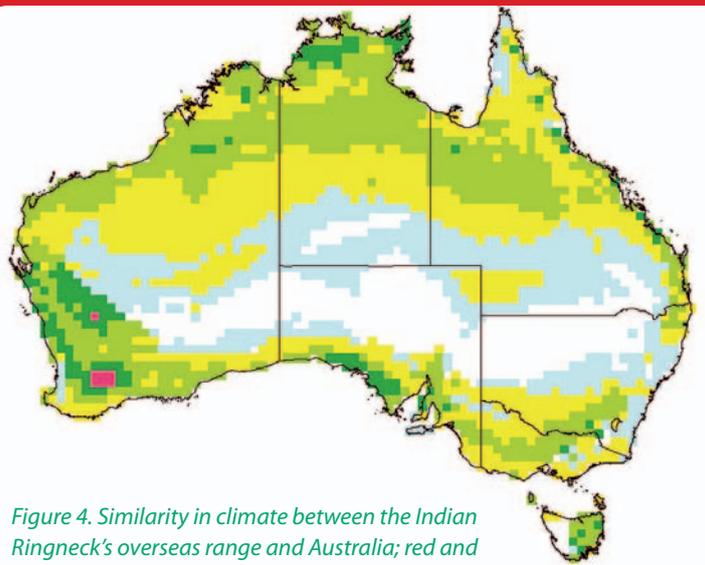


Figure 4. Similarity in climate between the Indian Ringneck's overseas range and Australia; red and green areas are most similar.

that the climate of the ringneck's overseas range is similar to Australia's climate (Figure 4).

It is therefore important that birds found in the wild in Australia are removed quickly. Indian Ringnecks could threaten biodiversity here if they become established in the wild. Native parrots such as rosellas and the endangered Swift Parrot may be at risk from competition for nest hollows. Agricultural crops such as sunflowers, other oilseeds, grapes and other fruit could be at risk.

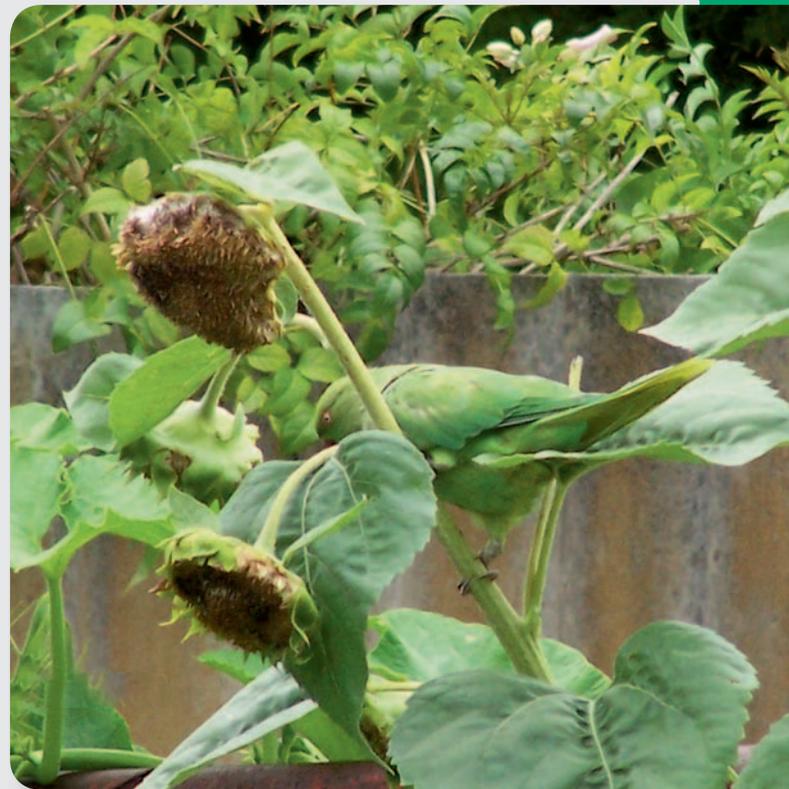


Figure 5. Spot the Indian Ringneck feeding on sunflowers in a Perth garden.

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## Birds in the wild

Large numbers of Indian Ringnecks are held in captivity in Australia but there are few requirements in place to ensure they remain secure in their cages.

Because they are so common, many ringnecks have little monetary value. While handsome, they can bite hard and can be very noisy. These factors contribute to many birds escaping or being released into the wild (Figures 5 to 8), and states and territories may carry out control programs to remove them.

Between 2005 and late 2007 at least 25 Indian Ringnecks were removed from the wild in Western Australia. Some of these birds are thought to have survived in the wild for at least four years and two groups had reportedly bred. Several captured birds had leg bands that identified them as originating with bird breeders.

Many Indian Ringnecks are caught using cage traps and relocated to the care of responsible bird keepers. Different colours, including blue, yellow, grey and white, have been bred in captivity and become common.



Figure 6. Indian Ringnecks that were part of a breeding group of six trapped in a Perth suburb.

## Important Disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Food and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.



Figure 7. An escaped Indian Ringneck safely retrieved along with several Galahs.

## Risk management

To help prevent Indian Ringnecks from establishing in the wild and becoming pests in Australia it is essential that they are maintained in secure (preferably double-door) cages. Unwanted birds should be surrendered, not released and any seen in the wild should be reported to the relevant government department or wildlife authority so that the birds can be safely retrieved.

## Acknowledgments

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Figure 8. Indian Ringnecks established in the wild in Kern County, California (photo: Bob Steele).

