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ARTICLES 021 – 030

The Australia Galah

10 Referenced Articles

Full Text

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ARTICLE 021

THE GALAH

Eolophus roseicapillus (Vieillot)

Cacatua roseicapilla Vieillot, Nouv. Dict. Hist. Nat., 17, 1817, p.12. (In the Indies = New South Wales.)

OTHER NAMES

Rose-breasted Cockatoo, roseate Cockatoo, Willock Cockatoo.

DESCRIPTION

ADULT MALE
Forehead, crown. Lores and occiput white with a pink suffusion through the base of the feathers; mantle, black, wings and tail grey; secondary-coverts, rump and upper tail-coverts very pale grey (almost white); primaries, primary-coverts and tip of tail very dark grey; cheek patches, ear-coverts, nape and underparts, including under wing coverts rose-red; under tail-coverts, vent and lower abdomen pale grey; naked periophthalmic ring deep crimson; bill horn-coloured; iris dark brown; legs grey.

10 specimens: wing 257-275 (266.9) mm., exp. Cul. 24-30 (25.8) mm., tars. 25-27 (25.8) mm.
Tot. length 338 mm (13.3 ins.), wing 274 mm., tail 150 mm., exp. Cul. 25mm., tars 26mm., (AM. 014853, Coonamble, New South Wales).

ADULT FEMALE
Similar to male; iris pinkish-red.
10 specimens: wing 248-282 (259.6)mm., exp. Cul. 24-27 (25.1) mm., tars 24-27 (25.6) mm.
Tot. length 362 mm. (14.2 ins.), wing 282 mm., tail 150 mm., exp. Cul. 27mm., tars. 25 mm., (AM. 028661, Narrandera, New South Wales).

IMMATURES

Duller than adults; crown and breast strongly washed with grey; naked periophthalmic ring pale grey slightly tinted with pink; iris brown.

DISTRIBUTION

Australia generally, chiefly the interior. Accidental to Tasmania.

SUBSPECIES

1 Eolophus roseicapillus roseicapillus (Vieillot)
The nominate race inhabits the eastern section of the continent. Field observers are largely unaware of the subspecific differences so the distribution of races is poorly known.

The Galah is widespread throughout Queensland, except the east coast of Cape York Peninsula, the coastal areas between Cooktown and Townsville, and the extreme south-eastern corner.

McGill (1960a) says that in New South Wales it is found throughout all areas west of the Dividing Range, with small populations in some central coast parts. It is also present on the Southern Tablelands. My observation indicate that only the nominate race is found in the State. All birds that I have seen about White Cliffs, Tero Creek and Broken Hill in the far west have been roseicapillus.

Wheeler (1967) states that it is found in all districts of Victoria, but on the distribution map he shows that in the east it is absent from parts of the Gippsland.

According to Cordon (1962) the species occurs throughout South Australia, including Kangaroo Island. It is possible that birds from from the far north and from the western districts may not be roseicapillis.

According to Storr (1967) the Galah is found throughout the Northern Territory. Ordinarily it occurs north of the Victoria and Roper Rivers, but towards the end of the dry season wandering parties reach the far north coast. It is also present throughout the Kimberley Division, Western Australia. Both subspecies may occur in the Northern Territory, roseicapillus being distributed along the northern parts and assimilis up from the south west.

2 Eolophus rseicapillus assimilis (Mathews)
Cacatoes roseicapilla assimilis Mathews, Nov. Zool., 18, 1912, p. 366, no. 439. (Laverton, West Australia.)

ADULT MALE
General plumage paler; crown more strongly suffused with pink; naked periophthalmic ring white or greyish-white; iris dark brown.
5 specimens: wing 262-269 (264.8) mm., exp. Cul. 25-27 (26.2) mm., tars. 25-26 (25.6) mm.
Tot. length 368 mm. (14.5 ins.), wing 262 mm., tail 152 mm., exp. Cul. 26 mm., tars. 25mm., (WAM. A8117, Millstream Station, Fortescue River, Western Australia).

ADULT FEMALE
Similar to male; iris pinkish-red.

5 specimens: wing 245-273 (256.8) mm., exp. Cul. 23-26(24.3) mm., tars. 25-27 (26.1) mm., (WAM. A8117, Millstream Station, Fortescue River, Western Australia).

This subspecies is found in Western Australia as far north as the Fortescue and probably the De Grey Rivers. Birds from the Kimberley Division may be roseicapillus.

Serventy and Whittell (1967) state that the Galah is now fairly generally distributed in Western Australia, where in recent years it has spread rapidly into southern parts, particularly into the wheatbelt. It has been recorded once on Rottnest Island.

The only reliable distinguishing feature of the subspecies is the colour of the naked periophthmalmic ring and this is conspicuous in the field. Observers visiting central and Northern Australia should note which subspecies occurs in each particular locality. Care should be taken to avoid confusing immatures of roseicapillus with adult assimilis. The periophthalmic ring colouration is clearly shown in living birds and not in their skins.

HABITAT

Galahs inhabit most types of open country. They are typical birds of the savanna woodlands and open grasslands of the interior, but are becoming increasingly abundant in coastal mountainous areas. They are rarely seen above 4,000 feet (1,250 m.), though in August 1967, John Bywater found a small group at 5,000 feet (1,560 m.) near Perisher Valley in the southern Alps, New South Wales .

STATUS

The Galah is undoubtedly the most widespread and one of the most abundant of the Australian parrots. It is common to very common throughout its range. During the past fifty to sixty years there seems to have been an overall increase in the numbers as well as an extension of range, the latter having been more spectacular in the southern regions.

The increase in numbers and extension of range probably has been brought about by man-made changes to the environment, namely land clearance, extension of cereal growing and the provision of stock watering holes. Serventy and Whittell (1967) agree that the these factors have accelerated the process, but, they suggest that fundamentally, the extension of range was initiated by slight deteriorations of the inland climate during this century.

In the past decade they have spread into the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. In this region the mountains are interspersed throughout with valleys and hills which have been opened up for grazing and the cultivation of cereal crops, mainly oats. Galahs have moved into and established themselves in the open areas. They have now become one of the most common birds, even breeding in trees in suburban gardens. At Dry Plains near Adaminaby, New South Wales, the first pairs arrived as summer

visitors in 1957; the first nest was located in 1960 and now there is a resident population of approximately one hundred birds.

Lendon (1951) says that the range appears to be expanding in South Australia and within the past thirty years the species has colonised the more settled, southern areas. According to Boehm (1959) the first Galah seen in the Sutherlands district, South Australia, was reported in 1918. A flock of five birds appeared in 1923, and the first recorded breeding took place in 1926. Within a few years flocks of up to twenty birds were common and by 1938 large flocks containing as many as two hundred individuals were occasionally seen. Thereafter they increased rapidly. The species is now well established on Kangaroo Island where it is said to have arrived in the 1920's.

The rapid extension of the range in Western Australia has been outlined by Serventy and Whittell (1967). Prior to settlement Galahs apparently did not occur south of the mulga-eucalypt line and were restricted to riverside eucalypt habitats of the north-western river systems, south to the Murchison. By 1928 they were very abundant at Mingenew, had reached the outskirts of the north-eastern wheatbelt, and were occasionally observed near Kellerberrin. However, the southernmost visitors did not persist at the time and it was not until the 1930's and early 1940's that Galahs became really plentiful in the northern wheatbelt. By 1950 they had penetrated in strength to a line from the Hill River to Goomalling and Wickepin. They now frequently visit the Perth district along the coast, and bypassing the heavy jarrah forest country, extend deep into the wheatbelt. Breeding occurs as far south as Nyabing and Kantanning and a few birds have appeared at Broome Hill.

HABITS

Galahs are usually seen in small parties or flocks, but large flocks, sometimes containing hundreds of birds are not uncommon. They are occasionally observed in the company of other cockatoos, mainly Cacatua galerita, C. leadbeateri, and C. sanguinea. When feeding with Sulphur-crested Cockatoos they respond to that bird's 'sentinel warning system', but at other times they are not timid. They spend many hours in the morning and late afternoon feeding on the ground, over which they move with a waddling gait. Occasionally a petty squabble will break out between two feeding birds. There will be a flapping of wings, a raising of chests and the emission of loud screeches. The remainder of the flock will cease feeding and, with chests raised in alarm, will watch the two birds. Soon all is quiet and feeding resumes.

During the heat of the day the birds shelter among the foliage of trees or shrubs, stripping the leaves or bark. They have been known to kill a tree by nibbling away the bark until it has been ringbarked. They frequently perch on telephone wires, even in towns and the outer suburbs of the large cities, and often swing upside-down from the wire. In outback districts they have been responsible for failures in telegraph communications; they sit on the top wire in such numbers that it is weighed down and comes in contact with lower wire thus causing a short circuit. After their evening drink the galahs drift in small groups towards their roosting trees. At sunset they commence pre-roosting aerobatics, flying swiftly in and out through the tree tops and

swooping down towards the ground, screeching loudly all the while. They sometimes fly about and call at night, occasionally for long periods.

Many of these galahs, particularly the young birds, are killed by cars as they rise from the ground beside country roads. They are preyed upon by falcons and some of the larger raptors.

MOVEMENTS

Apart from the general extension of range in the south, there is evidence of some local movement, the extent of which appears to fluctuate with food availability and seasonal conditions. In central Queensland, west of Townsville, Galahs are said to be nomadic and at times arrive in immense flocks. It has been reported that along Gasgoyne River, Western Australia, they migrate in large flocks after the breeding season. Deignan (1964) found that Galahs, although completely absent from the Darwin (Northern Territory) area in March and April, were common there at the middle of September.

Most recoveries of banded birds have been near the banding points. However, a Galah banded near Lower light, South Australia in September 1963, was shot at Pira, Victoria, in August 1965, an easterly distance of 296 miles. A bird banded near Lucindale, South Australia, in October 1965, was recovered in April 1967 at Portland, Victoria, 105 miles to the east. A bird banded at Mulgundawa, South Australia, in October 1962, was killed at Keith, South Australia, in April 1967, a south-easterly distance of eighty miles.

FLIGHT

The flight is moderately fast with full, rhythmic wing-beats, which differ markedly from the shallow, erratic wing-beats in the flight of the Cacatua spp. The birds glide only when coming on to alight. They are strong fast fliers and frequently indulge in aerobatics, especially during a rainstorm and before going to roost.

Of all Australian birds the Galah is probably the best example of loss of appreciation because of familiarity. It is a beautiful bird, and a flock in flight is the most impressive sight. As the flock twists and turns the rays of the sun highlight first the rose-pink underparts and then the soft grey of the back and wings.

CALL

The normal contact call, generally given in flight, is difficult to describe; it is rather high-pitched. Metallic, disyllabic screech bordering on a cry. When alarmed, the birds emit a harsh, grating call. The begging call of young birds is a drawn-out, whining cry.

FEEDING

The diet of Galahs compromises seeds of grasses and herbaceous plants, cereal grain, especially wheat and oats, fruits, berries, nuts, roots, green shoots, leaf buds, blossoms, and insects and their larvae. They eat sprouting shoots of wheat and attack ripening crops and bagged grain, causing considerable damage.

They have been seen feeding on mistletoe berries (Loranthus spp.) and the seeds of the rolypoly bush (Bassia sp.). In western New South Wales I have often found them in the company of Little Corellas (Caatua sanguinea) and Mallee Ringneck Parrots (Barnardius barnardi) feeding on the seeds of paddy melons (Cucumis myriocarpus) and wild bitter melons (Citrullus lantatus) split open by the sun. In Canberra they have become fond of clover seeds (Trifolium spp.) and flocks congregate to feed on lawns and sports fields. Near Richmond, Queensland, Berney (1906) found them feeding on the succulent leaves of Atriplex spongiosa. Boehm (1959) says that about Sutherlands, South Australia, they feed extensively on the seeds of saffron thistles (Carthamus lanatus) and white stemless thistles (Onopordon acaule).

Ratcliffe (1936) suspects that the feeding activities of Galahs might be an adverse factor in the regeneration of the saltbush (Atriplex vesicarium) and bluebush (Kochia sedifolia); because of the provision of stock watering places these birds have become more numerous, thus increasing the depredations on these plants. Flocks settle on any patch of vegetation at the seeding stage and not only pick up fallen seeds but attack ripening fruits.

At Cunnamulla, Queensland, Allen (1950) investigated the effects of the feeding habits of Galahs on the regeneration of natural pastures and collected a samples over a period of twelve months. The seeds in the crops were mainly western button grass (Dactyloctenium radulans), Flinders grass (Iseilema membranaceum), and Mitchell grass (Astrebla lappacea), with small quantities of pepper grass (Panicum whitiei) and herbage seeds such as Calotis hispidula. The daily consumption of seed per bird was approximately fifteen to twenty grams. Although many of the natural pasture species seed prolifically, this amount could be important in poor seasons when regrowth is governed by the amount of seed present.

The crop contents from four birds collected at Mangalore, Victoria, comprised wheat grains and seeds, including those of Cryptostemma calendulaceum (cape weed) and Erodium cicutrarium. Cleland (1918) examined the crop contents from five birds collected in inland New South Wales and found seeds, wheat grains, fibrous vegetable tissue and grit.

BREEDING

The courtship display is simple and generally includes aerobatics. The male with his crest raised and head weaving slightly from side to side, struts along a branch towards the female, uttering a soft chattering note as he approaches. The female leaves the branch and, followed by the male, flies across the paddock, twisting and turning through the trees and calling excitedly. They alight in another tree, where the display is repeated, followed by mutual preening.

The breeding season is variable. In southern Australia it lasts from July to December or sometimes as late as February. In the north nesting follows the wet season. And usually takes place during the months February to May or June. In the central regions dry seasons may stop breeding altogether or abnormally small clutches may be laid, while in good years the clutch size may increase or two broods may be reared (McGilp, 1924).

The nest is a hollow limb or hole in a tree, usually a dead or living eucalypt standing near water. At Pennington Bay on Kangaroo Island, South Australia, nests have been found in holes in cliffs. Both birds clean out and prepare the hollow. The strip bark from around the entrance and expose the smooth wood underneath; the reason for this is not known. The bottom of the hollow is lined with eucalyptus leave, which the birds carry to the nest in their bills. Occasionally they add more leaves after the eggs are laid and such a quantity is built up that the eggs may be almost covered. The normal clutch, comprising two to five white, oval shaped eggs, is laid over a period of up to a fortnight.

A set of four eggs of the nominate race from Buckinguy Station near Coonamble, New South Wales, now in the H. L. White Collection, averages 34 (33.3-35.2)x26.5 (26-27.2) mm. A set of five eggs of assimilis from the Coongan river, near Marble Bar, Western Australia, also in the H. L. White Collection, averages 34 (33.3-35.2)x26 (25.2-26.7) mm.

Incubation lasts about thirty days. Both sexes brood and care for the young. While the nestlings are young the parents visit the nest together each three hours and in turn enter the hollow to feed the chicks. While the nestlings are young the parents visit the nest together each three hours and in turn enter the hollow to feed the chicks. While the young birds are being fed they emit an incessant, wheezy call interspersed with harsh, vibrating cries. The adult interlocks her bill with that of the chick and with jerking up and down movement passes regurgitated food to the young bird. It is this jerking movement that is accompanied by the vibrating cry.

The young birds vacate the nest approximately six weeks after hatching. They are fed by the parents for a further two to three weeks. In summer the begging cries from young Galahs sitting in the treetops is an integral part of the inland scene.
A combination clutch has been recorded from Mingenew on the Irwin River, Western Australia. Three young cockatoos taken from a nest proved to be two Major Mitchell's Cockatoos (Cacatua leadbeateri) and a Galah. Apparently the Galah deserted the nest after laying one egg and the Major Mitchell's Cockatoo took over hatch the Galah egg along with her own.
Two mutations are occasionally reported in the wild. In one the grey of the upper parts is replaced by white, while in the other the grey is retained but the undersurface is white instead of pink.

AVIARY NOTES

Because the Galah is so common in Australia few aviculturists bother to breed it. However, it is an extremely popular cage bird, and hand-reared birds make

affectionate pets and will often become proficient 'talkers'. They are not as noisy as Sulphur-crested Cockatoos.

The basic seed mixture should comprise equal parts of sunflower seeds, oats, wheat and cracked maize supplemented by smaller quantities of millet and plain canary seed. Green-food, especially milk thistle, chickweed, lettuce and spinach, should be given regularly. Fruit will rarely be eaten, though some birds are fond of oranges.

For nesting, large hollow logs or nest-boxes should be erected in upright positions in the highest part of the aviary. Most birds will be satisfied with a lining of decade wood or sawdust, but green eucalypt leaves should be provided. Aviary-bred birds may be somewhat delicate and susceptible to chills and for the first six months should be protected from cold drafts.

The Galah has produced hybrids with the Gang-Gang Cockatoo, the Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, the Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, the Little Corella and the Long-billed Corella. Hybrids with Major Mitchell's and the Little Corella have also been seen in the wild.

Note: Galahs have now spread to all areas of Australia, and the sub-species territorial boundries have further blurred. It is now not uncommon to find the western Galah species (Eolophus rseicapillus assimilis) along the east coast of Australia.

ARTICLE 022

GALAHS:

TYPES

Living in Australia, there is rarely, if ever, a day that passes without the sight and sound of wild galahs. Galahs are found in every state and territory. But were you aware that there are different subspecies of the Galah ?

The Scientific name for Galah is Eolophus roseicapillus. Some authorities believe that the Galah is part of the Cacatua genus, which includes the white cockatoos. Whichever is correct, all agree that there are at least two, and possibly three, subspecies.

The most commonly seen Galah in the eastern states is the Eastern subspecies (E. roseicapillus roseicapillus). There are also small populations of a Western subspecies (E. roseicapillus assimilis) in Western Australia, and a Northern subspecies (E. roseicapillus Kuhli) in the north of Australia. The difference between the subspecies is slight, and involves the size of the bird, and the size and colour of the crest and the skin around the around the eye. By far the most common one, and the most commonly kept as a pet, is the Eastern subspecies.

There are also some new colour mutations of Galahs bred in Australia.
There is a 'blue' colour, where the pink is now white; a 'lutino' - white replaces the grey, and the eyes are pink; a 'silver' - the grey is diluted to silver; a 'cinnamon'- the grey is diluted to brown; a 'black-eyed white' - the grey is white and the eyes are normal; and a 'pied' - broad brands of white appear on the body. Although it will be some time before these are affordable for the average pet owner, they add a new dimension to keeping Galahs.

PURCHASING

A major problem in pet Galahs is an almost hysterical behaviour - feather-picking, screaming, and throwing themselves around the cage. While some of these cases are caused by skin conditions, many are due to behavioural problems. You can help to prevent these by thinking carefully if you can give a Galah the attention it needs. Galahs are very similar to young children, both in their IQ and their emotional needs. If you cannot give a Galah the sort of attention you would give a child, then it may not be the bird for you. Remember, a Galah can live for 30 to 40 years, so it is not enough to lavish care and attention on it for 6 months, and then put it in a small cage in the backyard and forget about it.

There are several ways to obtain Galahs. Often people have 'found' Galahs in a paddock, or have rescued injured birds on the roadside. Although their intentions are always the best, this rarely results in a good pet, and may be illegal in some states.

Galahs can be purchased in pet shops, but these may be legally trapped birds, and once again do not make good pets. Fortunately for those wishing to have a good tame pet, some aviculturists are now turning their hand to breeding and hand-rearing Galahs for the pet trade, and these birds make the best pets.

It is very difficult to age a Galah. Young birds often have a suffusion of grey through their pink feathers. This usually moults out between 6 to 12 months, and from then they cannot be aged correctly. Female Galahs (hens) often develop a pink iris at about 12 months of age, and this can be used to sex them. However, while all Galahs with a pink iris are hens, not all hens have a pink iris !

When purchasing a Galah, examine it carefully. Warning signs include:

- ragged, un-kept plumage
- overgrown beak
- dirty feathers
- discharge matting the feathers above the nostrils
- feather loss around the eyes, and watery, swollen eyes
- droppings pasting the vent
- timid, fearful nature
- evidence of feather picking

Don't accept assurances that the bird is only moulting, or is stressed. Galahs, like many other parrots, are susceptible to some very serious diseases. These include chlamydiosis (psttacosis) and circovus disease (Beak and Feather Disease). These are very common in wild caught birds, and in some aviary-bred birds. Both of these disease spread readily from bird to bird and psittacosis will effect people as well. For this reason it is wise to insist on a money-back guarantee subject to a post-purchase examination by an avian vet. There are special tests for these diseases, but these need to be carried out and interpreted by a vet who knows and understands birds and diseases.

HOUSING

There are few sites sadder than a Galah confined in a so-called cockatoo cage, often with a piece of pipe as a perch, and a rusting galvanised dish for food and water. These cages might be okay for a bird that is allowed free range of the house or yard, and only uses the cage to sleep. In this situation the cage is like a 'security blanket'. However, to confine a bird in one of these cages 24 hours a day should be considered an act of cruelty.
Before buying a Galah, look around for the largest cage possible. You might have to pay a few hundred dollars for one, but remember that this should be a lifelong investment. Surely $10 a year is not bad value ?

Place the cage in a part of the house where the bird will see people and be part of the family activities. Remember that Galahs are a flock bird, and they regard people as part of their flock. It is very stressful for them to be out of sight and sound of the rest

of the flock. Be careful though, not to put it somewhere where the traffic flow is so busy that your Galah gets stressed by constant activity !

Perches in the cage should be natural, non-toxic tree branches. Galahs particularly like chewing gum branches and these should be supplied regularly. Ensure that food and water dishes are not under the perches where the bird's droppings can fall in.

Position the cage and the perches so that the bird sits at about your chest height. If it is below that, it can become very timid and scared. Above your chest, your bird will think it is dominate to you. This can lead to problems with screaming and bitting.

Galahs are great chewers, and therefore the wire of their cage should be strong enough to withstand their beak. Use stainless steel feed and water dishes, or heavy ceramic dishes. Avoid galvanised dishes - not only are they poisonous in their own right, but they often have lead solder around their base.

FEEDING

The major problems seen in Galahs by avian vets is obesity. This causes heart disease, liver failure, diabetes, and fatty tumours under the skin. The single greatest cause of obesity is a diet of sunflower seeds.
Young Galahs should be introduced to as many different foods as possible, before they develop hard and fast dietary preferences. If these preferences have already formed, restrict the sunflower (or any other seed) to two small meals twice daily. Give the seed for 10 minutes while your having breakfast and tea. Take it away between meals, and offer a salad of sweet corn, peas, beans, silver-beet, carrot, sweet potato, capsicum and pumpkin.
Avoid or minimise fatty foods such as nuts or sunflower seed. Believe it or not, an occasional chop bone or chicken drumstick is much appreciated, and is quite good for your bird. 'Fun' foods, like pinecones, Casuarina and gumnuts, Banksia flowers, and Kikuyu runners, are not only good for your bird, but can keep it occupied for hours. Although this sort of feeding appears expensive and time-consuming, remember it is still much cheaper than a vet trip !

ENTERTAINING

As I said before Galahs, are like small children. Tests have shown that they have an IQ and emotional development equivalent to a three to five year old child. This means that they can learn things, have likes and dislikes, can sulk and have tantrums, and usually love a good cuddle ! Just as you would leave a child in a bare room with nothing to do, Galahs will suffer greatly if confined to a cage with nothing to do. You do not have to spend a fortune on toys, although there are some very good ones available.

Some of the toys you can provide include:

- cardboard boxes
- toilet rolls
- gum branches and gumnuts
- pine cones, banksia flowers, etc
- stainless steel toys
- rope and wooded toys

LIVING

The key element to living with your Galah is learning to think like a Galah. They are flock birds, and relate to people as they would other Galahs. All of their behaviour stems from this simple understanding.

For example:

- Screaming to greet the dawn and dusk, or to attract the attention of the rest of the flock, is normal behaviour. Yelling back at your Galah reinforces that behaviour - after all, that's what Galahs do in the wild !

- Galahs that are higher than the rest of the flock are dominant. Dominant birds will discipline their flock mates by yelling at them, or with a well placed nip. They will expect the best of everything, and expect it first. If they fail to get this, they can react angrily.

- At around 2 to 4 years Galahs are old enough to choose a mate, and bond with them. Any other member of the flock coming between them and their mate requires disciplining. The sudden removal of that mate can be very stressful, and lead to behaviour such as feather picking.

To help deal with this sort of behaviour, try the following tips:

- Never let your bird's eyes be above yours. Never let it sit on your shoulder.

- Don't react to it's screaming by yelling back - that's just what it wants. If possible, Ignore it, or place it in a dark room for 10 to 15 minutes.

- Never hit your bird - it achieves nothing except a scared bird.

- Feed your bird twice daily. By controlling access to food, you establish dominance.

- Give your bird lots of love and attention, but don't start with levels of attention that you can't maintain.

Don't be afraid to seek professional help if abnormal behaviour such as feather picking, screaming or bitting starts. The sooner it is recognised, and treatment begins, the better the chance of a successful outcome.

Galahs can make wonderful pets but they have special needs and requirements. Recognising this, and taking steps to deal with it, can help you to enjoy what must be one of the most under-rated pets in Australia.

http://www.greatgalahs.homestead.com/galah_types.html
Accessed: 29/09/2001

ARTICLE 023

- NO TEXT AVAILABLE -

ARTICLE 024

GALAH
Cacatua roseicapilla

Despite its (unearned) reputation for lack of intelligence, the Galah is probably the most successful member of the cockatoo family in terms of both distribution and abundance. It has increased its range in historic times and now occurs over almost all of the continent.

Originally the Galah was a bird of open woodland, mallee and all but the most arid deserts in the interior of Australia. It generally avoided coastal areas and was not found in the tall forests of the eastern ranges or in the more humid areas of the south-west. Although early records suggest that some natural movements have always occurred between Tasmania and the mainland, it is only within the past century that it has become a common breeding resident in the island State. Over the same period, it has moved into the Eastern mainland coastal areas and increased in numbers throughout its original range. Comparable movements are known to have taken place in South Australia. This expansion has apparently been in response to land clearance and the establishment of cereal cropping. Galahs are ground-feeders, and readily forage on wheat fields, lawns, golf courses and cleared paddocks.

The Galahs has thus shown itself able to respond quickly to an increased and more widespread food resource because of its natural mobility (itself an adaptation to the unpredictable nature of the climate of inland Australia). Large flocks move great distances in search of more favourable conditions when drought occurs in the interior. The Galah has been able to establish apparently permanent breeding populations as a result of such movements wherever the artificial habitats it encountered suited the needs of an open-country, seed-eating cockatoo. Ian Bevege tells of a flock of Galahs that, in response to an inland drought in 1966, arrived at Maroochydore on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland, where they had not previously been recorded. The birds remained to breed and founded what is now a permanent resident population. A similar story might be told of many places along the east coast, and the Galah is apparently continuing in a process of vigorous expansion and consolidation.

The Galah nests in a wide variety of tree hollows and competes actively with other species for available space. It usually selects a cavity from about two to twenty meters from the ground, but if a suitable hollow is not available, it will enlarge or create a suitable nest chamber. The floor of the chamber is carpeted with a few green leafy twigs. The clutch varies from two to six eggs which, incubated by both parents, hatch in about thirty days.

Galahs rarely breed until they are at leats two years old. Mating is permanent, but a new partner may be acquired after the death of one member of the pair. Although the birds may forage up to twenty kilometres away, mated pairs are sedentary, returning

every night to roost near the nest-tree and using the same nest hollow year after year. The reproductive strategy of the Galah involves a long period when the young are dependant upon the parent birds, including up to two months' residence in the nesting chamber before fledging. For thirty to forty days after departing the nest, adolescent birds form part of a crèche, which occupies tree tops or similar perches while the adult birds are out foraging. The parents return at intervals throughout the day to feed the young birds. When finally abandoned by their parents, juveniles form large flocks and disperse throughout the countryside. Adults seldom undertake these long-range movements unless prevailing environmental conditions force an emigration. There is a high death rate among younger birds but, if they survive into adulthood, there is a good chance they will live for many years. Analysing returns of tagged nestlings in Western Australia, Ian Rowley found that only forty-three per cent survived their first six months of life. Eighty per cent of all his returns had travelled less than twenty kilometres, and over half of the total had been shot. Remarking that "a population of galahs consists of three very different groupings; juvenile flocks that wander extensively; immature flocks that are locally nomadic; and the resident breeding pairs", he concluded that "shooting accounts for most galah deaths in the Western Australia wheatbelt, with cats, raptors and motor vehicles as other major factors; a quarter of the young birds that leave the nest may die before they are deserted by their parents after 6 weeks".

The Galah has hybridised with other cockatoos both in the wild and in captivity. There are also records of aberrant coloration in the wild, where the pink or the grey in the plumage is replaced by white. One aviary hybridisation involving a Sulphur-crested Cockatoo and a Galah took place under unusual circumstances between two very old birds kept by Jim Rook, of Griffith, New South Wales. The male Galah, at the age of at least forty years, tore through the wire separating him from the female Sulphur-crested Cockatoo to consummate the relationship. Expecting no progeny from such an unlikely pairing, Rook did not provide a nest box, but the Sulphur-crested female was undeterred and excavated a nest chamber underneath a piece of corrugated iron to lay two eggs, which subsequently hatched to produce a pair of spectacular "Cock-galahs". These birds were orange underneath, with grey wings and a large crest similar to that of the Pink Cockatoo (Major Mitchell).

OTHER NAMES
Rose-breasted Cockatoo, Roseate Cockatoo, Willock Cockatoo, Rose Cockatoo

MEASUREMENTS

Length:	c 350mm
Wing:	249 - 270mm
Tail:	120 - 160mm
Bill:	24 - 30mm
Tarsus:	c 25mm
Weight:	290 – 380g

DESCRIPTION
Adult:

Head pink; crest (usually not raised) pinkish white;
underwing coverts, neck, breast and abdomen deep rose;
mantle, upperwing and flight features chalky medium grey, lower back, vent and tail pearl grey; flight features grey, shading to very dark grey at tips.
Iris very dark brown; bare orbital skin pink; bill grey, legs and feet grey.
Sexes similar (except female has iris pink to pinkish cream); no seasonal variation.

Immature:

Similar to adult but duller and paler, with more grey plumage; naked orbital skin grey.

IDENTIFICATION
Unmistakable: a medium-sized pink and grey cockatoo.

VARIATION
Western populations (subspecies assimilis) separable on the basis of paler plumage, crown more deeply washed pink, and slate grey eye ring;
populations of central arid zone similar to south-eastern birds but smaller and paler, sometimes recognised as separate subspecies (howei)

VOICE
Clear, two-noted contact call “chi-chi” or “che-che”. Harsh alarm screech.

HABITAT
Open areas: natural grasslands, paddocks, grain fields, golf courses, open woodland, desert, city parks; also cliffs on rocky offshore islands.

FOOD
Seeds taken from the ground.

HABITS
Strongly gregarious, especially when foraging; flocks may exceed 1000 birds. Mature breeding pairs maintain permanent territories, younger birds congregate in roving flocks. Forages largely on the ground; congregates to drink at pools in early morning and evening. Roosts communally. Active, noisy and conspicuous. May call and fly after sunset. Wild hybrids recorded with Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Pink Cockatoo (Major Mitchell), Little Corella.

BREEDING
Season very variable, but mainly July – December in the south, February – July in the tropical north. Both sexes incubate and care for young.
Nest: in a tree hollow, hole in rock face or cliff, or similar site. Bottom of the hole lined with eucalypt or other leaves.
Eggs: usually 3 or 4; round-oval; dull white 35 x 25m
Incubation: c 30 days; fledging c 56 days.

DISTRIBUTION
Mainland Australia, eastern Tasmania, Kangaroo Island.

STATUS
Common to abundant; has increased in numbers and range (especially on the East coast and associated highlands) since European settlement, probably because of clearing of woodland and installation of artificial watering points. Expansion accelerated during 20th century because of aviary escapes in urban centres. Often common on small offshore islands. Endemic

Francis Crome, James Shields (1992)
Parrots & Pigeons of Australia
Angus & Robertson

ARTICLE 025

Galah,
Eolophus roseicapilla. (35 cm. Open areas. Very common.) The whole flock will "change colour" as they wheel, revealing the beautiful pink under-feathers. Many people can recall the day when seeing a galah was an event, but today they are one of the most prolific of country birds. They have continued to thrive, even during drought years, and obviously this is a species suited by land clearance and crop cultivation. (H. Frauca)

(1979)
Every Australian Bird Illustrated
Rigby
ISBN 0 7270 0009 8

ARTICLE 026

GALAH
Eolophus roseicapillus

DESCRIPTION
Length 35 cm. Weight (leadbeateri) 300 – 435 g.
ADULTS crown white suffused with salmon-pink, narrow, forward-curving crest scarlet tipped with white and with a central band on yellow, broader in females; face, neck, breast and upper abdomen salmon-pink; under wing-coverts slightly darker than breast; upperparts, tail and lower underparts white; undersides of flight and tail feathers basally marked with deep salmon-pink; bill white; iris dark brown in males, reddish-pink in females; legs grey.
IMMATURES resemble adults; iris pale brown.

DISTRUBUTION
Australia generally, chiefly the interior, accidental to Tasmania.

SUBSPECIES

1. E. r. roseicapillus (Vieillot)

10 males
wing 257 – 275 (266.9) mm, tail 135 – 161 (150.8) mm,
exp. cul. 24 – 30 (25.8) mm, tars. 25 – 27 (25.8) mm

10 females
wing 248 – 282 (259.6) mm, tail 140 – 170 (151.2) mm,
exp. cul. 24 –27 (25.1) mm, tars. 24 – 27 (25.6) mm

Occurs throughout eastern, central and northern Australia.

2. E. r. assimilis (Mathews)

ADULTS general plumage paler; crown more strongly suffused with pink; naked periophthalmic ring greyish white.

5 males
wing 262 – 269 (256.8) mm, tail 138 – 154 (146.0) mm,
exp. cul. 25 – 27 (26.2) mm, tars. 25 – 26 (25.6) mm

5 females
wing 245 – 273 (256.8) mm, tail 146 – 152 (148.2) mm,
exp. cul. 23 –26 (24.3) mm, tars. 25 – 27 (26.1) mm

Found in Western Australia as far north as the Fortescue and probably the De Grey Rivers.

3. E. r. kuhli (Mathews)

ADULTS similar to assimilis, but with grey-red periophthalmic ring.

5 males
wing 251 – 262 (256.6) mm, tail 125 – 136 (130.8) mm,
exp. cul. 24 – 25 (24.2) mm, tars. 23 – 25 (23.6) mm

1 Female
wing 235 mm, tail 112 mm
exp. cul. 23mm, tars 23 mm

Exact range is unknown, but birds from the Kimberly region, Western Australia, are probably best ascribed to the subspecies. I am provisionally accepting kuhli on the basis of periophthalmic ring colouration as noted on the label of one specimen from north-western Australia (AMNH. 619832). The type specimen is a very young bird and cannot be used for subspecific determination.

GENERAL NOTES

Galahs are abundant in most types of open country below 1250 m. They are typical birds of the savannah woodlands and open grasslands of the interior, but have benefited from land-clearance and the cultivation of cereal crops and are now becoming increasingly plentiful in coastal and mountainous areas, particularly in the Southern regions (for details, see Forshaw, 1969a and 1969b). They are common in many urban districts, even nesting in trees in gardens and parklands. There is evidence of some local movement, the pattern and extent of which appear to be unpredictable and probably dependant on food, availability and seasonal conditions.

They are usually seen I small parties or flocks, but large flocks of up to two or three hundred are common. They occasionally associate with other cockatoos and when feeding with Sulphur-crested cockatoos Cacatua galerita respond to that bird's 'sentinel warning system', but at other times they are not shy. They spend many hours

in the morning and late afternoon feeding on the ground, over which they move with a waddling gait. During the heat of the day they shelter in a tree or bush, idly stripping leaves and bark; they have been known to kill trees by removing bark from the trunks. After their evening drink they drift in small groups towards the roosting trees. At sunset they commence pre-roosting aerobatics, flying swiftly in and out through the treetops and swooping down towards the ground, screeching loudly all the while. They sometimes fly about and call at night.

The flight is moderately fast with full, rhythmic wingbeats. At the end of a long, high flight they spiral down, twisting and turning before finally darting into a tree. A flock of these cockatoos in flight is a most impressive sight as the sun highlights first the rose-pink underparts and then the soft grey of the back and wings.

Their food is seeds, grain, roots, green shoots, leaf buds and insects and their larvae. They eat sprouting shoots of wheat and attack both ripening crops and bagged grain, causing considerable damage. At Cunnamulla, Queensland, Allen (1950) investigated the feeding habits of Galahs over a period of twelve months. He found that they were feeding on seeds of grasses, mainly western button grass Dactyloctenium radulans, Flinders grass Iseilema membranaceum, and Mitchell grass Astrebla lappacea, and each bird consumed about 15 to 20 g daily. Crop contents from birds collected at Mangalore, Victoria, comprised wheat grains and seeds, including those of cape weed Cryptostemma calendulaceum and storksbill Erodium cicutarium.

CALL

In flight a shrill, disyllabic screech bordering on a cry; when alarmed a series of sharp shrieks. All call-notes are characteristic of the species.

NESTING

The courtship display is simple and generally includes aerobatics. The male, with his crest raised and head weaving slightly from side to side, struts along a branch towards the female and utters soft, chattering notes as he approaches. The female leaves the branch and, pursued by the male flies off, darting in and out through the trees and calling excitedly. They alight in another tree where the display is repeated and followed by mutual preening.

The breeding season varies from June to November in the north of the continent to August to January in the south. The nest is in a hollow limb or hole in a tree, generally a eucalypt growing near water. Bark is stripped away from around the entrance and the bottom is lined with a layer of Eucalyptus leaves on which are laid two to five, normally three, eggs. Incubation lasts approximately four weeks and both parents brood. The young leave the nest about eight weeks after hatching and are fed by the parents for a further two or three weeks. Adult plumage is acquired within the first year.

EGGS:
Ovate; 9 eggs,
35.3 (34.5 – 36.2) x 26.5 (26.0 – 27.2) mm [H. L. White Coll.].

Forshaw, Joseph M. (1989)
Parrots of the World - Third Revised Edition
Lansdowne Editions
ISBN 0 7018 2800 5

ARTICLE 027

*243. **Galah** Cacatua roseicapilla

380 mm. Underparts grey; crown pale pink; neck and underparts rose-red.

In 1920 Galahs were liberated from Taronga Park Zoo. There are no records of this species before or after this release until a the drought in 1941 which resulted in “hundreds” being reported from some districts. There has been a steady increase in the number of Galahs and they have become breeding residents in many areas around Sydney. The first definite breeding record was at Richmond in 1955. The records show that liberations had some bearing on the large flocks seen today.

Hoskin, E.S. (1991)
The Birds of Sydney, Country of Cumberland NSW 1770 – 1989
Surrey Beatty & Sons Pty Ltd
ISBN 0 949324 40

ARTICLE 028

314 GALAH Cacatua roseicapilla

Other Names: Goolie, Goulie, Roseate or Rose-breasted Cockatoo; Willie-willock, Willock.

Field marks: 340 – 380 mm. Well known: pale-grey above, rose-pink to deep rose-red below, with low cap-like crest. Male's eye dark-brown; female's reddish. Nominate race has whitish crown and crest, deep-red eyering; race assimilis has pinker larger crest, underparts whiter, specially rump and tail; eyering pale-grey. Imm: (both races) breast washed grey; eyering grey. Singly, pairs to very large noisy flocks, easily identified from afar by the alteration of grey and pink as the wheel. Feeds much on the ground but also in foliage: often a pest in grain, haystacks, domestic fruit or nut-trees. Waters and roosts in noisy antic companies; hangs with wings spread, flies wildly.

Voice: Unmistakable thin high-pitched splintered call, 'chill chill'; harsher screeches.

Habitat: Open country with suitable trees, typically on watercourses. Expansion of grasslands, cereal crops and provision of waterholes and tanks has greatly expanded habitat; town parks, playing fields, even beaches.

Breeding: Nest: in hollow tree, living or dead; occasionally in cliff. Two unusual features: bark is typically stripped from round entrance; nest-hollow is lined with green eucalypt leaves and twigs. Eggs: 2-5; white, oval.

Range and Status: Formerly inland and drier coastal areas where water available; has greatly expanded range coastwards since settlement. Now very widespread in suitable habitat except some wetter coastal areas. Nominate race: e. and se. Aust.; vagrant King I. and other Bass Strait islands; in Tas., recent records (? escapes) mostly near Hobart and Launceston; also Legana, e. Tas. Assimilis: n. SA, s. NT and s. WA. Common to very abundant; sedentary.

Pizzey, Graham. (1980)
A field Guide to the Birds of Australia
Angus & Robertson
ISBN 0 207 173 82 6

ARTICLE 029

How to look after a baby Galah.

People are forever asking me, how to take care of baby galahs. It might be because they want to hand rear a aviary chick or they have found an abandoned wild bird. So I have put together this article to explain what I would do.

The article is divided into two sections.

1. Abandoned Wild Babies
2. Looking after a baby Galah

Section 1. ABANDONED WILD BABIES

Occasionally wild parent Galahs will abandoned their babies. This can occur because of a threat to the nest by a predator, the baby is a runt, bad climatic conditions such as a drought and sometimes just because the parent Galahs are bad at parenting.

It is important to state that some babies may have fallen out of their nest, and the parents may be still looking after it on the ground. In this case, it would be best to put the baby back in the nest, or if it is impossible to do so a safe, warm place where the parents can come a feed it.

If you find a baby bird that appears to be abandoned the first thing you should do is assess the situation.

Is the bird in any current physical danger?

Is the bird is on the ground near a busy road? Is a cat or dog stalking it? Are other birds in the area attacking it?

Yes the bird is in Danger

If the bird is in danger its time to act. If possible remove any threats out of the area. For example tie your dog up, put your cat inside. If the danger cannot be removed from the area you may have to capture the bird. Read Capturing an Injured or Baby Galah below.

No the bird does not appear to be in danger?

If the bird is not being threatened, observation is the first step required. Find out if the birds parents are returning to feed it. If they are it is best to let the parents look after the bird. Place it back in the nest or in a safe spot away from any physical danger. A cardboard box with a towel in it makes a nice refuge. Place it in a safe shady place away from cats or dogs, above ground level if possible. You may be required to bring it inside of a night to keep it safe from roaming nocturnal predators.

If the parents are not feeding it or are attacking it you must take further action. You will need to capture the bird.

Note: Against popular belief parent galahs will not abandoned a baby if they watch or sense humans have touched it.

Capturing an Injured or Baby Galah

Your approach to the bird should always be in a direction opposite from any source of danger. So for example if the bird decides to flees, it will move in the direction away from a busy road.

By Hand

Depending on how old the bird is it might be possible to just simply walk up slowly and catch the bird by hand. Just be very careful, galahs are known to bite very hard. Especially older injured birds.

Approach the bird from behind, and depending on the birds age, place a minimum level of force on the birds back gently forcing its chest onto the ground. Then with your other hand, slide it under the bird's belly. Now move your first hand from the birds back and use your fingers to make a firm but gentle grip around the birds neck. Lift the bird and hold it tight against your chest.

When carrying a bird move in a slow and smooth manner, and try to keep any talking to a whisper to prevent scaring the bird.

Towel or Blanket

Some birds will allow you to get really close but not actually pick them up. Throwing a towel or light blanket over them is probably the best method to use.

If you still just can't get close enough, try getting a helper to herd the bird towards the towel so you can simply just lay it over the bird.

Some fishing nets will work equally as well in capturing the bird but have the disadvantage that the bird can still see what's going on so is more likely to continue to struggle. Blankets have the advantage that they block out the light, which temporarily disorientates the bird, making it more passive.

To pick up the bird clasp the bird body with two hands from both sides, towel and all. Then scoop up the towel, bundling it up towards your body. Hold the bundle firmly against your chest.

Wetting the Bird

If the bird still won't let you close to it, or has flown up to a low branch, you can prevent further flights by wetting the bird with a hose on a strong mist setting. Birds can't fly when wet, but don't over do it. The last thing a sick or abandoned bird needs is to be soaked to the bone.

If the bird now can't fly, now try to use a Towel or Blanket to catch it.

Now a BIG DECISION now needs to be made.

A. Do you try and nurture the bird untill it can be released?

B. Would you prefer to let wildlife carers look after the problem?

Before deciding to let the wildlife carers take the bird it is important to remember they have very limited resources. Galahs rate low on the priority list as they take resources away from other more endangered species. So if you can, I recommend you try to care for the bird yourself if at all possible.

If you definitely can't dedicate the time or your circumstances don't allow for you to look after the bird…

Phone WIRES NSW: 1800 641 188

For those that are considering looking after the bird yourself, please read all of Section 2 of this article before deciding this approach is right for you.

Section 2. LOOKING AFTER A BABY GALAH

Hand rearing a baby Galah is a time consuming process but he rewards are worthwhile. For those raising an abandoned bird it's the joy of keeping a bird alive and releasing it back into nature. For pet owners it is the friendly companion that will emerge.

Now you have the bird inside you need to find a place to keep the bird. A warm laundry is a usual favourite.

The bird needs to kept in a warm place away from any drafts, bright lights, direct sunlight, loud noises and dangers (like your cat or dog).. A cardboard box, with a towel scrunched into it forming a hollow works well. Whilst the bird is young cover the box with a towel to keep it dark when you aren't feeding the bird. This will help it keep calm saving precious energy and allowing it to get plenty of sleep.

Administering Liquids

It is important the bird gets plenty of liquids. Using water at room temperature, use a thoroughly cleaned eye-dropper, or an old spoon with the sides bent upwards, to feed the Galah. With you hands gently tilt the birds head back, hook the eye dropper or spoon under its beak and then gently lift the beak till it opens. Then poor/squirt the food gently into its mouth (not down its throat as it may go into its lungs and drown).

This will most likely be really messy, so wrap a cloth around the birds body to stop it from getting saturated and cold. Patience is the name of the game as a scared bird will put up a stubborn fight and refuse to drink until it realises you are trying to help it. So never yell at the bird, always praise and encourage the bird in a soft and gentle voice.

Hand Feeding

If the bird is too young to eat seed, you will have to feed it a mixture of Weat-Bix, water with an ever so small drop of natural honey (the sugar will get the birds energy levels up and the sweet taste will encourage it to eat).

Break-off a quarter of Weat-Bix biscuit into a bowl. Pour just enough lukewarm water onto the Weat-Bix, mixing it into the biscuit until it becomes mushy. Then add a drop of honey. Mix together well. Using a spoon put a small dab of Weat-Bix onto the tip of a spoon.

Again wrap the bird in a cloth, because a reluctant bird will fight and shake its head to prevent you feeding it until it realises the food tastes good. Again be gentle in nature and in voice.

Hold the birds head back so it is looking upwards, this forms a straight passage from the mouth to the birds crop. Put the tip of the spoon under the birds beak lifting it gently until its mouth opens. Slide the mush into its mouth. Then allow the bird's

beak to close. Keep its head tilted back. Now gently hold the bird's mouth shut with your fingertips for a few seconds until it swallows.

Again persistence is the key. If the bird isn't co-operating leave it for 15 minutes in a dark quiet place and the try again.

Very softly tapping on the bird's beak with the spoon before feeding it is a good way of teaching the bird you want to feed it. This imitates the parent's natural behaviour when it feeds a bird in the nest.

Once the bird begins eating, you will need to feed it three times a day. At sunrise (7am), before midday (11am) and in the evening (6pm). Follow up each feeding with a drink of water.

Teaching a Bird to Eat and Drink

As the bird gets older, introduce budgie/canary seed into the mushed Weat-Bix. Also try grinding some shelled sunflower seeds into the mix. So the bird becomes familiar with the seed and water, have a container of water and budgie seed where the bird can access it in its cage or box.

You can encourage a slightly older bird (once feathers start to appear) to eat and drink on its own by holding the bird near its seed/water bowl and pushing its beak gently into the seed or water. At this stage also introduce grass, fruit and vegetables into the birds environment for it to have a pick at. Promote these foods to the birds mouth to encourage picking.

Introduce the Galah to sunflower seeds by hand feeding it shelled sunflower seeds. Holding the seed in your fingers, push it under your bird's top beak till its mouth opens then place it onto the tongue till the bird puts pressure back on the seed with its top beak. Hopefully it soon gets the picture that if it grinds the seed with its beak it gets a feed.

Once it starts eating the sunflower seeds from your hand, you have now acquired your secret weapon. The achillis heel to the galahs undivided attention. Galahs almost always prefer sunflower seeds to any other food. So hold these seeds back as a treat (too many sunflower seeds can cause obesity in pet galahs). You will use these seeds to reward good behaviour when training a bird to talk, for being hand fed or to come to you on call. If you wish to release or keep the Galah in a large aviary and are not interested in training the bird, you can simply add a supply sunflower seeds to the bird's seed mix.

To get the bird use to cracking its own sunflower seeds, use your fingernails to crack and then peel off one side of the shell. Feed this to your bird. It will discover the shell doesn't taste so good and will discard it. Repeat this process for a few days. Now introduce seeds that have their shell split but not pealed off. The Galah will soon work out it has to manipulate and remove the shell to get to the yummy seed inside.

Once it gets the hang of this introduce uncracked sunflower seeds.

Release

Releasing an extremely tame Galah is not a wise move. It will not be able to cope with the dangers of the outside world. If you are looking to release a bird you have rescued:

- Keep human contact to a minimum.
- Ensure it can fly very well
- Introduce a mirror so it can associate with birds of its own kind.

If you wish to release your Galah it is best to keep it outside in a cage located under some the shade. This allows the bird to see and interact (call) with other Galahs. Once the bird is old enough to fly and can feed and drink without your assistance, open the galahs cage when other galahs are around. (Ensure it's in a place safe from cats, dogs or other wild animals). If the Galah doesn't leave when the wild galahs fly away make sure you close the cage again.

Repeat this process, as it is important the Galah leaves of its own accord.

If after a week the Galah hasn't got the hint, you can try removing it from the cage when other galahs are present and allow it to walk around outside. Leave the cage with its door wide open so if scared the Galah can retreat to its refuge.

Once the bird does decide to fly away leave the open cage outside for a few days with a supply of food and water in it. If the Galah struggles to find food it has a place to return for a feed.

If you find the Galah keeps returning for food, you can now remove the cage a just leave some food and water out in a bowl. You may now have a bird that will grace you with its company everyday.

If you are keen for it to look after itself without your assistance, sprinkle the seed on the ground so it learns not to associate food as coming from a bowl. Everyday reduce the amount of seed you put out until after a couple of weeks you are only putting out a pinch of seed. The Galah will learn through this method that if it wants a decent feed it will have to start looking elsewhere.

Conclusion

I hope this article was of some help. It will surely help me so I don't have to individually reply to all the e-mails I get asking about this topic.

Thanks,

Graeme Szynal
Updated: February 2005

Article 030

Rub-a-dub-dub

Rub-a-dub-dub,
There were THREE in the scrub,
Eating a pineapple pie,
Red Kangaroo, Mouse and Wallaby too,
When Peter Possum walked by.

Rub-a-dub-dub,
There were FOUR in the scrub,
Eating their way through the crust;
When out of the blue came Fred Cockatoo
With some cordial to wash down the dust.

Rub-a-dub dub,
There were FIVE in the scrub;
Nothing was left but the crumbs;
But when George the Galah drove up in his car,
They were all fast asleep neath the gums.

By Dan Valley

Illustrated by Yvonne Perrin (1986)
Australian Poems for the Very Young
Child & Henry Publishing Pty Ltd
ISBN 0 86777 248 4