

Foreign Lories in Australia
By Phil Smith mpas
Photographs by Phil & Ros Smith

Foreign lories have been around for many years, as far back as the 1920's, but the first of the imports since importation was banned in the 1950's, was in 1993, when we got the chattering red lories, dusky, and the black capped lories. I started in lories back in 1990 – 1991 when we got a Moluccan red lory that was very feather plucked. A friend of mine happened to need a Moluccan red lory cock and he did not mind that it was feather plucked, so we swapped for a young Buru red lory cock bird which came in on one of the early shipments. A few months later I was able to acquire a young Buru hen to make up a pair.

The pair was extremely compatible, and within the first 6 months we had our first round of eggs, but unfortunately they broke them to our dismay. When they laid the second clutch I was not going to take any chances, so I decided I would foster them under a pair of Australian scaly-breasted lorikeets that had reared many chicks in the past. I was so thankful that I did as it was a great success and they reared two beautiful Burus. This was the first of many clutches that they raised for me, in the next 8 months they raised 6 chicks and over the following 3 years we had raised 24 young under scaly-breasted, musk, red-collared and rainbow lorikeets. This put us on the track to being able to exchange these for many other varieties of foreign lories, such as chattering, dusky, Moluccan red, black capped and red-breasted black capped lories.

We have had success in breeding all these species. The challenge with some of the species is managing the gene pool which we found with our Burus as so many were produced from this one pair and not many other pairs in the country producing young, it was difficult to obtain outcrosses. Over 20 years of keeping foreign lories we learnt a great deal about the housing and keeping of them. We now keep our foreign lories in 6 meter flights. Previously, (some eight years ago) we had been keeping the chattering and black caps in 3 meter suspended aviaries and found there had been weight and liver problems probably due to the small cages as the birds could not be as active as in the large cages. When one of the chattering lories died, we had it autopsied and the results showed that it was suffering from fatty liver and iron problems due to the diet and lack of exercise. We are still learning the dietary needs for each species. Thanks to the assistance of a close friend of ours, Dr. Stacey Gelis BScBVSc (Hons) MACVSc (Avian Health), we have been able to keep a close eye on their diet and change it accordingly with each species.

If you are unlucky enough to lose a foreign lory you should get it autopsied or Stacey is willing to take carcasses to further his studies to learn more about the dietary needs and bacterial diseases of these birds. Stacey advertises in Australian Bird Keeper for freshly dead carcasses so please contact him if the need arises on 0409584750 and he will advise the best way to treat the carcass for mailing. Once birds have been frozen it breaks down their organs. So please do not freeze them.

Still to this day I don't think anyone in the world can say what the correct diet is for them. After speaking to many people here and overseas the life span of the foreign

lories is not so long, and they now think that stems from a variety of things such as hand rearing, diet and housing. I suggest anyone wanting to keep them to supply a varied diet such as fresh fruit and vegetables each day, in conjunction with the commercial food available.

In this country we have been very lucky to have had such a variety of lorries to keep. These include:

Duyvenbode's lory, black lory, yellow-streaked lory, cardinal lory, black-winged lory, violet-necked lory, blue-streaked lory, red and blue lory, Buru red lory, Moluccan red lory, dusky lory, ornate lorikeet, green-naped lorikeet, Mitchell's lorikeet, Edward's lorikeet, Weber's Lorikeet, perfect lorikeet, yellow-and-green lorikeet, Meyer's lorikeet, Goldie's lorikeet, black-capped lory, red breasted black-capped lory, yellow-bibbed lory, chattering lory, yellow-backed chattering lory, obi lory, red-flanked lory, Forsten's lorikeet, Mount-Apo lorikeet, Musschenbroek's lorikeet, purple-naped lory, Stella's lorikeet. These are the ones I have been lucky enough to see here over a number years but that is not to say there aren't more here.

It is very sad to hear through a number of vets and bird keepers that we are losing so many different species of lorries due to diet and bacterial problems. Over the 20 years of keeping lorries I too have lost many birds thru these problems. On the positive, side some foreign lorries have done extremely well such as the dusky, black capped, black and chattering lorries.

I believe that by giving the birds a varied diet which includes a lot of fresh vegetables and fruit and by increasing their exercise through larger aviaries, that we will have better success with all our species of foreign lorries.

As you can see in the colour prints in the magazine, the colours of these birds are bright and intense and worthy of inclusion in any collections of birds. They could just be that challenge you are looking for.

