

Bourke's Grasskeets

Great Apartment Pets

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Many people avoid getting a pet bird because they feel they are demanding, messy, and noisy. There are a number of articles on keeping Bourke's which address these issues [see links at end]. This article will concentrate on the general temperament and suitability for pets of Bourke's from my experience, either for beginners or for seniors, and those who may live in apartments which restrict noise and destruction levels found with other more boisterous pets.



General temperament

Bourke's Grasskeets are an excellent choice for beginning small parrot owners and for seniors. The Bourke's has a gentle and non-aggressive disposition and does well in aviaries with other bird species, such as cockatiels and finches. The Bourke's is relatively non-destructive and usually will not bother houseplants. They may nibble on you, but they don't bite like other parrots smaller and larger than they, which is a plus for seniors with "thin skin". Note that if scared or hurt, they may bite a bit harder. As pets [handfed is best], Bourke's are affectionate and relatively quiet, making them quite suitable to apartment living. Occasionally they may give a sharp alarm call if they are startled, but most of the time you will simply hear them chirp happily. Teaching contact calls early in their life is important, since when they are "resting", even outside their cage, they are relatively quiet and just watch while you search for them.

Bourke's are intelligent, although they don't usually talk (some males will say a word or two, and all can learn special whistles) or perform complex tricks (simple step-ups, etc., are easily done when they are handfed for pets), and they can live around other birds. They will usually just avoid more territorial species, and unless their nest is challenged (aviary situation), they will leave other birds alone.

A hand raised Bourke will land on your head, step up on your finger, or ride on your shoulder. They like to "hang out" around you. They are not "cuddly" birds that want to be touched on their bodies a lot, although handfed pets are fine with your gently picking them up by their bodies and briefly snuggling them. They shouldn't have their wings clipped, or they will have difficulty negotiating their cages because they don't climb the cage sides like some other species of parrots. The absolute joy with which a Bourke's zooms and loops-the-loop in your home is wonderful to watch.

Cautions: Like most grasskeets (including budgies, cockatiels, etc.), the Bourke's can tend to "night frights", which is why a nightlight is advisable. Also, being "grasskeets", they will land on and walk along the floor, so they can't be around cats or dogs, or anything that can grab them. And, of course, you have to watch where they are at all times, so you don't step or sit on them, or open an exterior door while they are out of their cages. Rotating ceiling fans are dangerous to any full-flighted birds. These cautions are also true of many of the smaller parrot species, including small conures, parrotlets, love birds, etc.

Interaction/Independence

Handfed Bourke's love to hang around their people, but they can also entertain themselves and just "chill" somewhere in sight of their people. They are not as demanding as some parrots, but they do like to ride around on shoulders (or on heads), wherever their human is going. Anything involving food, however, must be monitored for their safety, as they are curious and can get into trouble (e.g., falling into a tall glass with a little water they are trying to reach). Because they are relatively quiet birds, it's easy to forget they are out and perching somewhere "observing". They will step up easily out of their cages, but sometimes ignore the finger when out. However, if they are handfed and handled, they are not afraid of hands, and you can just gently scoop them up and either put on your shoulder, finger, or back in their cage.

Bourke's Grasskeets are sweet, melodious companions!

*** Inquisitive personalities, intelligent and gentle**

*** Aviary birds and pets, affectionate and playful, not nippy**

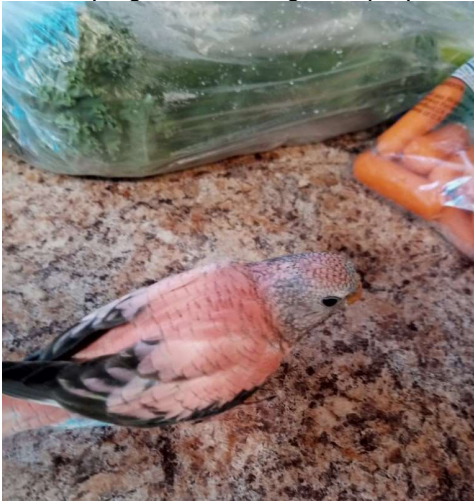
*** Soft, pleasant calls and chirps, occasional word**

*** Beautiful watercolor feathers—pink, blue, yellow, green, tan**

*** Low volume in vocalizations**

They will usually give kisses (with gentle nibbles) whenever you put your lips to their beaks. They are very gentle and sweet little birds!

*Pet rosey Bourke's
helping with morning food prep*



Easy step-up for pet Bourke's



*Bourke's and roseifrons conure sharing
breakfast with mom*



Feeding

General: The diet for the Bourke should include a mixture of seeds along with a natural pellet that is about the size of millet seeds for better acceptance. Green leafy vegetables such as kale, slightly cooked and chopped carrot or sweet potato, spray millet, sweet peppers, thawed corn and peas, and chopped apple should also be offered. Like most 'keet types, because of their heavy seed and millet diets, they are messy, strewing hulls out of their cage with glee!

Live food: Sprouted or germinated seeds are sometimes more easily accepted by "seed addicts" than fresh fruits and vegetables, and they are healthier as the sprouting changes and enhances the nutritional quality and value of seeds and grains. Sprouted seeds add a nutrition high in vegetable proteins, vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and chlorophyll.

Differences between Bourke's and some other popular small pet parrot species

Biting: While parakeets, cockatiels, love birds, and other small parrots can deliver blood-letting bites, the Bourke's only nibbles and beak-bumps. For those with sensitive skin, that's a big relief. The only exception to this is if they are really scared or hurt!

Destruction: Bourke's are much less destructive than other pet parrots. While they will chew paper edges, they don't mess much with wood.

Food: Bourke's require more seed/millet in their diet than most other small pet birds. ALL small parrots love millet sprays.

Messiness: ALL parrots are messy, some more than others. Bourke's really enjoy flinging seed hulls everywhere outside their cage, so frequent cleanup is needed.

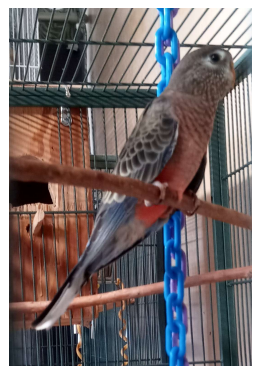
Play: Most parrots like to play with toys. Bourke's don't hold objects (like foot toys), but they will grab wiffle balls or plastic jacks, for example, and move them around. All like some hanging toys, though Bourke's are not as "enthusiastic" as some other parrots in their play.

Sociability: Most parrots have favorite people and must be taught to accept and enjoy others. Tame Bourke's are little social butterflies, and will check out almost anyone entering the home. If you have two Bourke's, they will encourage each other!

In summary...

These little birds are not just "aviary birds". They can be excellent pets also. They are more suited to quiet lifestyles than busy households, and for many seniors, they can be wonderful companions.

*Normal ("wild-
color") male
youngster*



Reference articles on bourke's:

<https://thefinchweekly.com/bourkes-parakeets/>

<https://imparrot.com/bourke-parakeet/>

<https://www.animalfunfacts.net/pets/birds/712-bourkes-parrot.html>

<https://www.millracegardencentre.co.uk/caresheets/pgr/bourkes-parakeet-care-sheet> 30665

<https://www.northernparrots.com/blog/bourkes-parakeet-fact-sheet/>

<https://animalofthings.com/bourkes-parakeet-best-bird-for-first-timers/>