Monk Parakeet
AKA QUAKER PARROT

Monk Parakeet
Conservation status: Least concern

Domesticated female Monk Parakeet

Scientific classification

- Kingdom: Animalia
- Phylum: Chordata
- Class: Aves
- Order: Psittaciformes
- Family: Psittacidae
- Genus: *Myiopsitta*
  Bonaparte, 1854
- Species: *M. monachus*

Binomial name

*Myiopsitta monachus*
(Boddaert, 1783)
The Monk Parakeet (Myiopsitta monachus), also known as the Quaker Parrot, is a species of parrot that originated in the temperate areas of Argentina and Brazil in South America. It is the only member of the genus Myiopsitta.

There are four subspecies:

- *M. m. monachus*, southeastern Brazil, Uruguay, and northeastern Argentina
- *M. m. calita*, western and southern Argentina
- *M. m. cotorra*, southeastern Bolivia, Paraguay, northern Argentina, and southern Brazil
- *M. m. luchsi* an isolated population in Bolivia which is smaller and may deserve species status.

This parrot is, on average, 29 cm long with a 48 cm wingspan, and weighs 100 g. Females tend to be 10-20% smaller. It has bright green upperparts. The forehead and breast are pale grey and the rest of the underparts are very-light green to yellow. The flight feathers are dark blue, and the tail is long and tapering. The bill is orange. The call is a loud and throaty *graaa* or *skveet*. Domestic breeds have produced colors other than the natural plumage; these include white and blue in place of green.

The Monk Parakeet is the only parrot that builds a stick nest, in a tree or on a man-made structure, rather than using a hole in a tree. This gregarious species often breeds colonially, building a single large nest with separate entrances for each pair. In the wild, the colonies can become quite large, with pairs occupying separate "apartments" in nests that can reach the size of a small automobile. Their 5-12 eggs hatch in about 24 days.

Unusually for a parrot, Monk Parakeet pairs occasionally have helper individuals, often a grown offspring, which assists with feeding the young.

Monk Parakeets are highly intelligent, social birds. Those kept as pets routinely develop large vocabularies.

The Monk Parakeet was brought to the United States in the late 1960s as a pet. Many escaped or were intentionally released, and populations were allowed to proliferate. By the early 1970s, it was established in seven states, and by 1995 it had spread to eight more. There are now thought to be approximately 100,000 in Florida alone.

As one of the few temperate-zone parrots, the Monk Parakeet is more able than most to survive cold climates, and colonies exist as far north as New York City, Chicago and some communities in the state of Rhode Island. This hardiness
makes this species second only to the Rose-ringed Parakeet amongst parrots as a successful introduced species.

The lifespan of Monk Parakeets has been quoted to be from 15-35 years.

The Green color of Quakers are in effect a combination of Blue and Yellow pigments. When a genetic mutation 'switches off' the gene producing the Yellow pigment, we only see the Blue. Likewise, if the Blue gene is 'switched off', we get Quakers that are yellow. Just as the wild type Green Budgerigar from the Australian outback has given rise to a myriad of colors resulting from genetic mutations to genes involved in the production of color pigments and feather structure (affecting how light is reflected from the feather), the Green Quaker has the potential to give rise to such colors as Cobalt, Violet, Blue, Cinnamon, Yellow, White and etc. Blue Quakers are becoming fairly established in aviculture, but still fetch a premium price over the Green. This mutation first occurred in Belgium in the 1950's, although it is unknown if the Blue Quakers in Australia are descended from this initial mutation or from a mutation that occurred independently here. Blue Quakers have a powdery soft blue color in place of the green with the top of the head an almost turquoise blue. The cheeks, throat and breast are a light silvery grey compared to the light dusky grey of the green Quakers.

There is no difference in personality or talking ability between the Blue and Green birds, although there are some reports that the Blue birds tend to be slightly smaller. I would however not give full credence to these reports. The Blue mutation is recessive, meaning that two alleles (matching genes) of the blue gene must be present in the genetic make up of the bird before it appears visually as a blue bird. If only a single copy of the blue gene is
present together with the dominant green gene, the bird appears green and cannot be differentiated externally from other green Quakers that carry two green genes. Birds that carry both the blue and the green gene are termed 'heterozygous' or more commonly in aviculture as 'split' for the color character. The only way to tell that a visually green bird is split for both the green and blue gene is to either know the exact genetic makeup of the parents or to test cross the visually green bird with a visually blue bird. Crossing with a blue bird will produce offspring, half the number of which are blue and the other half green (statistically speaking). The blue gene is not sex linked.