

Blue-headed Pionus/Blue-headed Parrot (*Pionus menstruus*) Species Profile

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Pionus menstruus



There are 3 subspecies of the Blue-headed Pionus/Blue-headed Parrot:

Pionus menstruus menstruus - nominate subspecies

Pionus menstruus reichenowi - head and neck darker blue and more blue coloration throughout body

Pionus menstruus rubrigularis - blue of head and neck duller than nominate, conspicuous red base to throat feathers

Primarily a forest canopy dweller, the Blue-headed Pionus will also frequent and cause severe damage to corn crops in its native habitat, and is also fond of bananas, attacking the bunch with great zeal. Of the three sub-species, the nominate *Pionus menstruus menstruus* is found throughout the wide distribution range, while *Pionus menstruus reichenowi* is limited to Brazil, and *Pionus menstruus rubrigularis* is found only in Central America.

The Blue-headed Pionus is one of five *Pionus* genus of parrots. Also included is the Maximilian (*Pionus maximiliani*), Dusky (*Pionus fuscus*), Bronze-winged (*Pionus chalcopterus*), and White-capped or White-crowned (*Pionus senilis*). The Pionus is considered to be one of the more under-appreciated parrots, probably because it is not a prolific talker and does not display the majestic colors of some other parrot varieties, although, a healthy Pionus will have an almost iridescent quality to its feathers. With a gentle nature, when well nourished and handled with love and compassion, the Pionus will become a devoted pet.

Not much for talking, the Pionus makes up for this parrot character flaw in its friendly disposition and aerobic antics. The Pionus is considered an excellent bird for beginning parrot owners and can be purchased for between \$400 and \$1,000, depending on region and purchasing source.

Quick Stats: Blue-headed Pionus/Blue-headed Parrot

Family: Psittacidae

Origin: The island of Trinidad, northern South America, Central America, Panama, and Caribbean

Size: 11"

Coloration: Overall body green; head and neck blue; black ear coverts; underside of tail red; dark grey bill with red at base; dark brown eyes; and pale, greenish-grey legs.

Diet: 65-80% quality pelleted diet, 15-30% vegetables (e.g., greens, legumes, corn-on-the-cob), 5% fruits, and an occasional nut. Use many varieties of fruits and vegetables, washed thoroughly. No avocados or fruit pits. See [Basic Nutrition for Psittacines \(Parrot Family\)](#) for more information. In the wild, fruits, berries, seeds, blossoms, corn, and bananas.

Cage Size: Minimum 30" H x 30" L x 30" W

Grooming: Trim beaks and nails as

Compatibility/Disposition: Gets along well with other birds and pets. Not as single-minded toward a specific individual as some other parrot species. Relatively quiet, easy-going, and undemanding.

Vocalization: Variety of high-pitched screeches and harsh screams.

Playfulness: Often described as having a "sweet" personality; loving and gentle-natured.

Life Span: 30-40 years

Age at Maturity: 2-3 years

Nesting Sites in the Wild: Hollow limbs and tree cavities.

Breeding Season: October to May, depending on location.

Sexing: Reliable via DNA or endoscopy only.

Special: Under stress, Pionuses will wheeze noisily through their nostrils until they calm down again. (Some call this a "snarfle") Although this

<p>necessary. Trim flight feathers.</p>	<p>sounds alarming (much like asthma), it is not a cause for concern. Love bathing.</p>
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