

# Quaker Parrot (*Myiopsitta monachus*) Species Profile: The Monk Parrot

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## *Myiopsitta monachus*

There are 4 subspecies of the Quaker Parrot - also known as Monk or Grey-breasted Parakeet:

*Myiopsitta monachus monachus* - nominate subspecies

*Myiopsitta monachus calita* - Mendoza Grey-breasted Parakeet

*Myiopsitta monachus cotorra* - Paraguayan Grey-breasted Parakeet

*Myiopsitta monachus luchsii* - Luchs's or Bolivian Grey-breasted Parakeet

The Quaker Parrot is also referred to as a parakeet in the literature - a reference to its long tail. The Quaker or Monk Parrot, however, has all the personality traits and needs of the larger parrots.

The nest of the Quaker Parrot is unique among parrots. Although single, smaller nests are not uncommon, the more common nest is a communal version, built and expanded upon over several years by several paired flock members. Using twigs and thorny branches, these nests often have several compartments (up to 20 have been observed), each with its own, singular entrance tunnel so no connection exists between compartments. Nests weighing 90 pounds have been recorded. Used year-round, the nests are repaired and added on to as breeding season approaches.

These birds are very gregarious in the wild, forming flocks of a handful to several hundred. Quaker or Monk Parrots are most often found in lowland areas and especially near areas where there are people. Although the Quaker originates from South America, it is also now found in Puerto Rico and the United States as a result of human introduction.

The name "Monk," it is believed, comes from the shape of the grey-colored swath found on the breast, throat, and forehead. There is some debate about where the origin of the name "Quaker" comes from. Many believe this name stems from behavior observed in babies and sometimes in adults; baby Quakers display a characteristic tremor or "quaking" (what one would think of when hearing the expression "quaking in his boots") when feeding or begging for food. Adults have been seen "quaking" when courting or ill.

Quakers exhibit a myriad of entertaining and interesting behaviors that are carry-overs from their lives in the wild. A stimulating and fun-loving bird, the Quaker can and will find itself in dangerous situations if precautions are not taken throughout the home, such as covering aquariums and toilet seats, ensuring wings are trimmed, and not decorating with lace or other fabric within which the Quaker's feet may become entangled. When cleaning the cage, it is best to allow the Quaker to leave first as they often become quite territorial regarding this area.

With appropriate socialization and observance of the somewhat unique needs of this lively little parrot, Quakers will make an endearing and entertaining pet. Expect to spend in the neighborhood of \$50-300 for one of these little clowns.

## Quick Stats: Quaker Parrot

**Family:** Psittacidae

**Origin:** South America

*Myiopsitta monachus monachus* -  
Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay

*Myiopsitta monachus calita* -  
Argentina

*Myiopsitta monachus cotorra* -  
Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, Argentina

*Myiopsitta monachus luchsii* - limited  
to Cochabamba province of central  
Bolivia

**Size:** 11"-13"

**Coloration:** Predominantly green;  
forehead bluish-grey; cheeks, lores,  
throat pale grey; grey to grey-brown  
breast feathers with marked barring;  
crown, nape, back, and upper wing

**Cage Size:** A minimum of 18" square  
if the bird only sleeps and spends no  
more than 3-4 hours a day in the cage.  
Avoid placing the cage higher than the  
chest level of the smallest member of  
the house to avoid problems with  
dominance and aggression.

**Compatibility/Disposition:** Need to  
be introduced to other species at an  
early age, in neutral territory, and  
always supervised during interaction  
throughout their association. Because  
of their strong territorial tendencies, it  
is unwise to house different species  
with Quakers.

If hand-fed as a baby and well  
socialized, the birds are usually

coverts dark green; mid-abdomen displays wide tan band; lower abdomen, thighs, lower back, and rump yellow-green; lower wing coverts and underside of tail feathers blue or green; beak pale yellow-brown; legs gray; iris dark brown.

*Myiopsitta monachus calita* -

Significantly smaller than nominate species. No blue on head, but slight bluish tinge to abdomen.

*Myiopsitta monachus cotorra* - Similar in size to *M. m. calita*. Upper body and abdomen brighter green.

*Myiopsitta monachus luchi* -

Compared to nominate ssp., forehead and crown very pale to white; no barring on chest; brighter yellow abdominal band; no green margins on primaries (strictly blue); and underside of tail feathers strictly blue.

**Diet:** 65-80% high-quality commercial diet (pellets, crumbles or nuggets). The rest of the diet should consist of 15-30% vegetables, 5% fresh fruits, and an occasional nut, mealworm, or cricket. 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: seeds, fruits, berries, nuts, leaf buds, blossoms, insects, and insect larvae.

**Grooming:** Trim beaks and nails as needed. Because Quakers are so curious, they are sometimes accident-prone in the home, making feather trimming highly recommended.

affectionate and friendly.

**Vocalization:** Loud, staccato shriek and high-pitch chatter while eating. Will easily learn a variety of human words.

**Playfulness:** A very intelligent parrot, requires lots of mental stimulation including out-of-cage time in appropriate play areas. Provide a variety of toys. Gregarious and very curious; enjoys and depends on human companionship.

**Life Span:** 20+ years

**Age at Maturity:** 1-1.5 years

**Nesting Sites in the Wild:** Treetops

**Breeding Season:** October through December

**Sexing:** Reliable only via DNA or endoscopy.

**Special:** Some believe the Quaker is the "perfect parrot," with this caveat - it is commonly agreed among Quaker enthusiasts that a Quaker needs to be socialized at a very young age, and proper handling and behavior techniques should be maintained throughout life to ensure a safe, well-mannered bird, especially around children. Can be very loud. It is not recommended as a "first bird" for budding aviculturists.

Due to their thriftiness and opportunistic behavior in the presence of crops, Quaker Parrots are illegal to own, register, or sell in some states. Check with your local Division of Wildlife or Agriculture Department before purchasing.