

The African Grey



As you daydream about owning a parrot, you can't seem to get the majestic African Grey out of your mind. You stare at photographs of this bird for hours. You're captivated by its mystical gray appearance, piercing yellow eyes and bright red tail feathers. The proud, elegant bird has seized your heart. But aside from its physical beauty and agility, you are especially intrigued with this bird's intelligence and talking ability. The African Grey's have a superb talking ability that is rivaled by no other parrot species.

You imagine what it would be like to have a bird that answers your questions, mimics your voice and heartily greets friends and neighbors as they arrive in your home. You can see the surprised looks on the faces of your friends as they stand in amazement at what an intelligent bird you own.

History

It is believed that the African Grey was imported into Europe as early as 1455. They were favorite pets among the royalty who were the few people who could afford such a costly bird. The oldest known stuffed bird is an African Grey named Effigie, a dear pet to the Duchess of Richmond and Lennox in England. Before her death in 1660, the duchess left written instructions as to what should be done with her beloved bird upon his death. Effigie was carefully stuffed after his death and can still be seen today in the Norman Undercroft Museum at Westminster Abbey.

Native Origin & Natural Habitat

The African Grey originates from the coast of Africa and can be found in places such as the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Chad, Kenya, Angola and other African countries. They live primarily in the tropical jungles of Africa where they fly about in large flocks numbering in the hundreds. They feed on fruit trees, crops, seeds, nuts and

berries. They are extremely social birds and verbally communicate with one another through a variety of shrieks and screams.

African Greys choose their mates carefully and stay together for life. Breeding season lasts from July-September. At this time the birds build their nests in hollowed tree branches where they raise 3-5 chicks every year.

Distinct Abilities

African Greys are the most fluent and gifted talking birds in the world. The Guinness Book of Records refers to An African Grey named Prudle who amassed a one thousand word vocabulary. In a book entitled the *Speaking Parrot*, published in 1884, Dr. Karl Ross describes a unique African Grey owned by a woman in Germany. The bird could speak three languages including Dutch and German.

African Grey's have clear voices that are easy to understand. They are such skilled speakers that their voices can actually sound like a human talking. They also have a unique ability to imitate any sound they take a fancy to. For example, your African Grey may decide he likes the noise of the telephone ringing or the car alarm going off. He will imitate this sound so accurately that you may not be able to tell whether or not the phone is actually ringing, or if your African Grey is simply up to his tricks. African Grey's can even be taught to recite poetry and long sentences. Imagine what your friends will think when they see and your bird reciting Shakespeare together.



As your bird learns more and more words, he will start forming sentences and word combination on his own. Originally it was believed that African Greys's simply mimicked the words they heard, with no cognitive understanding. However, some research has suggested otherwise. Various tests and scientific research has indicated that these birds are actually capable of logical thought and may even understand the words they are saying.

Physical Agility

African Grey's are bold, fearless climbers. Their feet are especially adapted to for this purpose. They have two toes in the front of their foot and two in the back, enabling them to readily grasp branches or other climbing equipment.

In order to encourage your bird to get the exercise he needs, consider placing a large [ladder](#) in his [bird cage](#).

Physical Characteristics



The African Grey has a large hooked beak, fleshy tongue and short neck. Their feathers are various shades of gray with the wing feathers slightly darker than the rest of their body.

Their eyes change colors as they mature. Baby Grey's have black eyes, which slowly turn to gray and finally to yellow as the bird reaches adulthood. The tail feathers are bright red, offering a stunning contrast to the gray body. Occasionally red feathers may be sprinkled on the head back, chest, thighs or wing feathers. African Grey's are exceptionally large birds, with males reaching 14-15 inches in length. Females are slightly smaller.

Disposition

African Grey's are extremely clever and can learn to latch and unlatch their **bird cage** door, making a secure locking system paramount to keep this bird contained.

When shopping for an **African Grey cage**, be sure to find one that has a secure locking system. The **birdcages** offered by **Cages By Design**, have a revolutionary, top-notch security system. When locked properly, it is impossible for even the cleverest bird to open these doors. The outer handles of the cage interlock with the outside frame, while a pin locks the doors together. The lock itself is placed outside the cage so that your pet does not have access to it.

Caring for Your African Grey



One of the most important decisions you'll make for your bird, is choosing a proper **parrot cage**. A bird's cage is his home—he needs a place that is roomy, spacious and comfortable. Due to the Grey's size, a **large bird cage** is of paramount importance. Your bird will need room to stretch. Climb and move around without feeling cramped.

African Grey's are not only inelegant and athletic, they are also very powerful. So they will need heavy-duty housing. An **acrylic bird cage** is a good option. Acrylic panels are the hardest clear plastic available. They are hard to scratch and offer excellent UV protection.

Another option is a **stainless steel parrot cage**. While many stainless steel cages have welds, which create weak points, the **stainless steel bird cages** offered by Cages By

Design do not have this problem. These cages are made using crimp-locked wire, which offers maximum strength and durability.

Stainless steel parrot cages are great for birds who love to climb, such as the African Grey.

You can even order a custom bird cage to suit your pet's individual needs and preferences. The possibilities are endless. This is an exciting time when you get to plan your bird's habitat—and create a welcoming environment he'll love.

It's just like preparing for a new baby—you can't wait to set up the crib, pick out the curtains and purchase all the accessories you need. Well, the same is true for your new parrot. Finding the perfect cage with toys, backgrounds and bird accessories is an extremely important task. The long-term health and happiness of your bird depends on it.

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