



The Beautiful Budgie

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Walk into any pet store, and you are sure to encounter friendly little colorful birds called “budgies.” Originally from Australia, the aboriginal people of that nation referred to these beautifully feathered friends as “budgerigars,” which was later shortened to the more easily pronounced form, “budgie.” Since John Gould introduced the first of these birds into England in 1840, they have become extremely popular pets and are found in about every country around the globe.

Budgies are members of the same biological family as parakeets, which they are often called and, in fact, some individuals refer to the budgie as a shell parakeet. Although two different varieties—the American and the English budgie—exist, both belong to the same species, *Melopsittacus undulatus*. The American budgie is the type most commonly found in pet stores, while the slightly larger English budgies are more often observed in bird shows and exhibitions.

Through selective breeding, budgies display a rainbow of colors and striping patterns, including albino, blue, pied, violet, yellow, and more. In the wild, the typical budgie has a distinctive appearance with its green body with black bars on the wings, back, and head. Mature female birds tend to have a tan or beige cere, which is the fleshy part around the nostrils, while on grown males, the cere is usually bluish.

When they are young, it can be very difficult to distinguish males from females, as they both possess pink ceres for the first eight months or more of their lives. Juvenile birds also have bar markings on their foreheads that tend to diminish as they age, and their dark irises usually transition to gray; however, these rules do not hold for all variations of these colorful birds.

Given their gentle disposition, these small, intelligent parakeets make wonderful pets, as they are typically very active and playful. Although they do make some noise, budgies are generally quieter than other birds. Females of the species tend to be much less vocal than their male counterparts, which are usually very capable at mimicking human speech, although sometimes their speech can be more challenging to understand.

Budgies that live in cages by themselves tend to develop greater abilities to imitate human language: it's not unusual for these brilliant birds to develop vocabularies of 100 or more words! Birds that share space with other feathered friends generally do not imitate human speech as well, since they socialize and bond deeply with their cage mates.

Get to know these engaging, fun-loving birds, and you are sure to find that budgies can be wonderful companions!

The advice provided in this article is general in nature and may need to be adapted for your specific situation. Always consult your veterinarian.