



The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)

(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)

"Cocky" the Talking King Parrot

Cocky is an Australian King Parrot (*Alisterus scapularis*)

(ASNSW Meeting - December 2013)

Cocky was accompanied by members of his family - Lyn, Gary and Griffin Dalton

Lyn, being Cocky's owner, did all the talking ... well not quite! Cocky chattered away continuously whilst sitting on the top of his cage throughout the whole presentation and he seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself. He wasn't a bit shy, continuing to chatter and whistle away during supper, lapping up all the attention of the members as they stopped to say hello and chat with him during the break.

Presentation by Lyn

I actually didn't know that King Parrots could talk; I didn't know anyone who had a talking King Parrot and Cocky was not supposed to be a talking King Parrot. Cocky just decided he'd talk.

Cocky is very, very old. He is 22 years old and I apologise that he is currently in the middle of a moult. He decided to do that just after we decided to bring him to the meeting. So he has looked better, but he is 22, so we think he is doing alright considering his age.



Somebody gave him to me when he was a baby just out of the nest and so he has been hand reared from the beginning. He is older than any of my children, my daughter is 21, and I have a photo of him sitting on my arm whilst I was pregnant with her. How we discovered he talked, and why he is called Cocky, is because of a Galah that we had. They both sat in cages outside the bathroom window, and every time we went past we would say "Hello Cocky", "Hello Cocky", because we were trying to teach the Galah how to talk. I was in the bathroom one day and I heard... "Hello Cocky", "Hello Cocky", and I thought, "that is a strange voice for a Galah?" and it was Cocky.

Cocky whistles *The Road to Gundagai*, he does all the usual car noises and you can tell that I have got a tea habit because he makes the sound of the spoon in the cup (tippety, tippety, ting, ting). He makes noises like chickens now because we have chickens, he says "pop goes the weasel" and he laughs like I do. When we are having a family dinner and everyone starts laughing, Cocky starts laughing as well. He has been around for a long, long time.

He has been on Dr Harry a couple of times. Dr Harry used him as a prop when they were talking about hand raising birds. Also with Dr Katrina Warren... he gave her a good nip on the ear!

He is getting cranky in his old age but Griffin is particularly good with him. His diet is important too. We had him in an aviary but when it started getting cooler a couple of years ago we brought him in the house because he was getting old. A couple of years ago he had a turn and it was like he'd had a stroke or something. He couldn't sit on the perch. It was like lead poisoning, but it wasn't. It was very strange. We noticed that he couldn't fly, he had no projectory, and he just went down. It was like his joints were stiffening up. We thought we had lost him but we took him to Dr Ross Perry in Cromer. Basically he recommended lots of brain vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, goji berries, etc., and since we have been better with his diet he just came good and he has been good ever since. He can fly now if he wants to fly. He feeds with the other parrots and he gets nuts and other things. He has taught the Indian Ringneck to talk so the Indian Ringneck now says what Cocky says.

Questions and Comments

Do you know what the average lifespan of the Australian King Parrot is?

I think about 18-20 years. He is doing very well. Usually he is bright red and green and his back is beautiful. You have just caught him at the wrong time when he is in the middle of a moult and he has his white pin feathers up on top.

Well we are thinking about Cocky becoming a member of the club, what do you think?
(from Graeme Phipps, the Society's President)

I think that would be good. I think he should join the club.

So we have got a definite yes. We have got Cocky joining the club and he could be the patron of the club?

That sounds a great idea!

So he could add that to his celebrity status!

Cocky has to go fairly shortly because his family has something else on, but what we could do in the supper break... if you are really quick... you could get some celeb photos or we could Photoshop you in!! For a price of course, because this guy is not just any parrot, he is a celeb!!!

You can come and have a chat to him, he will chat to you.

Why was he on Dr Harry (that was before my time)?

He was on Dr Harry when I first got him. I didn't know how to cut his nails to be honest with you and I wrote in to Dr Harry and said that I didn't know how to cut his nails. Dr Harry decided to do one of those surprise visits, and if you think they are not surprise visits, I am telling you that they are!!! I had been out of hospital for a week with a new baby and I get a knock at the door. When I opened it I got a shock because there was a camera and there was Dr Harry standing there. I very promptly shut the door back up again! Dr Harry did come in and he cut his nails for me. That was the first time and because Cocky was wandering around the table and he was throwing things at him, Dr Harry thought he was wonderful. So when they wanted a bird for a particular segment, they rang me and asked if they could use him.

He has got pretty long nails now?

He does. As he has got older his nails just get out of control and we feel like we are cutting them all the time. We have to cut them a lot. I don't know whether it is because he is not as active or whether they are just growing faster.

I think it is just one of those old age things. It's the same with other species including ourselves.

When you look at his feet they are pretty crotchety, poor old thing. He is still pretty lively though. He is like a watchdog; he lets us know when anyone is around. Listen to him now, he's laughing.

He is laughing.

There is another thing that he does. If it is night time and you go to his cage he whispers. He won't talk loud.

Graeme thanked Cocky and his family for coming and members responded with their applause. Cocky sat on top of his cage during supper enjoying all the attention and his own treat of "Donkey Weed seeds" which Josh gave to him after his presentation on "Donkey Weed" as (Bird) Plant of the Month for December.

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