

JARDINE'S PARROT: *Poicephalus gularis*

The largest species of their genus.

The continent of Africa, though blessed with a rich native population of birds and animals, has relatively few parrots. Of the kinds available as pets Lovebirds (*Agapornis*) and African grays (*Psittacus*) are certainly the most popular.

But there is another group of Africans that are often overlooked in favor of the common lovebird or the renowned talking ability of the African Gray. These are the birds of the *Poicephalus* genus. All birds of this genus are fairly quiet, don't require a lot of space, time and effort on your part and are above average talkers. Readily available species of this group include the Senegal, Red Bellied and Meyer's parrot. These are all short stocky birds with various interesting color patterns. All require about the same care and are hardy long lived birds.

Yet, there is one species commonly available that stands literally head and shoulders above the rest. This is the much larger, and in my opinion, more colorful Jardine's parrot. The three subspecies of the predominately green Jardine's ranges widely through central Africa. They are popularly known as the lesser and the greater. The lesser is the most commonly available in the states. It is indeed the smallest but has red to deep orange color on top of the head, which can extend partway down the back. The leading edge of the wings is red as are the leg feathers. The beak is large for the size of the body giving the bird a somewhat "beaky" appearance.

The greater is more commonly seen in Europe. It is a bit larger with some reaching the size of a Timneh Gray. The beak is proportionately smaller giving the bird's beak a more "tucked in" look. Although there may be a bit of orange on the forehead and thighs it is not near as plentiful as is seen on the lesser.

Jardine's are good talkers and mimics. In addition they do not scream but rather emit pleasant chirps, whistles and other "jungle sounds" much like an African gray. One definite drawback is a tendency toward nippiness. If hand fed babies are handled consistently and often this problem should never develop.