

Black-headed Parrot (Caique)

(*Pionites melanocephalus*)

Class: *Aves*

Order: *Psittaciformes*

Family: *Psittacidae*

Characteristics: Black-headed parrots have orange-yellow feathers on the cheeks, throat, flanks, and thighs and an orange band across the back of the neck with a border of bluish feathers. Feathers on the wings, back, rump, and upper tail are green; belly and breast feathers are creamy-white; tail feathers on the tip are yellow. They have a strong, hooked bill acting as a third foot for climbing; a flexible tongue allows them to open nuts and to preen; zygodactyl feet (two back and two front toes) allow for perching, holding and manipulating food. [Beauty of Birds 2015](#)

Behavior: Black-headed parrots are very energetic, playful, affectionate and intelligent. Also, they are very social, vocal birds. Diurnal (day-active), they are most often found in pairs or small noisy flocks of 10 - up to 30 individuals. They are known for their loud shrieks and alarm calls that include trills, songlike sounds, toots, and kleeeks. For defense, the flock falls silent and then all at once takes off with a loud and confusing array of color and noise to startle the predator and avoid danger.

[Brandywine Zoo](#)

Reproduction: During the breeding season, the female lays up to four eggs which incubate for about 25 days. The male feeds the female while she is brooding, and joins her in the nest at various times during the day and at night. The hatchlings leave the nest at about 14 weeks. [Brandywine Zoo](#)

Diet:

Wild: Mostly flowers, pulp, seeds and possibly insects.

Zoo: parrot pellets, seed mix, fruit and vegetable mix, greens

Conservation: Black-headed parrots are generally fairly common and occur in many protected areas throughout their range although population trend shows decreasing (>30% decline over ten years or three generations) [Northern Parrots 2013](#)

FYI: AKA Black-headed caiques or Blacked-headed capped parrots. The name caique is pronounced "kye-eek."

GPS-tracking studies of parrots are extremely uncommon, since the birds are adept at removing foreign objects (i.e. tracking devices) from their bodies.



Range & Habitat:

Found in forest (especially, but not exclusively, humid) and nearby wooded habitats in the Amazon basin of South America



Lifespan: 30 years in captivity, 15-20 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Curved beaks to open hard shells and to aid in climbing.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least concern

