

Monk Parakeet

Species Description

Scientific name: *Myiopsitta monachus*

AKA: Parotan y Mynach (Welsh)

Native to: South America

Habitat: Urban and sub-urban areas, parks, large gardens, agricultural land and golf courses.

Monk parakeet, a recent introduction in the UK, is about 30 cm in length and identified by its green upperparts, yellowish belly, pale grey face and breast and pale bill. Where colonies are established, its communal nests and raucous calls make it an obvious species.

A feral breeding population became established in Hertfordshire in 1996; not known anywhere else in Great Britain.

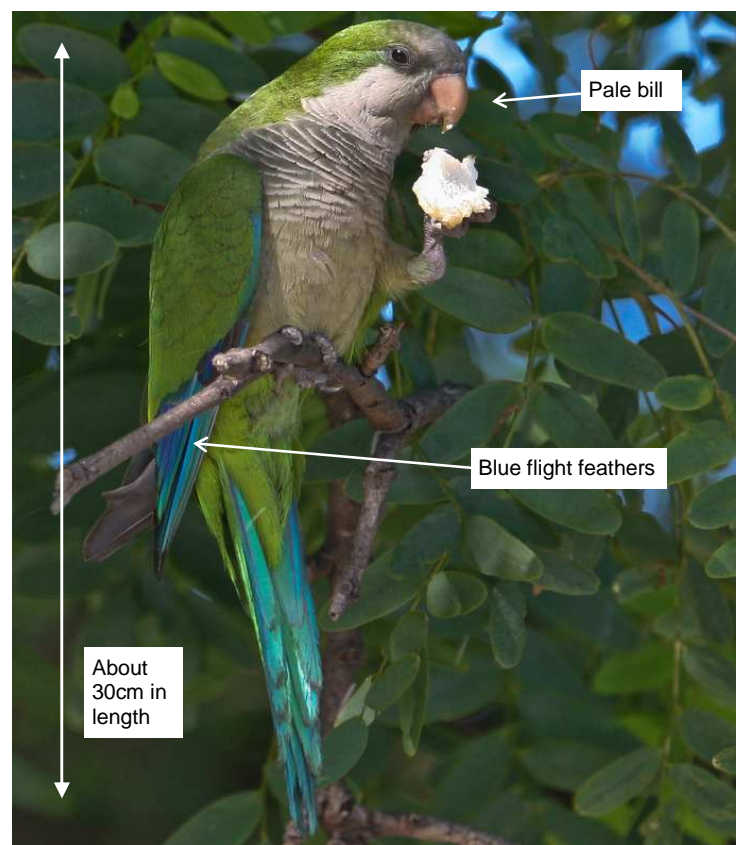
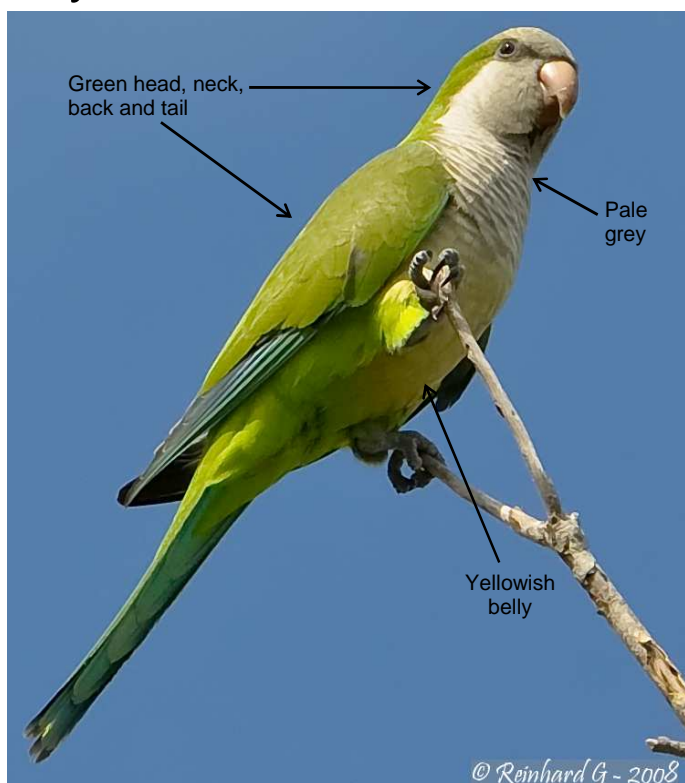
Monk parakeets can be extremely destructive to a wide range of crops, as observed in both its native range in tropical to sub-tropical south America, and in feral populations in the USA. There are relatively few reports of damage to crops however when damage does occur, it can be locally significant. Willow trees have also been damaged, probably due to their utilisation by birds for food and nesting material. In the USA, the large communal nest structures of monk parakeets on electricity utility structures can cause power cuts, particularly when nests become wet from rain.

Monk parakeet is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England and Wales. As such, it is an offence to release or allow the escape of this species into the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features



Identification throughout the year

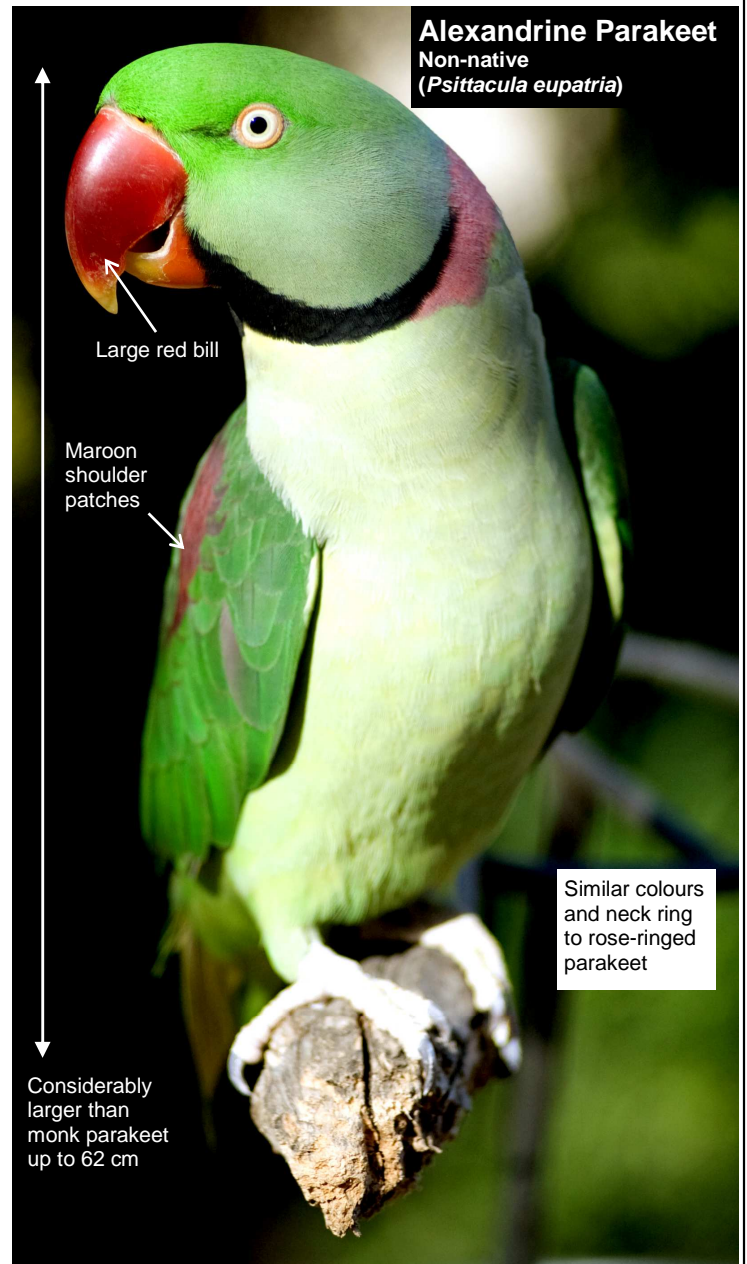
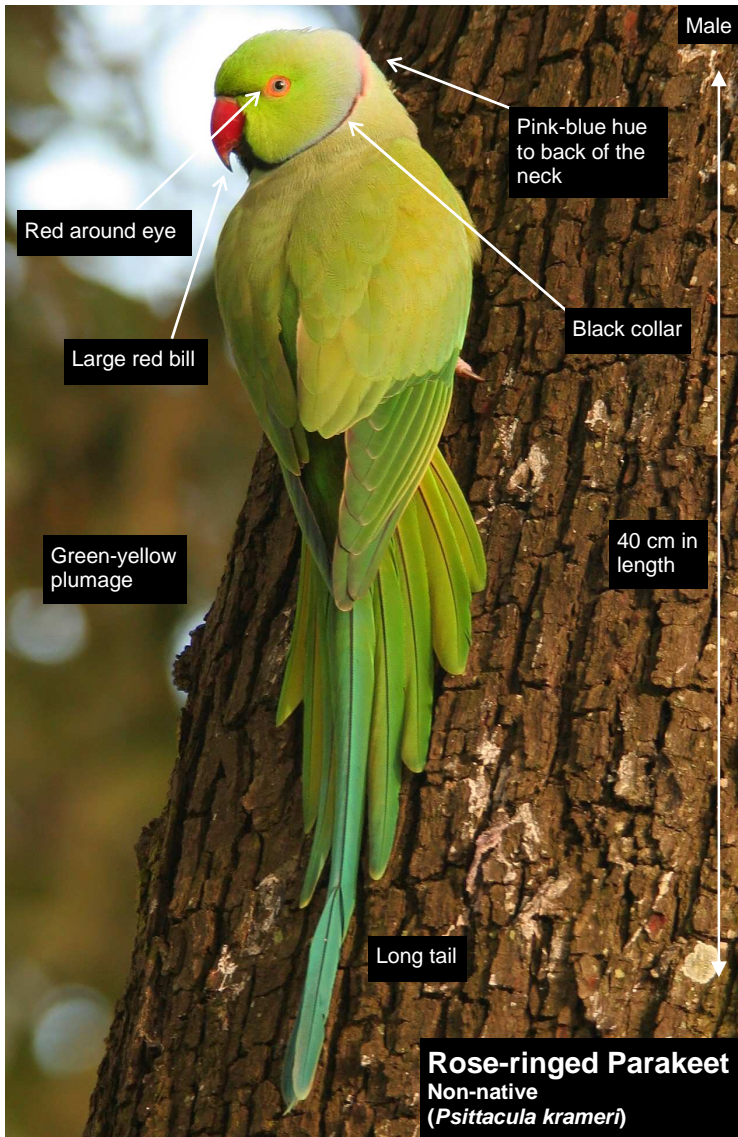
Monk parakeet is resident throughout the year in the UK and retains the same plumage characteristics.

Distribution

At present the main population is located in Hertfordshire.

Similar Species

It is unlikely that monk parakeet would be confused with any native birds. Superficially, monk parakeet is similar to the much commoner and more widespread rose-ringed parakeet. However, the monk parakeet can be identified by its smaller size, lack of collar ring, pale beak, plumage colouration and social habits.



Field Signs

- Call - Incessant chattering with loud alarm screeches.
- Behaviour - Colonial breeding species often encountered in flocks.
- Nest - monk parakeet is the only species of parrot that builds a nest (from sticks), which may be small and house a single pair, or can be a very large structure housing multiple pairs in separate nesting chambers.
- Eggs - White, broadly oval, not glossy. Similar to those of ring-necked parakeet and should not be used for the purpose of identification as monk parakeet.

References and further reading:

Lever, C (2005) "*Naturalised Birds of the World*". T & A D Poyser

Holling, M and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel (2007) Non-native birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 2003, 2004 and 2005. *British Birds* **100** 638–649

Mullarney, K, Svensson, L, Zetterstrom, D and Grant, PJ (2001) "*Bird Guide*". Harper-Collins

Snow, DW and Perrins, CM (1998) "*The Birds of the Western Palearctic*". Oxford University Press