

MAJOR MITCHELL COCKATOO



Introduce

Major Mitchell's cockatoo (*Lophochroa leadbeateri*), also known as **Leadbeater's cockatoo** or the **pink cockatoo**, is a medium-sized cockatoo that inhabits arid and semi-arid inland areas of Australia, though it is seen regularly in other climates, for example, South-East Queensland's subtropical region.

Description

With its soft-textured white and salmon-pink plumage and large, bright red and yellow crest, it is often described as the most beautiful of all cockatoos. It is named in honour of Major Sir Thomas Mitchell, who wrote, "Few birds more enliven the monotonous hues of the Australian forest than this beautiful species whose pink-coloured wings and flowing crest might have embellished the air of a more voluptuous region." Major Mitchell's cockatoo females and males are almost identical. The males are usually bigger. The female has a broader yellow stripe on the crest and develop a red eye when mature.

Reproduction and lifespan

The bird reaches sexual maturity around 3–4 years old. The oldest recorded Major Mitchell's cockatoo died at 83 years old.

Distribution and habitat

In contrast to those of the galah, populations of Major Mitchell's cockatoos have declined rather than increased as a result of man-made changes to the arid interior of Australia. Where galahs readily occupy cleared and part-cleared land, Major Mitchell's cockatoos require extensive woodlands, particularly favouring conifers, sheoak and eucalypts. Unlike other cockatoos, Major Mitchell's pairs will not nest close to one another, so they cannot tolerate fragmented, partly cleared habitats, and their range is contracting.

In the Mallee region of Victoria where the galah and Major Mitchell's cockatoo can be found to be nesting in the same area, the two species have interbred and produced hybridised offspring occasionally.