

## Broadbills



This fact sheet gives an overview on keeping Broadbills.

The Broadbills form a very colourful family of 14 species and are collectively grouped under the genus (*Eurylaimidae*). Most species are to be found in the forests and bamboo thickets of Southeast Asia and India. There are 3 species also found in Central Africa. The Asian Broadbills have very striking plumages, whilst the African species are slightly smaller and drab in colouration.

Their name comes from their stout, flattened bill with an extremely wide gap. They are birds with large eyes, suited for the dense evergreen forest which they prefer to inhabit.

The **Long-tailed Broadbill** (*Psarisomus dalhousiae*) – which is imported into this country on occasion, comes from the mountain and tropical forests of Northern India, Southern China, Sumatra and Borneo. Both sexes of this species look alike, but with the advent of DNA feather sexing, we are now able to ensure that we have true pairs. This species is approximately 11 inches in length and is highly insectivorous. In the wild they can be seen flying around in small flocks, catching insects on the wing. They also like to probe for insects on tree branches and the many creepers found in the neo-tropical forest. Some species have also been known to take frogs, small lizards and small mice to supplement their diet. Their striking green plumage can quickly become pale and bleached if kept in an aviary exposed to direct sunlight. The nest is constructed usually on an overhanging branch, near water and is roughly pear shaped. Nesting materials, including bamboo leaves, lengths of vines, moss and coarse grasses, are skilfully used to make the elaborate nest. In India the nests have even been observed hanging from telegraph wires. A clutch of between 5-6 eggs is laid, unfortunately the incubation time of the clutch is not known. Field studies are being carried out to determine this. The eggs range in colour from white to salmon-pink in overall colour, some having reddish brown blotches on them.

Another species sometimes available to the aviculturist is the **Lesser Green Broadbill** (*Calyptomena viridis*). With this species the sexes differ. The cock bird has an ornate crest that covers his bill. This gives him the appearance of having an oversized head, where only

the tip of his beak can be seen. His plumage is mainly shining green with black bars on the wings. The hen of this species is much duller in colour and does not have as much of a crest above the beak; she does not have any black wing marking either. She is however, usually larger than the cock bird. The Lesser Green Broadbill is easier to accommodate in captivity, because its diet consists of larger quantities of fruit and ripe berries, as well as live food. A good quality universal soft food containing dried insect larvae and dried shrimp will also be eaten with relish. Other foods such as peas, sweet corn, cooked rice, hardboiled eggs and even soaked dog food are readily taken and have been used by several zoos and bird gardens who have successfully bred the species. The nest is like a smaller version of the Long-tailed Broadbill's, pear-shaped and constructed using dead leaves, coarse grass and moss. They will only lay a small clutch of eggs, usually only 2. Once again the incubation time is unknown. Several collections are experimenting with a single cock bird and several hens to form a harem.

The **Silver-breasted Broadbill** (*Serilophus lunatus*) is the third of the group described here. Its range is from Nepal to China, Burma and the Malay Peninsula. This species is imported at very irregular intervals. Sexing this broadbill may appear to be difficult, as they look alike. However, several ornithologists, observing the species in the wild, believe that the cock bird has a solid silver band across his breast (also referred to as the "gorget"), whilst the hen has the same type of band but it is broken in the middle. A bulky ball shaped nest is built amongst the bamboo forests. A clutch consists of between 4-5 eggs, normally five and is incubated by both sexes.

Keeping Broadbills for those that persevere is extremely rewarding. They will become very tame and wait for their owner to turn up with a tasty morsel of live food.

This fact sheet has been produced for:  
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