

## AFRICAN GREY

THE AFRICAN GREY is the dapper intellectual of the parrot world. Dressed conservatively in light-to-dark-grey feathers, greys are far from being the most colorful parrot. However, many people believe their gift for gab makes them the smartest. Greys are capable of clearly enunciating dozens of human words and phrases--and in context, according to their proud owners. The best known example is Alex, an African grey trained to identify common household objects by MIT professor Dr. Irene Pepperberg. The two species of African greys are the Congo (*Psittacus e. erithacus*) and the Timneh (*Psittacus e. timneh*). Congos sport bright red tail coverts and a black beak. Timnehs are darker grey with lighter-colored abdomens, a horn-colored upper mandible and a maroon tail. Both species have dark-grey feet, bare facial areas and pale-yellow irises.

**Countries of origin:** Congos occur in western Kenya, northern Angola, southeast Ivory Coast, southern Congo and northwest Tanzania, and on the nearby islands of Fernando Poo and Principé. The rarer Timneh can be found in southern Guinea, Liberia, western Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone.

**Size:** Medium, 12 to 13 inches long and from 275 grams up to 650 grams (1.4 pounds). Congos are slightly larger and heavier than Timnehs.

**Personality:** Affectionate, but can be shy. Tends to bond strongly with one person. Relatively quiet voice, although capable of loud calls. The Congo may be more liable to feather pluck.

**Talking ability:** Excellent in general, although some individuals may not speak.

**Listen:**

Congo African grey mimicking owner's voice. (Thanks to Rosie's Page.)

**Average lifespan:** 50-60 years.

**Additional reading:**

- [The Grey Play Round Table](#). Print magazine for the African grey "pet human."
- [The Alex Foundation](#). MIT professor Dr. Irene Pepperberg's research into the cognitive abilities of African greys.
- [It's a Grey's World](#). Information site sponsored by Grey Feather Toy Creations.