

Cockatoo hold food only in the left foot. It may be worth noting that all three feed in trees and rarely, if ever, descend to the ground other than to drink. However, data are at present insufficient to determine whether this reflects a broader and perhaps ecologically significant correlation. A hypothesis is, however, suggested: that exclusive use of the left or right foot for holding food will be found most commonly in species or populations that feed either while perched, or by employing specialized feeding techniques, or both. I suggest that the various populations of the Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo will provide an opportunity for initial testing of this hypothesis within a species. This species has populations that are either terrestrially feeding diet specialists, arboreally feeding diet specialists, or arboreally and terrestrially feeding diet generalists (Saunders *et al.* 1985, Joseph 1982b, Forshaw 1981).

There is much potential for further study of this curious subject. Concerning individual variation, McNeil *et al.* (1971) reported that individuals of the Brown-throated Parakeet that held food significantly more often in the left foot had longer left than right legs (summed lengths of femur, tibiotarsus and tarsometatarsus); individuals that held food significantly more often in the right foot exhibited the opposite tendency. It would be of interest to measure left and right leg lengths in species such as the Glossy Black-Cockatoo and Gang-Gang Cockatoo, which hold food consistently in the left foot, and in other species that use both feet in which to hold food. Finally, there is much scope for further study of how much of this

aspect of feeding behaviour is learned and how much of it has an innate basis.

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EDITORIAL

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