

# First Danish Breeding of the Blue-rumped Parrot

*Psittinus cyanurus*

by Peter Them, Dragoer, Denmark

In the town of Greve, south of Copenhagen, lives one of Danish aviculture's directional stars, Mrs. Jette Christensen, who for more than 45 years has practiced aviculture, and is currently the secretary for "Stuekultur's Fuglevenner" the old and famous avicultural club in Copenhagen.

Throughout the years, Jette Christensen has visited many avicultural collections in Scandinavia as well in Europe, including Loro Parque, Tenerife. Her dream now is to eventually visit the wild parrots in South America.

Today Jette Christensen runs a very nice and interesting avicultural collection containing different species of parrots (including hanging parrots, red-winged, king parrots, and mountain parakeets), finches, and softbilled birds.

By the use of surveillance cameras the breeding facilities are observed 24 hours a day.

## Pionus Parrots

Jette Christensen, the leading Danish breeder of Pionus Parrots, has obtained several breeding results, including the first Danish breeding of the Bronze-winged Parrot *Pionus chalyptus* in 1990, which she feels is her greatest avicultural victory.

She now wishes to obtain a pair of Plum-crowned Parrots *Pionus tumulosus* and try her skill with them.

## Blue-rumped Parrot

In appearance, the Blue-rumped Parrot *Psittinus cyanurus* is not unlike a larger-than-life lovebird of the *Agapornis* species.

Throughout the years many Blue-rumped Parrots have been exported from the Far East (especially Singapore and Indonesia) to Europe, U.S.A. and South Africa. Unfortunately, many of these birds were not properly accommodated because the receivers treated them as if they were parrots from the deserts of Australia instead of from secluded tropical rain forests (lowlands

of south east Asia including the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, parts of Borneo, and other nearby islands).

Only very few aviculturists have been successful with the Blue-rumped Parrots and Christensen happens to be one of them. She learned by experience not to obtain just two birds, but to try to set up a larger number of the same species. When, in 1992, Christensen had the opportunity, she got three male and three female Blue-rumped Parrots.

## An Active Bird

The Blue-rumped Parrots move extremely stealthily, and therefore some aviculturists think they are inactive birds. As the birds keep their heads slouched onto their shoulders, they have a scowly, stocky outline.

But the observation cameras have shown Christensen that the Blue-rumped Parrots—when they feel nobody is watching—are actually extremely active birds.

By way of a closed circuit camera system, Christensen has watched the Blue-rumped Parrots wing-lifting as well as flashing their eyes and shrugging their wings as warning for others to keep their distance—activities similar to those of the South American *Pionus* species.

Indeed, Christensen finds there are many behavioral similarities between Blue-rumped Parrots and the Pionus Parrots, examples being their movements and also their way of perching and looking at their human caretaker.

The Blue-rumped Parrots are not social in the way of some parrots, and they do not preen each other—in this they are more like *Electus* Parrots.

By observing which birds were perching together, Christensen established three pairs. Unfortunately, a male died so the surplus female was given on loan to another Danish aviculturist, Poul Nielsen, who beside breeding *Electus* Parrots and Pileated Parrots (*Pionopsitta pileata*), had a single male Blue-rumped Parrot.

## Accommodation

The two remaining pairs were separated, one pair placed in box cage and the other pair in a large aviary. But the pair in the large aviary was not happy, so these birds were also soon moved to a box cage.

Each cage had a dry nestbox 25 x 15 x 15 cm (9.75 x 5.85 x 5.85 inches) with a darkened interior.

The Blue-rumped Parrots entered the nest boxes to explore but not to roost. They perched together outside the box when they slept.

## Breeding

At the end of spring 1996, one pair of Blue-rumped Parrots was very active near and in the nestbox. In June 1996 Christensen saw two chicks in the nest—but the youngsters lived only for eight days.

In the summertime 1997 nothing seemed to happen with the Blue-rumped Parrots and in August, when the general breeding-season was finished, Christensen, according to her standard procedure, cleaned the breeding aviaries and cages.

But when on 25 August 1997 she took the Blue-rumped Parrots' nestbox down to clean, she saw three eggs—and on the 28th there were six eggs.

On 15 September 1997 Christensen heard the first chick—after about 20 days incubation—and on 23 October 1997 two young left the nestbox for the first time.

The nestbox was empty with no sign at all of the other four eggs. The nestbox was very clean.

For about one month the young used the nestbox for roosting together with the female. The male, however, always perched outside the nestbox, singing and fanning his tail feathers almost continually. When the hen left the box to be fed by the male, she also sang.

At about three months of age, the young started to develop their adult coloration.

During the breeding period the male was busy guarding the breeding area and feeding the female when she was out of the nest (only a few times to defecate). The parent birds never defecated inside the nest box, which they kept as clean as possible.

## Sounds

The Blue-rumped Parrot is not a noisy bird. Christensen says that the birds have a nice a pleasant, melodious call with now and then a fast alarm chatter. Christensen can not hear a difference in sounds between the males and females but one of our Indonesian friends, Odom, says that he can. Odom (a Dayak just three generations removed from the active head-hunters on Borneo) knows the birds, of Borneo very well and *can* hear the differences in the male and female sounds of the wild Blue-rumped Parrots on Borneo where he and his wife, the Danish Lone Drocher Nielsen, run the large rehabilitation center for the Orang Utan.

## Nails and Beak

The nails and beak grow extraordinarily quickly, necessitating cutting several times a years. Christensen hopes that readers of this article can supply her with some information about how to prevent this overgrowing of beaks and nails.

## Nutrition

Why is nutrition the most talked about subject in the world of parrot aviculture? Because, perhaps, no one really has much knowledge about this subject. How could we? So little is known of what parrots eat in the wild, and from what they derive their nutrition.

For example, in South America there are said to be about 2000 different fruit species which the native South Americans use. The so-called *modern* human beings, on the other hand, use only approximately 20 of the species.

Despite some improvement in the technology of modern bird nutrition, Christensen is very concerned about nutrition and hygiene in modern aviculture. She feels that the main task in aviculture is to supply the correct nutrition to the birds—and she hopes that the future will bring a more serious effort in parrot nutrition production. For now, Christensen had turned back to nature and makes her own varied diet for the birds.

She offers the Blue-rumped Parrots

a selection of plenty of fruit and vegetables, especially fresh tomatoes, but also apples, carrots, fresh as well as dried figs, and cactus fruit.

She also supplies plenty of sunflower seeds—sprouted as well as dry. The birds also eat other seeds including safflower, a little canary, and hemp.

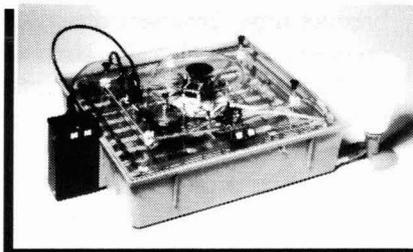
## Breeders of Pionus and Blue-rumped Please Contact

Jette Christensen finds there are many similarities in the behavior of Pionus Parrots and the Blue-rumped Parrots, and she intends to continue her concentration upon breeding Pionus and Blue-rumped Parrots.

To share experiences, Christensen would very much like to make contact with other breeders of these birds. She can be contacted at:

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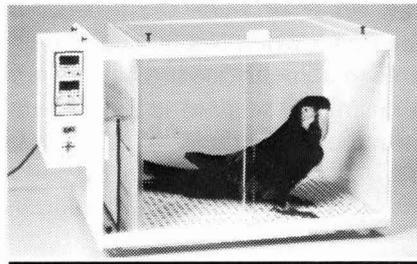
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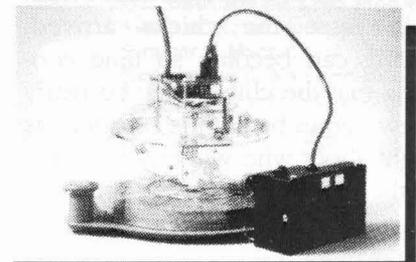


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