



a short note on the Short-tailed Parrot

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Photo by Cyril Laubscher



The Short-tailed Parrot *Graydidascalus brachyurus*.

Although parrots are among the most popular cage and aviary birds, it is amazing that so little is known about such a large number of species. One of these little-known species is the Short-tailed Parrot *Graydidascalus brachyurus*. Its main distribution lies in Brazil but it is also found in parts of Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, and French Guiana and in most parts of these areas it isn't rare.

Being 24 centimeters in length, it is

medium-sized and because of its completely green coloration it has never had the attention of aviculturists – who seem more interested in more colorful species.

Because of this disinterest and the fact that Brazil has closed its borders for bird export, the Short-tailed Parrot now belongs certainly among the rarest parrots kept in captivity. Indeed, its numbers are even smaller than such vulnerable species as the Saint Vincent

Amazon, Blue-throated Conure, Thick-billed Parrot, and Red-fronted, Blue-throated, and Hyacinth Macaws.

Even so, I was lucky enough to take care of some specimens of the Short-tailed Parrot while I was at the Walsrode Birdpark in Germany.

In the Netherlands, the late well-known aviculturist, Mrs. Spenkelink-van Schaik had a pair which made some breeding attempts in 1980.

In the most complete bird publication available at the moment, *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (Lynx Edicions, Barcelona) – it is noted under the heading "Breeding" for the species that birds with partly developed gonads were found in East Brazil in September and that no further information is available.

But Mrs. Spenkelink-van Schaik, however, offers some breeding information to fill the gap in knowledge.

In the Netherlands, breeding started in June and the first clutch contained only one egg. Because the female didn't show any interest in it, the egg was placed in the nest of a parrot (about equal in size to the Short-tailed) which then incubated the egg successfully. After 25 or 26 days of incubation, it hatched.

The skin of the chick was pink and the back and wings were covered with orange down-feathers. The head of this chick was bald. Unfortunately the chick died at the age of 13 days after a sudden drastic drop of the temperature. A second clutch was started on 28 June with a second egg laid on 30 June. These eggs were placed in an incubator but the single chick which hatched died at the age of three days.

A third clutch of eggs was produced on 26 and 30 July the same year but both eggs proved infertile.

I am not aware of the number (if any) of Short-tailed Parrots in the U.S.A., but if there are some, everything possible should be done to breed them and to collect data on their breeding biology. Such an effort can go far to preserve and increase the stock.

Literature Referenced

Handbook of the birds of the World Volume 4 pp 459. Lynx Edicion, Barcelona.

