



# Beautiful Bubbly Biakis

*Eclectus roratus biaki*

by Susie Christian  
Morro Bay, California



*A beautiful pair of Biaki Eclectus.*

Photo by Susie Christian

Perhaps I am like everyone else who falls in love with a particular bird species; I quickly become addicted and want more! Having owned Vosmaeri Eclectus Parrots since 1987, the flock size of these elegant parrots in my life naturally evolved by adding one here and another one there. Well, you know the story. When I read an advertisement in *Eclectus World* for baby Biaki Eclectus I was on the phone with the breeder in a heartbeat. I am not sure exactly what my attraction was to a rare Eclectus, but I had to have a pair.

The breeder graciously sold me a hen from one of his two very prolific pairs first, and assured me that there would be an unrelated male available soon. Before long a sweet little male was added and I had a pair. I made a big mistake by keeping them in the house as semi-pets after I weaned them and, after seven years, they still are not

as bonded to each other as they should be. They were too busy relating to me and being my pets until time to put them together in a big, outdoor cage.

Such lovely pets they were too. The male Biaki was housed beside a Red Lory and they played together by the hour, passing small slender toys back and forth through the cage bars and generally having a merry time with one another. He learned to talk and mimic very well during his first year because his cage was in the living room and boy was he fast to pick up my snore. In fact, the minute I would sit on the sofa he would start this hideous rasping mimicry of my snoring. The hen – and I'd never do this again with a rare bird that would become a breeder – loved to cuddle with me by the hour and watch television. At least she was kind enough not to pick up my snore. From the get-go they were much too imprinted to me

and not to each another.

My second pair of Biakis came to me in 1995 from local folks who had to sell them because of an illness in the family. They found me and I said yes, knowing that these birds were brother and sister to the pair I already had. I figured I could contact others who had Biakis and either trade or sell the babies, hopefully finding people who had unrelated birds.

The story I have regarding these birds is that in 1991 a Christian missionary brought 15 Eclectus Parrots to the U.S.A., most being the *E. r. biaki* subspecies, with a few noticeably larger Red-sided Eclectus included. This group of birds was legally imported and the proper permits were obtained so the birds could be resold when they reached the states. Mike, the man who raised my birds, bought his two pairs directly from the importer and was the only person I know who had any

breeding success with them. To my knowledge, no one else has gotten any offspring from the babies that came from him.

The *E. r. biaki* hail from the very small islands of Biak, Numfor, Yapen and Mios Num located in the Geelvink Bay north of west Irian (New Guinea). It is interesting to look at the map and find that the location of this island is just a few degrees south of the Equator. The resemblance of Biakis to the Red-sided, *E. r. polychloros*, and also to the Solomon Islands Eclectus, *E. r. solomonensis*, is easy for me to recognize. Biakis did not land far from the big homeland island where the Red-sided Eclectus originated. In my eyes, the Biaki Eclectus is the step between the Solomon Islands Eclectus and the Red-sided Eclectus. The Red-sided Eclectus is at the larger end of the size scale with the Solomon Islands Eclectus being the more diminutive (in size only) of the three subspecies.


To an untrained eye, and perhaps even to the trained eye, it is difficult to distinguish the Biaki subspecies from the Red-sided or the Solomon Islands subspecies. The difference in males is especially hard to distinguish because they resemble the Red-sided so much. The Biakis are perhaps a bit longer and rangier with a broader, more defined pale yellow underside to the tip of the tail. I find there is a very slight scalloping around the feathers on the backs that looks like the merest outline on each feather-edge. This is visible in natural sunlight. Generally the Biaki is a darker green color that leans more toward the forest blue-green with less of a yellow cast to his feathers, such as the color found on the Vosmaeri. He has striking, reddish-colored eyes.

Biaki hens, too, resemble the Red-

sided Eclectus, but they are slightly smaller. Her nape and undersides are a brighter hue of a rich royal blue with a lot of lavender cast and the periophthalmic ring to match. The eye itself is straw colored. Her primary coverts and primaries are dark blue with narrow green edging to the outer part of the feathers. Tail feathers are dark red, becoming very slightly lighter toward the tips, which are a bright salmon hue.

About the only way that I could distinguish between them was by putting a Biaki beside a Solomon Islands or Red-sided and comparing, comparing, comparing them! I see the differences quickly when they are side by side.

It is discouraging to report that in the four years they have been set up with nest boxes, both pairs have laid clutch after clutch of infertile eggs. I have tried every type of the best food and supplements and have given them a three-month rest once a year, but no fertility. Both pairs are quite bonded but one pair is noticeably more "in love" than the other one. I am not giving up hope because I enjoy having them and being able to admire their breathtaking beauty daily.

If anyone reading this has knowledge of the owner of the original two pairs of Biakis, or knows of anyone having an Eclectus that they believe to be a Biaki subspecies, please contact me. I can be reached by E Mail at: winged1s@juno.coms or telephone 805-772-2038. I hope to form a network with other Biaki Eclectus owners because there are so few specimens in this country. I would be sorry to see these beautiful birds unknowingly paired and bred with the Solomon Islands or Red-sided subspecies, thus further diluting the dwindling gene pool. 

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