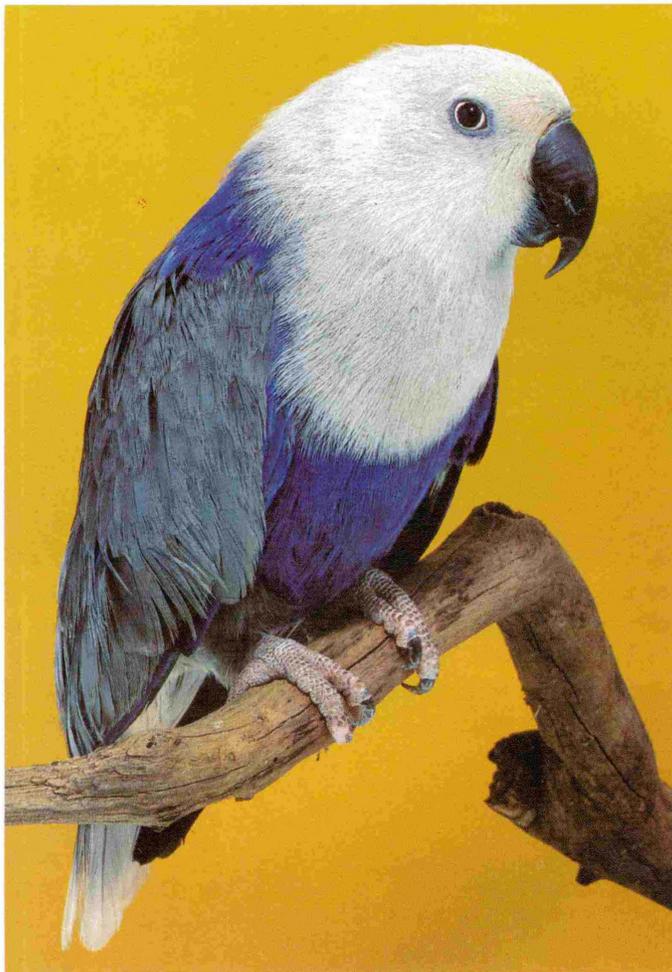


The Blue Eclectus



by Roger Bringas
North Hollywood, California

Every once in a great while, something very special emerges in the world of mutation-colored birds. It is one thing for a new color mutation to appear or materialize in nature, but it's extraordinary for it to happen in aviculture. Undoubtedly in nature, this happens with much more frequency than we know or probably suspect. George Smith in England theorizes that one out of every six birds in the wild carries one gene for a color different than that of what is recognized as being normal. Due to the enormous number of obstacles and dangers most bird species encounter on a daily basis in their pursuit to survive, mutation-colored birds, who are so blatantly obvious, are the first to be singled out and eliminated from the natural population by many willing predators.

In a captive environment, where a responsible breeder provides the basic essentials of food, shelter, and protection for his birds, mutation-colored birds are no longer at a disadvantage with respect to predation and have an excellent chance of living long enough to propagate. When a new color mutation occurs in an aviary setting, this is quite remarkable and breeders have a chance at developing and establishing a new color.

The bird illustrated on the cover of this month's issue of the *AFA Watchbird* is an example of a fortuitous occurrence that befell a novice European breeder. In the early 1990s, a couple interested in Eclectus purchased a cock and a hen from two different sources. They paired up the two birds and eventually had their first two chicks. A normal looking cock and hen.

As these were their first babies from their breeding pair of Eclectus, they decided to keep their first, precious offspring. The brother and sister were housed together in a separate aviary away from the parents. It just so happened that an old nest box was hanging in that aviary and the owners never thought or bothered to take it down.

At two years of age "mother nature" took over and the brother and sister pair went to nest and laid two fertile eggs. When the chicks started feathering, the breeder noticed that one of the birds, the hen, was very unusual in color. She was blue and grey! Thus the first "blue" Eclectus was hatched in 1995. Since then, two more blues have been bred including one magnificent looking blue cock.

I have been asked, "how did the first blue Eclectus appear?" Well, in this case we know *how*, but not exactly *who*. I know that I have probably confused you more but I can further explain and simplify the history of this mutation this way. A single brother and sister pair has produced the three existing blue Eclectus. All primary blue mutations are autosomal recessive. That means that both the normal looking father and mother of the blue birds, are "split" for blue (carrying one gene for blue). Most certainly they both obtained their single blue gene from either their father or mother, the grandparents of the blue birds. And this is where the uncertainty lies. Until we have better or more thorough genetic analysis available, we, unfortunately, don't have the ability to identify heterozygous or "split" birds. Thus we know one of the grandparents is split blue, we just don't know which one.

The blue Eclectus is now being developed and is on its way to being established in three different aviaries. There have been rumors of a lutino mutation but I have no first-hand knowledge of such a bird. If anyone has some information on a lutino Eclectus or any other new mutation in a different species, please contact me at my mailing address:

Roger Bringas, P.O. Box 2176
No. Hollywood, CA 91610-0176

