

The Caique in Captivity

Photo by George D. Dodge and Dale R. Thompson



Black-headed Caiques (*Pionites m. melanocephala*). This photo was printed in color on page 28, April/May '90 issue.

PART II

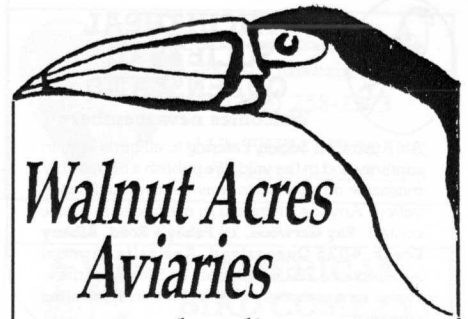
by Dr. George A. Smith
Broadway Veterinary Clinic
Peterborough, Great Britain

In my opinion, a tame caique makes one of the very best of pet parrots. I will not argue that they do not have the majesty of macaws; the "presence" of the Moluccan Cockatoo or the imitative ability of the African Grey Parrot. But in sheer personality, they are supreme. Their patchwork patterns of contrasting pure colors (yellow, green, white, orange and black), with no intermingling of shades, makes them most handsome harlequins. They are not so big in body size and beak size to frighten the timorous. Nor so small as to make the owner fearful for their safety. Indeed, they are exactly the right size for a pet parrot.

When extremely tame, as they will be after they have been hand-reared, or if they are taken immediately after weaning from the parents, they are utterly fearless. The adjectives which describe them are: exhibitionist, arrogant, charming, confiding and macho. They are an active bird, but in ways pleasing for a parrot. They walk, jump and climb in preference to flying. Tame caiques positively enjoy being touched or stroked. They love taking tidbits. They are tough and

resilient enough to be able to withstand the inevitable knocks and bangs caused by living in a domestic environment. They are very curious and, like cats, will explore such interesting cavities as paper bags or open handbags. Being residential birds, not given to wandering, and with a "home base" situated in a tree hollow, they prefer to roost under cover. When night comes, they will literally slink beneath the sheets, whether of cloth material or newspaper, or make use of a nestbox.

Further, when roosting, they do not defecate overnight. This absolute control they have over their bowels allows us to house-train a caique. As they are highly intelligent (and this cannot be said of all parrots), and because it is very obvious to any perceptive owner, when they are going to eliminate, bowel-training is fairly simple to encourage. With the bird on the hand, a small, portable receptacle is gently placed under the tail. This should be done in such a way as not to alarm the bird. This should be done when it appears to be about to void its first "stool" of the morning, which it will do within less than half



Walnut Acres Aviaries

breeding

Toucans, Toucanettes,
Cockatoos, Macaws,
Eclectus, African greys,
Australian parakeets,
Parrots and Finches

All Birds Closed Banded

Call or write for price list.
Jerry Jennings

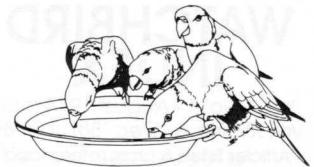
(619) 728-2226

Route 6, Box 14
Fallbrook, CA 92028

Visitors by appointment only.

Loriidae Production Network

offers



Lories Delight Dry Powder

a nutritionally complete formula with the proper balance of proteins, carbohydrates, and necessary nutrients to ensure health and breeding vitality. A combination of grains, pollen, fructose, fruits, vegetables, and vitamins/minerals are utilized in a fine flour consistency which is natural to Lories. This mixture may be used in the *dry state* or *blended* with water and fruit as a nectar. I personally use it both ways for my breeding stock. To date, this formula is producing third generation youngsters.

Over 30 species of Lories and Lorikeets are presently in our collection. *Handfed* young and *adult pairs* are available. The 100-plus pairs set up for breeding are successfully maintained on "Lories Delight", both in the dry and nectar forms. Fresh fruit is provided regularly.

Feel free to call for prices and any questions regarding the maintenance and breeding of Lories.

John Vanderhoof

P.O. Box 575, Woodlake, CA 93286

(209) 564-3610



AVICULTURAL SOCIETY OF QUEENSLAND

Welcomes new members

An Australian Society catering to all birds both in captivity and in the wild. We publish a bi-monthly magazine on all aspects of aviculture and conservation. Anyone interested in membership please contact: **Ray Garwood, 19 Fahey's Road, Albany Creek, 4035 Queensland, Australia.** Annual subscription: \$22 (A) airmail, or \$16 (A) surface. Please remit monies or bank drafts in **Australian currency.**



Gamini Ratnavira

Wildlife Artist

1921 E. Mission Rd.
Fallbrook, CA 92028
(619) 723-9256

Birds eat it and like it.



Marion Zoological Inc.

Dana Ochoa Tucson, AZ 85746
Phone 883-1206

NEW FLAVORED
EXTRUDED DIET!

CHEESE
CORN
RED APPLE
EXOTIC
BIRD
FEAST



THE BIRD CHALET



Rt. 9W — P.O. Box 267
West Park, NY 12493

Handled Exotic Birds
Accessories & Cages
N.Y.S. Distributing For
Lakes' Parrot Buffet



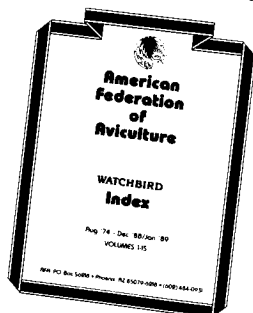
(914) 384-6845

1 (800) 669-BIRD

NOW AVAILABLE WATCHBIRD INDEX

Vol. I, No. 1 - August 1974 thru
Vol. XV, No. 6 - Dec '88/Jan '89
Articles listed & cross referenced
under 3 alphabetized headings

Article • Author • Topic



\$11.00 Price includes
shipping/handling

American Federation
of Aviculture
P.O. Box 56218
Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218
(602) 484-0931

an hour after it wakes.

As it eliminates into the container, it should be rewarded with a caress and a tidbit. And, most important, this should be done with an accompanying word of encouragement. It will learn, if this word, or some other signal is invariably repeated as it begins to prepare to defecate, to do this on command. Such a trained bird can fly on its own accord to its "potty." Although I have read somewhere that birds have no control of their bowel system, this ability to retain a "motion" and defecate under volition is not unique to caiques. It certainly applies to those many South American parrots that naturally roost within a cavity. But caiques seem easier to "train" than others. There is also an account of this in a Blue and Gold Macaw.

Of course, if you want a perfect pet caique, or any other parrot, when it reaches sexual maturity it is better to keep it apart from other birds. If it gets a companion it will put some, if not all, of its attention towards this new bird. This wonderfully tame, confident, strutting, bumptious, appealing clown can then become an extremely fearless adversary. Caiques in pairs or family groups can become a ruthless gang. I had a pair of caiques get into a cage containing a tame Vinacious Amazon. They would have killed it if their whoops of frenzied, joyous, battle had not caught my attention and interference. A caique "paired" to its owner may nip other humans who "trespass" against this "union."

The demand for pet caiques must surely increase once their virtues become better known. This can only be supplied by captive breeding. One of the first hurdles to overcome is sexing. The average male may be "bolder" about the head, yet there is no real sexual dimorphism in size, color, or appearance. I surgically sex almost all my youngsters once they are sufficiently old enough. (Quite contrary to what has been written, I find that it is an absolute impossibility to identify the sex of nestling and fledgling young by endoscopy. At this time, the gonads are completely obscured by mesonephric tissue. They cannot be seen. Mesonephros has some resemblance to an immature ovary and may be thought to be such. As some early sexed birds ultimately prove to be female, this is not proof that they were correctly identified by surgical sexing at an early age.)

A few of mine have been sexed by their chromosomes and all might have been by their behavior. One characteristic of many New World parrots is to threaten by "wing-lifting." That is when the perching bird lifts up its wings. The upward stretching wing shows its under-surface and the flank. Threatening wing-lifting is particularly evident in macaws when nesting, but can be seen at other times. In the caique, wing-lifting is invariably accompanied by a piping "toot". To my present observation, only males have ever been seen to do this. To achieve a demonstration of *pipng with wing-lifting*, it is easily done if a tape-recording is played to the caged bird.

Active copulation is not a sexual determinant. The hand-reared pet caique will, whether male or female, solicit and copulate with the owner's hand.

Caiques have not bred for me until they are two years old. Some may not breed until a year later. In no instance have I had birds younger than 18 months old lay eggs. Perhaps they might in a warmer climate. Whatever, we should not be dogmatic. Most of what we know in aviculture is the result of very few observations made by very few people and they can be wrong!

Until their first molt, young caiques differ from the adults by having pale yellow, rather than white, underparts. When about six months old, the brownish eye of the fledgling is replaced by the red color of the adult. The redness of the iris, like the pinkness of feet and bill in the White-bellied Caique, is blood within the capillaries. The sick or anemic bird shows pallor here. With the first molt, the feather colors become purer and fuller. The few black patches to the cap of the Apricot-headed races disappear. It may take a few years for the White-bellied Caique to lose all traces of black to the skin of their feet and face. The Pallid Caique fledges with a horn-colored bill that gradually, over six months or so, darkens to black. Whereas, in Black-headed Caiques the beak is black in the nest.

I have bred caiques in outside aviaries and indoor cages. In my experience, they do far better if they are given some seclusion. That is, if they have blocked views in some directions. I would prefer that mine had larger quarters; but my pairs are now housed in pens some three feet wide, six feet high, and six feet long. They


are only open at the front. The side walls have a window of translucent fiberglas to make it less dismal within. The nest box is hung at the very back of this short, oblong "tunnel." Before these small aviaries were built, the caiques were all kept in cages two feet square and three feet long. Breeding, then, was not quite as successful. Originally I housed them in indoor flight cages and the birds in these were extremely prolific.

Within reason, the nest box size is likely to prove irrelevant. My own are built of half-inch thick plywood and measure about six inches square by one foot high. The entrance hole, as is invariably my practice, is made just large enough for them to enter through. Both sexes chew away at the interior. Generally, laying can be anticipated by litter being scraped out of the box through the entrance.


I know of no other parrot that looks quite so pregnant for so long a time before actually laying has begun. Indeed, they are so podgy with abdominal contents that the eggs, when they come, seem disappointingly small. They weigh between 8.9 and 12.8 grams. The average weight of 60 assorted eggs has been slightly over ten grams (10.11). The largest eggs I have had were laid by a pair of pure-bred Black-headed Caiques, the smallest by White-bellied Caiques. But eggs differ between individuals. The smallest sized caique is the Pallid *P.m. pallida* and the largest is the Yellow-thighed White-bellied Caique *P.m. (leucogaster) xanthomeria*. The former tend to have the smallest eggs and the latter the largest.

The interval between eggs, generally, is three days. In cold weather, this may increase to four or even five days. Eggs have been laid in every month of the year, so they may be independent of day length. That said, October has been the most prolific month (32 clutches) and July the least (seven clutches).

Incubation is done by the hen. Nowadays all my eggs are artificially incubated and hatched. They are removed on the day they are laid. This saves any from being broken and encourages the hens to relay. It is found that with a temperature of 100 °F (37.7 °C), eggs pip after about 22 days. It will depend, directly, upon the weight loss. "Dry" eggs pip earliest and those that have lost more water pip later. As eggs are individually controlled, I try to arrange that they will have somewhere just over a



BIRDS & SPECIALTY PRODUCTS
COCKATIELS • FINCHES
 BREED AND SHIP 12 MONTHS A YEAR
RE-USEABLE FINCH AND CANARY PADS
 100% WASHABLE
 P.O. Box 1207 • Perris, CA 92370 • (714) 943-6370




Kathleen Szabo Harring
 domestic handraised babies
(305) 258-2373
LUV THEM BIRDS, INC.
 P.O. Box 0285, Goulds, FL 33170


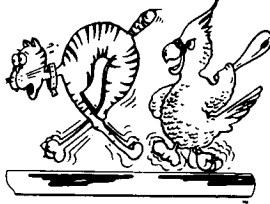
GOWER'S AVIARY
 500 WOODLAND RD., RALEIGH, NC 27603 (919) 779-6078




DOMESTIC HAND-FED, CLOSED BANDED AFRICAN GREYS (CONGO & TIMNEH), SENEGALS, MEYER'S, RED BELLIED PARROTS, CONURES, PIONUS, AMAZONS.
 DISTRIBUTORS OF ROUDYBUSH HAND-FEEDING DIET, PELLETS, CRUMBLES.



AMERICAN BIRD COMPANY
(703) 536-BIRD
 One of the largest selections of domestically bred birds and bird supplies in America
 6219 Lee Highway, Falls Church, VA 22046



Sleek & Sassy™ Naturally Nutritious fresh & clean enriched garden diets with fruits and vegies, PLUS a complete Pellet & Crumble Diet!

Sleek & Sassy Bird Diets contain only fresh, clean & naturally nutritious ingredients! Vitamins, minerals, plus all essential amino acids! No food coloring or oil is added!
Sleek & Sassy Enriched Diets are blended specifically for Exotic Birds so that health and longevity are enhanced! Blended and packaged every week!

Featuring **Sleek & Sassy™**

Send 50¢ for further information. We will send you a **2% DISCOUNT COUPON** for your first order of **Sleek & Sassy™ Bird Diets!**

SPECIALS: (Enclose this ad when ordering) Includes shipping in continental USA

Kellogg's Hand Food:
 2# - \$7.55 5# - \$16.00 15# - \$46.25

Fresh U.S.A. Grown Millet Sprays
 5# - \$15.00 15# - \$36.25

Send this ad with money order, VISA, MasterCard. We ship by U.P.S. Daily!

Wildwood Aviaries
 MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS
 P.O. BOX 497, DEPT. A, MONROE, OR 97456
 Sleek & Sassy Distributorships Available



AVIAN PUBLICATIONS

3311 W. Country Club Lane, Dept. AFA, Altoona, WI 54720, (715) 835-6806

Over 200 Titles Including:

Clinical Avian Medicine & Surgery, Harrison\$85.00	Eagles, Hawks & Falcons Of The World, Brown\$89.98
Everybird, A Guide To Bird Health, MacWhirter\$36.00	The Birds of Africa, Vol. 1, Brown\$143.00
Caged Bird Medicine, Steiner, D.V.M.\$24.95	The Birds of Africa, Vol. 2, Urban\$143.00
Companion Bird Medicine, Burr\$38.95	The Birds of Africa, Vol. 3, Fry\$129.00
Avian Hematology & Cytology, Campbell\$39.95	The Life Of The Hummingbird, Skutch\$18.95
Understanding The Life Of Birds, Coyle, Jr.\$21.95	South American Birds, Dunninghc \$47.50 pb \$35.00
How To Build Everything You Need For Your Birds, Larosa\$ 9.95	Aviculture In Australia, Shephard ..\$55.00
The Bird Care Book, Gerstenfeld ..\$10.95	Birds Of Burma, Smythies\$95.00
Australian Cockatoos, Sindel\$50.00	Monograph Of Endangered Parrots, Silva\$140.00
Parrots, Their Care & Breeding, Low\$80.00	Parrot Incubation Procedures, Jordan\$30.00
The Complete Book Of Parrots, Low\$16.95	Land Of Parrots Video Tapes- set of 7\$294.00
Hand-Rearing Parrots & Other Birds, Low\$24.95	

U.S. Orders: Add \$2.50 for 1st book and 50¢ for each additional book.
Foreign Orders: Add \$4.00 for 1st book and \$1.00 for each additional book.
Wisconsin residents add 5% sales tax.

Send \$2.00 for our complete catalog.

PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE

day between pipping and hatching. The incubation time varies only a few hours either side of 24.5 days. This is in complete agreement with natural incubation during hot summers. In cold weather, the longest it has taken an egg to hatch has been 26 days. Except when the weather, or the housing, is warm, hatchability is better (80%+) in the incubator.

It is found that, for maximum hatch, water loss at pipping should be between 18 and 19 percent. For abnormally large eggs, weight loss might best be taken to as high as 21 percent. Suffice to say here that much of what has been printed is taken, directly sometimes almost word for word, even if this plagiarism is not acknowledged, from *The Incubator Book* by Dr. Anderson-Brown. What applies to poultry, or pheasants, is not necessarily correct for such a different group of birds as parrots.

The fresh-hatched chick will weigh about two thirds of the laying weight of the egg. The seven to nine gram chick is hairy with white down. There is some difference in the quantity. It may be that *xanthoemia* has more down than *melanocephala*. They prove no more difficult to hand-raise than other parrots. My aim with these, as with other parrots, is to determine how best to get the maximum earliest growth because hand-rearing is a tedious process and anything which reduces the time it takes should be identified.

By nine or ten weeks, they should be eating by themselves. When I used the parents for incubation and rearing, the chicks would be left with them sometimes for months until the chicks were given away. Never, under such circumstances, did the hens relay.

Molt appears to be determined by diminishing day-length. Only after mid-summer do they begin to shed feathers. No doubt, like the budgerigar, they may, in the wild, lose feathers throughout the year.

Feeding is perfectly straight forward — the usual mixture of seeds and plenty of fruit. As more are bred, the price may fall sufficiently for caiques to become recognized as the pet parrot supreme. Regretfully, it is found that the majority of breeders wish to confine themselves to the most expensive, the most prestigious, of parrots. Here we have, in caiques, a bird that is not demanding in its avicultural requirements and is of huge interest and beauty. ●

Pure, natural, and cleaned...
finest cuttlebone available.

small 6" - 7" • medium 7" - 10" • jumbo 10" - 13" • mixed sizes

CUTTLEBONE-PLUS

5 lbs. at \$3.90 per lb. = \$19.50
10 lbs. at \$3.00 per lb. = \$30.00

All orders prepaid and shipped freight collect (order 5 lbs.) (Minimum)

FEATURING AVICO[®] LORY AND SOFTBILL DIETS

Lory Life 2 lbs. \$ 6.50 5 lbs. \$16.25 Lory Life Nectar 2 lbs. \$17.00 5 lbs. \$42.50

OTHER SPECIAL NECTAVORE DIETS AVAILABLE
With the addition of fresh fruits these are complete diets.

(213) 776-6486

Wholesale and breeder prices available.

Dick Schroeder: breeder of softbills, rare lories, and pet parrots

Cuttlebone Plus • 644 S. Isis Ave., Dept. A, Inglewood, CA 90301

