

Sun and Gold-capped Conures



*Selective breeding for Color
Intensity at the Voren's Aviaries*

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Howard Voren is noted for the selective breeding of the Sun and Gold-capped Conures for color intensity and color variation. His aviaries are closed to visitors, with a limited access to holding areas and, rarely, the nursery. With minor exceptions, all eggs are removed from the nest and hatched in an artificial incubator.

Mr. Voren's facility is housed outdoors and all his conure cages measure 2 ft. x 2 ft. x 4 ft. long. They are suspended four feet above the ground level. Under the cages is bare ground, which has applications of a chemical herbicide to prevent growth of vegetation. A cage projection of 10 in. x 10 in. is extended out from the bottom front of each conure cage and this area

is used for both a feeding area and a way to catch the birds. There are doors on both the small extension area and on the side of the main cage.

The water container for each cage is in a separate basket that is accessed by a latched door. The wire for all the cages is 1/2 in. x 1 in. or 1 in. x 2 in. Food dishes, made to Voren's own design, are inserted through a 1 in. x 8 in. slot opening in the front of the small extension area. There are covers over the rear third of each cage and over the front (feed) extension.

Nestboxes measure 12 in. x 12 in. x 18 in. deep. This depth deters the bird from emptying the nest of nesting material. The nestboxes are made of wire-reinforced plywood, but metal boxes are gradually being introduced

as replacement.

Perches are made of PVC rods, which have been roughened, with a drill-powered rotary rasp. They are placed high and at the front and back of each cage. There is also a natural branch that is placed crosswise and low (or on the cage floor) in the cage around the midway position. This also serves as a chew stick. Voren does not use any mature fruitwood branches due to possible toxicity. For Florida, Australian Pine, *Casuarina equisetifolia*, and *Melaleuca leucadendra* are readily available and are excellent choices. Oak is also suitable.

Since all eggs are usually removed for artificial incubation, nestboxes are refilled as necessary with new nesting material. The boxes are cleaned only if the clutch is allowed to remain to be parent raised.

No commercial avian pellets are ever fed in the diet. Sprouted beans (mung, lentil, adzuki), canned corn, carrots and apples cut into 1/4 in. cubes are fed during the entire year. Seed is added during breeding season only. The feed is dusted with a custom mixed supplement containing vitamins, minerals and a chlorophyll supplement that is 1/3 wheat grass powder. The birds are fed and the water is changed two times per day. Watering is done by flushing and refilling the dishes using a hose. Cage floors are flushed at the same time. If there are heavy accumulations of droppings, a heavy rain will soften them so that hosing then will remove what the rain did not.

Mr. Voren selectively breeds those conures in which he wants to increase the intensity and amount of color. He is noted for his red Sun Conures and these were gotten by reproducing those birds that had a slight bit more of red coloration than the others. After continuing this program, it did not take many generations to acquire a very intensely red colored Sun Conure.

Variations of this can also be done to acquire a yellow Sun or increase the red-orange intensity of a Gold-capped Conure. These Suns and Gold-caps are very beautiful, indeed, and stand out in the aviary. This type of selective breeding is similar to how color variations happen in wild. ➔

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