

DO YOU HAVE A PAIR OF PRECOICIAL BIRDS?

by Sheldon Dingle

There are several different species of precocial birds that have interesting and often unusual habits. Precocial birds are those that are able to take care of themselves right out of the egg as opposed to the altricial birds, such as parrots and finches, that remain in the nest and are fed by the parents. The precocial babies have a greater or lesser dependence upon the parents, according to the species.

Bobwhite quail chicks, for example, have their eyes open and have muscular coordination that permits them to leave the nest within a matter of hours after hatching. They are not completely independent though, as you know. They do not attain a practical degree of homoiothermy for several weeks which means that they must depend upon the parents (or a mechanical brooder) for body warmth. This explains why the Bobwhites go about in family groups and have rather strong familial ties. The adults will spend about three-quarters of each day brooding the chicks — not in the nest but during the course of their foraging for food. If the temperature drops you can hear the hen calling the chicks to assemble under her fluffed feathers. On the other hand,

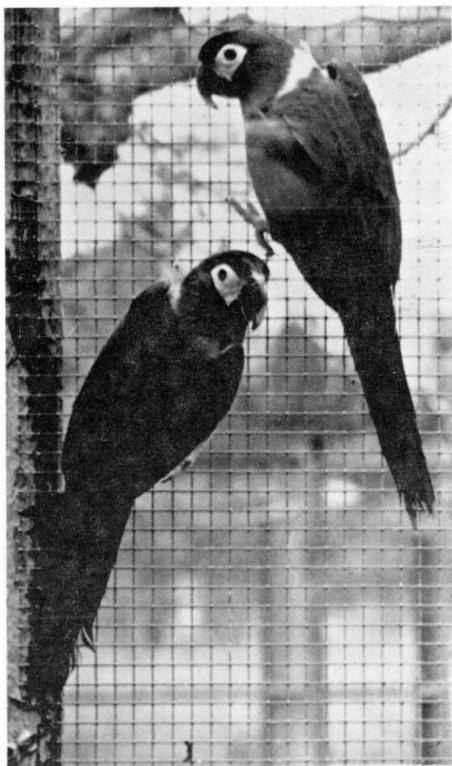
when a danger threatens, the chicks scatter and hide. Young quail are theoretically independent at the age of about one month although they usually remain with the parents at least another month.

Young waterfowl are among the most precocial of birds. The chicks emerge from the egg, covered with a thick down that eliminates the need for any brooding. They can swim, dive and gather some food without any help. The particular feeding habits of the species determines whether or not the baby has to learn some tricks from its parents. For example, the species that feed on fish usually catch fish for the babies until they (the babies) are large and strong enough to catch their own fish.

The most precocial of all birds are the Australian Mound Birds that lay their eggs in warm sand and forget about them. The eggs hatch out and the chicks never see their parents. They fly within two days and are totally independent.

I rather doubt that you have any totally precocious Mound Birds but I am sure that many of you have a great variety of other species of precocial birds in your aviaries. Raising them sure beats hand feeding baby parrots doesn't it? ■

DONATED MACAW RAFFLED AT 1976 CONVENTION

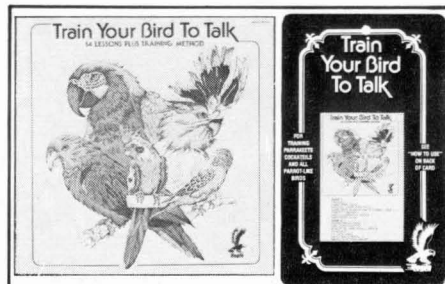


Conventioneers at the 1976 A.F.A. Convention were treated to a surprise raffle of a tame Yellow Collared Macaw generously donated to A.F.A. by Mr. David Mohilef, owner of the Pacific Bird Supply Co. — one of the largest U.S. quarantine facilities. Pacific Bird owns three stations and part of a fourth in the U.S. as well as additional holding facilities in Singapore, Canada, and England.

Dave Mohilef has been a consistent supporter of the American Federation of Aviculture through his membership, advertising, the Macaw, and the donation of his time in sitting on the Psittacosis Advisory Committee.

The 1976 Bird Raffle Winner was Mr. John Lake of Bakersfield, California. The Raffle netted A.F.A. in excess of \$550.00. It is likely that a similar Raffle will be held in Phoenix in 1977.

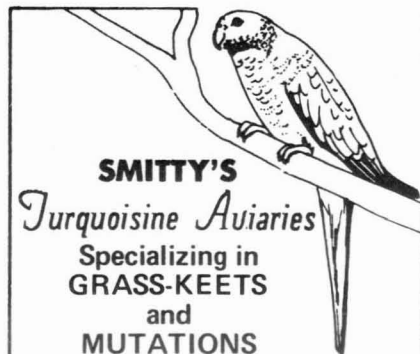
The American Federation of Aviculture wishes to thank Dave Mohilef for his generous support and congratulate John Lake for his prize. ■



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