

KEEPING AND BREEDING THE NANDAY CONURE (*NANDAYUS NENDAY*) IN AUSTRALIA



By Matt Baird
Melbourne, Australia

The Nanday Conure also commonly called the Black-masked or Black-headed Conure is, like the Queen of Bavaria's Conure and the Patagonian Conure, placed in a genus all its own.

The Nanday Conure is a common bird in its home land of South America often seen traveling in large flocks, feeding on native and farmed fruit and seed crops. Wild populations inhabit a range which includes Bolivia, Paraguay and areas of Argentina and Brazil. The Nanday Conure has been observed nesting in tree hollows and in fence posts in rural areas where clearing of native vegetation for farming has occurred.

The Nanday Conure is a medium sized parrot, measuring approximately 31 cm (12 inches) in length. The colouring of the Nanday Conure varies from the many shades of green - lime green wings and back, to the almost yellow in the lower abdomen. There is a soft blue band that runs across the upper breast area. The head and beak are black, and the periorbital skin around the eye is white.

With those un-mistaken red thighs, the Nanday Conure is a very pleasing bird to admire. Adult birds weigh around 140 grams, and are sexually mature around 2 1/2 to 3 years of age.

The Nanday Conure has a strong and avid desire to destroy anything that is timber, so a constant supply of perches and nest boxes must be readily available.

The Nanday has a reputation for being LOUD, VERY LOUD. It is one of the loudest of all the South American Conures, with exception to the Queen of Bavaria's Conure. When considering keeping Nandays, one must think not only of your own Sunday sleep-in, but also that of your neighbours'. A Nanday's call in the morning and afternoon can stretch the limits of tolerance between the best of neighbours.

All of my birds are fed a diet consisting of a high quality seed mix and a fresh fruit and vegetable mix given every day. The fresh fruit and vegetable mix consists of: apples, oranges, corn (on the cob as well



A normal coloured Nanday Conure

as kernels), carrots, broccoli tips, sweet potato, celery, grapes, peas and beans. Additionally a mung and lentil sprout mix is given. I do not "sprinkle" vitamin or mineral supplements over my birds' food. I feel that if the birds are fed a high quality human grade diet, there is no need for any vitamin supplements. The seed mix is available for the birds all day and the fruit and vegetable mix is fed out in the morning. The fruit and vegetable bowls are collected in the afternoon and the birds are fed out a fresh slice of either apple / pear or a chunk of corn on the cob. The amount fed out every day varies depending on if there are chicks in the nest.

Housing of any species should be one that works well for not only the birds comfort, but also that of the owner's ability to service the set upon chooses to have, be it a conventional aviary or suspended aviary. I house my Nanday Conures in suspended cages, measuring 3 feet high x 2 feet wide x 5 feet long. The nest box is hung on the outside of the cage, giving the birds the maximum use of the cage and allows for ease of inspection / replacement of the nest box. It should be noted that a lot, if not all, of the South American

Caption Left: A Cinnamon mutation Nanday Conure

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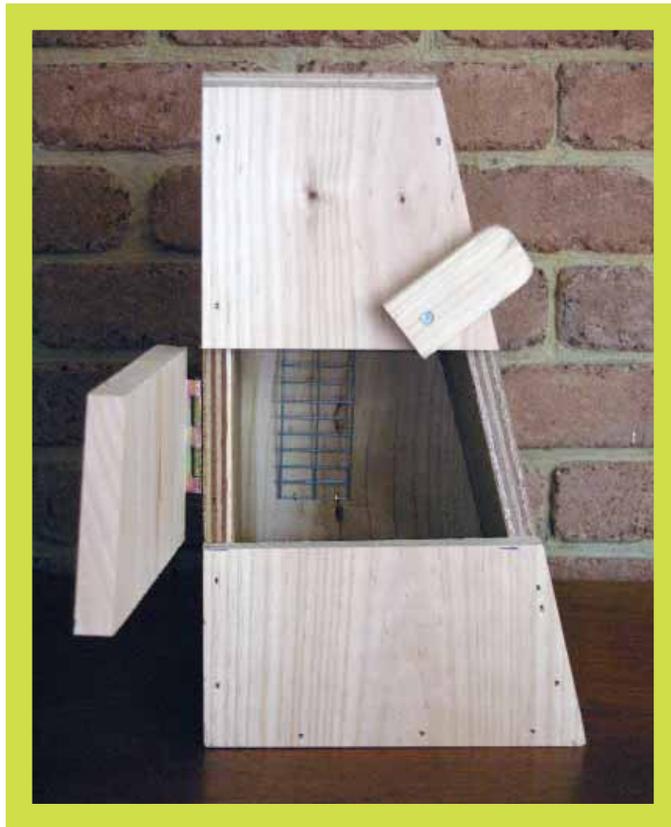
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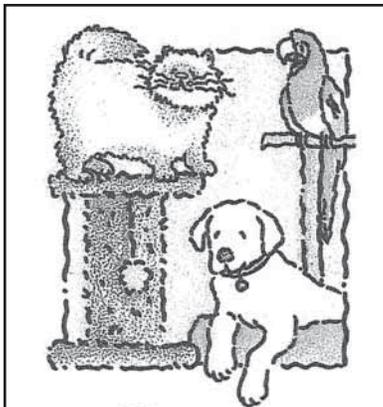
Nest box
used for
breeding
Nanday
Conures

species of parrot like to roost in their nest at night, so a nest box must be provided all year round. The type of nest box that I use is 400 mm (16 inches) high and has a 225 mm (9 inches) internal measurement and is made from solid timber, with an internal wire ladder for the birds to climb in and out easily. I deliberately drill a small 4 cm (1 1/2 inch) in diameter entrance hole, as I have found that allowing the birds to chew/work there way into the nest box, helps to stimulate the pair to nest. I place about 2-3 cm (1-1 1/2 inches) of pine wood shavings in the bottom of the nest box and on top of this I place a generous amount of wood chips, which the birds take great delight in chewing down.

In Melbourne, the Nanday Conure will start to nest around June and go through to December. Most pairs will double clutch and a third clutch can be gained if one wishes to pull the eggs or chicks for hand rearing. Hand reared young make delightful pets, and are a lot quieter than parent reared birds. The average clutch size consists of 3-5 eggs, in which the hen will start to incubate when the 2nd egg has been laid, with a 1-2 day interval between the eggs. The incubation period being is around 26 days. Nanday Conures will breed successfully from the age of 2 years, though more success is gained from birds older than 3 years. The chicks hatch naked, but within a few days start to grow a light grey to white down. The young will leave the nest at 8-9 weeks of age and are independent of the parents 3-4 weeks after. At fledging the young Nandays resemble their parents, except for a few minor differences. However, within 6 months of becoming independent of their parents, they are very hard to distinguish from adults. Be sure to keep an eye out for any parental aggression towards the young. If noticed, the young should be removed immediately. When placed in a new enclosure, be sure to include a nest box for the young to roost in.

To my knowledge there are only two colour mutations that occur in the Nanday Conure. A Lutino, which is still under development in Europe and a Cinnamon or Faded mutation which is established in both Europe and Australia.

Despite being loud at times, I find the Nanday Conure to have a personality all of their own. They are a good species for the novice aviculturist, but also a great stepping stone. The experience and knowledge that is gained from breeding these conures can be used to keep and breed the rarer conure species as well as the majestic macaws. ■



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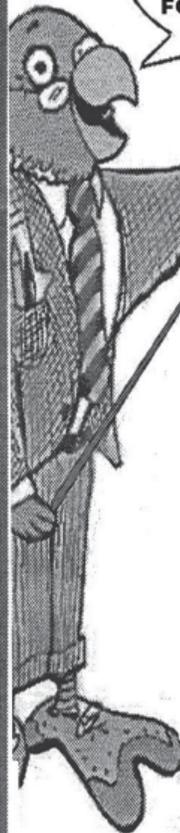


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