

WALSRODE BIRDPARK

by Simon Bruslund Jensen, Zoological Director

February 2008

The text contains selected news from the Walsrode Birdpark and the Vogelpark Walsrode Foundation. This text is made available to multiple Magazines and Newsletters worldwide. Editors are welcomed to use the whole text or selected portions or to translate the text into their respective languages. The Walsrode Birdpark will not carry any responsibility for alterations to the texts.

Gulls

In 2007 the first attempts to setup a real gull-colony in one of the large flight aviaries in the Crane-section started. Eleven Grey-headed Gulls (*Larus cirrocephalus*) and two Mediterranean Gulls (*Larus melanocephalus*) were placed together. Both are tropical and subtropical gull species both with classic colony based breeding behaviour originating from Africa but with their distributions separated by the Sahara.



Grey-headed Gull

In the past we were reluctant to keep too large groups of gulls on display due to the high degree of waste and corrosive excretes produced by gulls. However the increased attractiveness of the aviary through the liveliness of the birds and the fact that the birds are allowed to live out their natural behaviour certainly outweighs this problem. In return we have to accept the fact that some boulders contain white blotches that are difficult to remove in the realisation that this is as much a part of life in a gull-colony as the loud calls and the lively intrigues between pairs. We had fairly high hopes that breeding in the group would equally increase with the larger group of birds, the first eggs were also laid early but shortly thereafter went missing and later further clutches disappeared without a trace. It was speculated that the problems might have

been caused by a weasel but to rule out that the gulls were not stealing each others eggs the colony were carefully observed.

To our surprise the culprits proved to be the two young Siberian Cranes (*Grus leucogeranus*) sharing the exhibit the cranes would take daily swims to the gull colony and systematically "sweep" the grounds for fresh eggs. In the end we only managed to secure a few eggs before the end of the breeding season, however now that the problem has been recognized we will make the necessary adjustments for the 2008 season. The concept of a gull-colony proved popular with visitors and gulls alike.

Congo-Peafowl

The pair of Congo-Peafowl (*Afropavo congensis*) on exhibit at the Pheasantry exemplarily reared a domestic chicken in 2007. The pair has been allocated restrictive breeding status from the EEP studbook in the past and as such was not allowed to rear its own chicks due to the risks related to inbreeding.

In order to give the pair enrichment we would let them have chicken eggs to rear, this also keeps the pair fit for the case that they might foster the young from another pair of Congo-Peafowl or another species. The most recent edition of the studbook however takes into consideration that there are now only very few founders left and that it is unlikely that new bloodlines from the wild will be available. As a result the pair has been allowed to breed for the coming years and we now hope they will produce fertile eggs and hopefully healthy chicks. A number of problems pursue the captive populations of Congo-Peafowl all likely to be related to inbreeding issues including poor feather, poor fertility and a tendency to metabolic bone disease in chicks. A recent diagnosis of diabetes type A in a male Congo-Peafowl at Walsrode is likely to be a new problem as this is the first time this mainly inheritable disease has been diagnosed in a Congo-Peafowl.

Guineafowl

With the Crested Guineafowl (*Guttera p. pucherani (granti)*) there were quite a few chicks in 2007. The birds kept by Walsrode can all be traced back to imports made from Kenya in the 1960ies. They were originally identified as *Guttera eduardi granti* but later the taxonomy was reviewed and they were renamed to *Guttera pucherani granti*. Meanwhile another review is prevailing which does not recognize

this subspecies as valid and includes this taxon in *Guttera pucherani pucherani*. However the birds in Walsrode consistently present the black collar that is supposed to be diagnostic for the "Granti's". If this collar represents a colour morph, an intergraded population between two subspecies or if it is in fact its own distinctive geographical variation still unknown, it is obvious though that the Guinea fowl as a group are taxonomically poorly understood by scientists. Crested Guinea fowl are fairly social birds living in small groups of up to 10 birds throughout the year defending territory and rearing offspring together.



Crested Guinea fowl

The Vulturine Guinea fowl (*Acryllium vulturinum*) displays quite different social behaviour, off breeding season they will congregate in huge groups of several hundred birds, but for breeding pairs will separate and defend their own nest and territory. When the chicks are a few days to a week old the individual "families" will join up with others forming small groups that continually grows in size. In Walsrode Birdpark we try to simulate this behaviour and the best results are achieved by letting the pairs form in the group and then isolate them in a separate aviary in April or May depending on weather conditions.

Laughing Kookaburras

The Laughing Kookaburras (*Dacelo novaeguineae*) reared two single chick clutches in 2007, as we expected the chick from the first clutch assisted in rearing the second chick. This is the natural behaviour and by keeping the Kookaburras in this new constellation as opposed to only in pairs we are hoping to be able to present this interesting kingfisher in a much more active and dynamic fashion. The trouble however is for the keepers to determine when it is time for some of the young to "move

away from home” in order to avoid aggression all together. It is also to be expected that it will be impossible to reintroduce any bird once it has been away from the group more than a few days. Therefore if a bird is removed for treatment its isolation is likely to become permanent until we would find a new home for it in another zoo.

It seems that males live longer than females in Carmine Bee-eaters and it appears that these “left behind” males spend a good deal of their time harassing younger pairs in their attempts to breed. For the 2008 season the colony will be split up into bachelor group and a breeding group with an even sex-ratio.

From a breeder in Flensburg, Germany, we received six Black Manikins (*Lonchura stygia*). These waxbills from New Guinea are under threat in the wild due to loss of habitat. In Europe they are rare in aviculture and we were pleased to find a very dedicated breeder of this species. All of the small birds arrived closed banded and with exemplary documentation of their pedigrees.

Goodbyes to an “Old Lady”

On a Sunday evening in October 2007 it became clear that we would have to say goodbye to one of our oldest and most charismatic cranes. The old Hooded Crane (*Grus monachus*) female were no longer able to stand and had been suffering from age related gout for some time. This bird originally ended up in



Hooded Crane

Walsrode Birdpark as a unintended “bi-catch” in a shipment Demoiselle Cranes from Mongolia in 1969 and were for a long time the only Hooded Crane in Europe. After considerable effort a male were brought in from USSR in 1987 and already in the following year the pair went on to produce a chick possibly the world’s first captive breeding of this species. Several of the keepers in the crane-section share fond memories with this old and sometimes rather eccentric Hooded Crane lady.

However once it had been determined that the bird was having pain it was time to make the difficult decision to put this bird down for humane reasons. When this bird arrived in 1969 she was already in adult plumage making it difficult to estimate her age, but she was at least 40 years old.

In 2007 Walsrode birdpark reared Hooded Cranes again now in the third generation, in Europe the Hooded Cranes belongs to the most rarely maintained crane species and is currently only kept in Walsrode and one other Zoo. In North America the breeding program are more successful and at least ten zoos keep this small crane species.

Photos: Walsrode Birdpark Archive



Horned Guan

Hoopoes

The Hoopoes (*Upupa epops*) reared their first clutch completely unnoticed in a nesting chamber that was otherwise intended for the Carmine Bee-eaters (*Merops nubicus*). In company of these insect-eaters the Hoopoes had no problems finding enough live-food to rear their young. The Carmine Bee-eaters themselves were not successful in 2007 this is probably not due to the Hoopoes but caused by a rather skewed sex-ratio within the population. There are a number of very old males in the aviary, several of which are almost 20 years old and no longer breeding.

Horned Guans

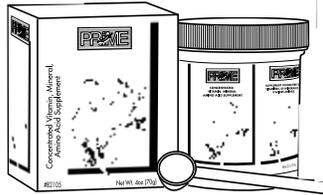
A pair of Horned Guans (*Oreophasis derbianus*) arrived from African Safari, Puebla Zoo in Mexico as a part of the international breeding effort for the species. The pair arrived as strangers but quickly after release from the quarantine proved to be a very compatible pair. They are housed in one of the breeding complexes off exhibit. Thanks to donations the Vogelpark Walsrode Foundation has been able to commit to a parallel in-situ conservation project, for at least the next five years, to the benefit of this endangered species in the wild.



CONCENTRATED FULL SPECTRUM VITAMIN, MINERAL AND LIMITING AMINO ACID SUPPLEMENT



- Ultra fine highly palatable powder does not cake over time
- Penetrates soft foods for accurate dosage administration
- Contains 14 vitamins and 9 minerals missing in most seed/vegetable/fruit diets
- Extra vitamin C and E for increased breeding and as antioxidants
- Calcium gluconate carrier adds required calcium which is deficient in most other supplements
- Exotic fruit flavoring without added sugar which can promote pathogenic organisms
- Lysine and Methionine amino acids improve diet protein quality
- Unique combination of enzymes and acidifiers to improve digestion
- Micro-encapsulated Beneficial Bacteria (Probiotics) keep birds in top condition



Years of formulating and field testing have resulted in the *most advanced avian supplement*. Prime has excelled above all other supplements in providing all species of companion birds with their required nutrients. Prime, however, is not a dumping ground for every nutrient known to man - *ingredients were selected strictly on the basis of need*. This results in higher levels of those nutrients truly needed by birds. For most accurate dosage administration, we recommend Prime be sprinkled over your bird's favorite fruits and vegetables.

MAKES A GREAT ADDITIVE TO EGG AND NESTING FOODS.

THE BEST WAY TO ENSURE TOTAL NUTRITION FOR ALL CAGE BIRDS.

Available sizes: #82102 - 20g, #82105 - 70g, #82106 - 0.88 lb, #82110 - 4.4 lbs



HARI'S WEB SITE: <http://www.hagen.com/hari/>



Your dollars make a difference!



- AFA Conservation Fund
- AFA CITES Fund
- AFA Legislation Fund
- AFA Disaster Relief Fund

Thank you for your support!