

Grey-cheeked Parakeets

by Smiles Germeau
Centralia, Washington

Grey-cheeked Parakeets *Brotogeris pyrrhopterus* make wonderful pets for the apartment dweller or small home dweller. They don't require much space and any cage of appropriate size will do. They like toys and places to hide. (They are also known as pocket parrots!) The hand-fed babies love to be with people and will ride around on your shoulder or in your pocket as long as you will allow them.

A Grey-cheeked breeding routine for me begins with a healthy adult bird. A bird new to my facility will be isolated for a month or more. Once the prospective breeder is believed to be healthy, it is introduced to another one of the opposite sex from the flock. (All breeders are surgically sexed.) These two are caged together until breeding season is over. At that time,

all birds are released into a community flight.

Beginning in February or March, depending on the weather in our area, I set up the breeding cages. Each cage is 24"W x 18"D x 20"H. A nest box is attached to the outside of the cage on the end. I use an offset cockatiel nest box in which I put a divider between the entrance hole and the actual nest site. Pine shavings are put into the depth of the entry hole. A visual barrier is used between each pair to provide privacy.

When the cages are ready, I watch the colony to observe pairing. Once I feel certain a pair is ready to nest, I move them to a breeding cage. It will take that pair about a month to settle into the new quarters and get serious about nesting.

A pair will lay four to six eggs per clutch and begin to sit tight with the third egg at which time the pair remains in the nest most of the time. They will come out to eat during feeding time in the morning and again in the evening. The hen will usually sit in the nest box waiting for the male to return, at which time she may go to the food cup. It is during this time that the nest boxes are checked daily. Nest checking becomes part of the routine and does not seem to upset the pairs. There are a few exceptions to this, however!

As incubation progresses, the birds become more protective and some pairs are absolutely vicious when they are nesting. Hatching should begin in 26 days. This may vary with some pairs but seems to be an average.

I do not artificially incubate the Grey-cheeked's eggs as all my pairs are excellent parents. When the babies are 10 to 14 days old, I pull them for handfeeding.

A handfeeding diet that is close to the regular diet is used for the babies. This seems to work well for me. There are many handfeeding diets available. I prefer to use Prettybird and Scenic as I have good results with both of these.

Some pairs will go back to nest when the babies are pulled. I have

one pair that laid three clutches one year. I discourage multiple clutches by removing the nest box. This is stressful on the breeding pair. I leave the pairs in the breeding cages until all pairs are through breeding and have had a rest for about two weeks. At this time all the parents are released into a colony in a walk-in flight.

The walk-in flights are indoor-outdoor style, the outdoor area being four feet wide, nine feet long and nine feet high. The indoor area is eight feet wide, four feet deep and nine feet high. They are given bedrooms (a series of small, connected wooden boxes similar to a finch nest box) for sleeping or hiding. There are several perches of varying sizes appropriate for their feet made available indoors and out. The entire area is cement floor with a roof which is an extension of our building. The outdoors are draped with clear plastic for protection from the weather during the winter months.

Here in the Pacific Northwest, our weather can get very cold and I have found the Grey-cheeked will acclimate quite nicely if protected from breezes and kept above freezing. If heat is needed, I provide a red heat lamp. Never use the white heat bulbs as they will blind the birds. No matter how cold, the birds will spend some time in the outdoor area every day. On sunny days the plastic drapes are rolled up and the birds have indirect sunlight.

Sunlight is very important to all living things. It is necessary for assimilating vitamins and minerals, calcium being a very important one. Cuttlebone is provided at all times. Just before going to nest, the Grey-cheekeds work the cuttlebones until what is not eaten is on the floor of the cage. A mineral block may be put in the cage but in my opinion, the Grey-cheeked does not care for them. They prefer the cuttlebone.

I use very small amounts of vitamins and minerals. If the diet is nutritious, they will get the needed vitamins and minerals naturally. To bring the birds into breeding condition I don't change the diet a great deal. Vitamin E and a good powdered vitamin is added to the vegetable dish once a week.

It is very important to provide your Grey-cheeked with a nutritious diet. An essential part of the diet is vegetables and fruit with some seeds to



Greenwings
Buffon's
Hyacinths
Militarys
Blue and Golds
Scarlets
Redfronts

- ALL BIRDS ARE CLOSED BANDED and VETERINARIAN CHECKED
- UNRELATED PAIRS AVAILABLE

Joanne Abramson
RAINTREE MACAWS
BREEDING AND RESEARCH
P.O. Box 1271, Fort Bragg, CA 95437
707-964-4380

provide entertainment. If given a choice, these little darlings will eat just fruits. This is not in the best interest of the birds. A daily ration consists of frozen mixed vegetables (thawed, of course) to which I add raw, grated carrot, and three chopped apples. Other vegetables and fruits are added in small amounts as they come into season. We also feed peas and beans in the pods and raw shredded beets from our garden.

I never feed fruits which contain pits. The pits are toxic and the toxins can bleed back into the fruit. Consequently you feed the toxin to the birds!

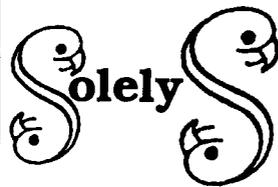
If you have only one or two Grey-cheeked it is very simple to provide a good diet. Just share your meals with them.

It is much easier to tell you what not to feed! Do not feed highly spiced foods (including salt), fatty foods, sugar, caffeine or alcohol. I have a few sayings, "if it has a pit, question it", "if in doubt, don't" and "better safe than sorry".

Another very important part of any diet is, of course, clean, fresh water every day. One way to accomplish this is with the use of water tubes. Grey-cheeked Parakeets don't drink much water but they do love to bathe and will use the drinking water if need be. To keep them from soiling the drinking water, I provide the drinking tubes and a separate bath vessel. I have found the plastic, six-inch flower pot drain tray works well. They are also easy to clean and sanitize well. My theory is, if it isn't good enough for me, it isn't good enough for the birds in my care.

The little Grey-cheeked does have some ability for mimicry but is not known for the speech clarity of its larger cousins. The Grey-cheeked Parakeet has a higher pitched voice and is not always easily understood. I have several who have very clear voices and it is a real thrill when I enter the aviary and hear "pretty bird" or "hey turkey, turkey, turkey". I just grin and repeat the phrases. They also do a very good wolf whistle!

Caging your little bird is very easy. There are so many styles of cages available on the market today, the only recommendation I have is the bigger the better! Just be sure it is appropriate for your Grey-cheeked Parakeet. Enjoy your wonderful pet! ●



Solely Solomon Aviaries

Specializing only in
Solomon Island Eclectus

Fair Pricing — Top Quality

CHAUNCEY MIDDLETON
(409) 547-2506

P.O. Box 517
WARREN, TX 77664



WHITE BEAR PRODUCTS

AVICULTURALISTS * VETERINARIANS * BREEDERS
ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE USING
WHITE BEAR PRODUCTS
AND SEEING THE DIFFERENCE!

CALL TODAY FOR OUR HOT NEW
FULL COLOR CATALOG
FEATURING 53 GREAT NEW
PRODUCTS!
(317) 849-9637

You Will Soon See Why
White Bear Products Are The Very Best!!



White Bear Products is proud to be an
OFFICIAL SPONSOR of the AMERICAN FEDERATION of AVICULTURE

A Division of Gary Dorman & Associates, Inc.
7535 East 71st Street - Indianapolis, IN 46256
(317) 849-9637 Fax (317) 577-2573