



The Male Yellow-throated Hanging Parrot waits at the entrance of the nest box in which the pair bred.

[Note: This breeding of the Yellow-throated Hanging Parrot has been submitted to the American Federation of Aviculture for a first U.S. breeding nomination. If any readers have reproduced the species or know of some one reproducing it prior to the date described in this article, please inform Dale R. Thompson (chairman of the AFA's Avy Awards Committee) through the AFA Business Office, P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218. Please include the name and phone number of the breeder and the hatch date of their successful breeding]

Breeding the Yellow-throated Hanging Parrot

by Robert and Angie Petrie,
Kansas City, MO

Included in a group of birds I acquired in 1992, were birds called Blue-crowned Hanging Parrots *Loriculus galgulus*. Having seen them at a zoo several years prior, I got them as something of a novelty. Soon I was completely fascinated by these strange little parrots. For those readers not familiar with hanging parrots, they are the size of the South American parrotlets, which are smaller than Budgies. Their natural diet is fruit, nectar and probably some seeds and insects. This high carbohydrate diet not only makes their droppings like those of lorries, but their movements also can be hyper-

active like those of lorries. Hanging parrots are closely related to lovebirds and their social behavior is reminiscent of lovebirds. The females are the dominant sex and can be quite aggressive.

The one behavior that gives these parrots their name is the habit of hanging upside down from the top of their enclosure like bats. When you see them in a barren cage, it looks quite odd but in a planted aviary they become dangling tree leaves and are hard to spot. The niche that hanging parrots occupy is similar to that of small fruit bats. They spend their time clambering about in the very tops of

tropical rainforest trees searching for ripened fruit or flowers. The flight of hanging parrots is also bat-like. That is, it is not quick and straight but is, instead, slow and highly maneuverable. Their voices are not loud like typical forest parrots, but rather high pitched like bats. This higher pitched voice does not carry through the forest very far and so it doesn't signal to predators their exact location. Hanging not only helps to camouflage the birds but if there is danger among the branches, the hanging parrots need only release their grip and they are in instant flight.

Hanging parrots, as a group, are a rarity in captivity. The Blue-crowned and the Vernal are the most commonly kept species. The Celebes and the Philippine can also be found, but infrequently. The other six species are rarely imported.

In the summer of 1993 we acquired three Yellow-throated Hanging Parrots from an importer in California. The trio consisted of two females and a male. These were the only individuals of this species we could locate. After the initial quarantine, the Yellow-throateds were housed in two foot cube cages similar to the cages lovebirds and parrotlets are bred in. A variety of nests and nesting materials were offered.

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Hanging parrots are reported to line their nests as lovebirds do.

Their diet is a variety of fruits and vegetables with calcium and vitamins sprinkled on top, and soaked parrot pellets. This diet is fed twice a day. I have offered different types of seed from finch to parrot—soaked to dry—and they have never touched it. The male was kept with only one female at a time. All the birds were in great health and seemed to have everything they needed but they did not show any breeding behaviors.

While researching information on hanging parrots, I read Larry and Kathy Weish's article "Breeding the Celebes Hanging Parrot." I decided to try some of the things they did. All three Yellow-throateds were placed in a suspended cage measuring 2 ft. high, 2 ft. wide and 4 ft. long. Their cage was placed alongside a pair of Blue-crowned Hanging Parrots. A reverse-boot style breeding box similar to the Weish's was placed at the back of the cage. The nest chamber measured 6 in. wide, 6 in. long and 12 in. deep with an entrance tube 6 in. square and 6 in. long. A tube type box 4 in. wide, 6 in. high and 10 in. deep was also provided.

The male Blue-crowned Parrot displaying to its mate would excite the male Yellow-throated and he would begin displaying. Soon, one of the female Yellow-throateds began to spend time in the tube type box. At the same time, she would restrict the other female to a small spot near the food dishes. The subordinate female was subsequently removed. The remaining female then laid two eggs that were later found to be infertile. The female did sit on the eggs the full incubation time though. After the infertile eggs were removed, the female began spending her time in both of the boxes. Several weeks later, on April 14, two eggs were found in the reverse-boot box. Out of fear of disturbing the female, I did not check the box for four weeks. On May 12, 1995 one naked pink chick was found. It appeared to be about one week old. Again, worried about disturbing the female, I did not check the box after that. The chick fledged on June 24, 1995. It had the coloration of the female. Its cere was still disproportionately larger than that of the adults and

had black on it. Its eyes were also darker than those of the adults.

Yellow-throated Hanging Parrots are only a few colors off from their Blue-crowned cousins. That is, remove the Blue-crowned's blue crown and change their black beak to orange, change the male's red throat patch to yellow and you have created the Yellow-throateds. The males' displays were identical. On a perch next to the female, the male would run up to her, let out a squeak and in a quick flash he would thrust his head forward, as though he were attacking the female, and simultaneously flare the feathers of his throat and rump patches perpendicular to his body. He would lift his head to extend his throat, and droop his wings and tail. This body position accentuates the throat and rump patches unbelievably. Immediately after this, the male would regurgitate a thick, yellowish fluid. The female would eat the fluid either directly from the male's beak or off the perch. If the female didn't accept the treat he would re-eat it.

The female was the only one to enter the nest to incubate the eggs or brood the chick. The male would get excited and offer the female food every time she left the nest box. In addition to the male's offerings, the female would still eat fresh food from the dishes.

After fledging, the chick would roost near the male but would beg for food from the female. The chick was not observed hanging like the parents until several weeks after leaving the nest.

If there is anyone with Yellow-throated Hanging Parrots, we would like to communicate with you in the hope that we can work together to get a founder population started. Please contact us at 4325 NE 53rd Street, Kansas City, MO 64119 or call us at (816) 459-9800.

References:

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