

I am sure that many bird breeders have heard the expression "Handfed birds aren't any good as breeders." Actually, the problem is not that they were handfed, rather it is the *way* in which they were handfed and raised as chicks and juveniles. Furthermore, it is usually only the male future breeders that are adversely affected by this problem.

I have never read anything on this subject in regards to Eclectus Parrots, although I have read articles on cockatoos and cockatiels. I would suspect that many other parrots are similarly, adversely affected by the manner in which they are raised as chicks and as juveniles if they are to be used as future breeders.

The main problem is that the *male* chicks and juveniles become excessively imprinted (bonded) on humans then they *usually* aren't any good for breeding purposes. They seem to think that they are little people instead of birds and will do their mating displays for their human "mate" instead of a potential bird mate. Therefore, the female bird never receives the proper signals from the male and breeding doesn't occur. In fact, the female will usually try to push the male to breed her and these affected males just don't seem to have a clue as to what it is all about. The males will usually become severely stressed and become either sick or neurotic feather pluckers. There are, of course, occasional exceptions to this, however, the foregoing is *usually* the end result (problem). Fortunately, there is a solution to this problem but first let me say a few words about raising chicks to be pets.

To Be Pets

Handfed chicks make the best pets. Pull the chicks for handfeeding at 2-3 weeks of age for the best results. Give them lots of human attention, nurture them, handle them and socialize with them as frequently as possible each day, especially after they start to feather in. Some bird breeders feel that chicks raised without the company of siblings (individual containers in the brooder) make the best pets. I leave siblings together until they fledge (usually the 10th week) and start to wean, then I separate them into individual cages if they are to be pets.

To Be Future Breeders

When raising *male* chicks and juveniles to be future breeders, I offer the

Raising Eclectus Chicks

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following suggestions based on my own experiences and on the experience of several other Eclectus breeders whom I have spoken to about this subject. Parent raised males are fine as future breeders. Handfed males are also fine as future breeders if you handle them as little as possible—just enough to get them fed and with a little nurturing while they are very young (2-9 weeks of age). Leave the male future breeders with siblings or with

males or females from other clutches. I used to keep an extra male around (about one year old) and used him to help wean the chicks. He would show them how to eat and would also feed them some if they needed it. Once the chicks wean, quit handling them. In other words, allow them to be birds, not little people. Weaned juveniles should be caged with another Eclectus or caged in close proximity to other caged Eclectus. This will allow them to have the proper bird-to-bird socializing which is so very important to successful breeding. ➤

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