

Renauld's Ground-cuckoo

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Photo by Maarten de Ruiter



Renauld's Ground-cuckoo, an uncommon but very interesting Southeast Asian bird in aviculture.

The Renault's Ground-cuckoo is not common in aviculture and is not kept by the average aviculturist. Only if one has a very large aviary and is looking for a challenge, does one acquire this challenging bird.

The Renault's or Coral-billed Ground-cuckoo, *Carpococcyx renauldi*, along with the Sunda Ground-cuckoo, *C. radiceus*, belong to a Southeast Asiatic group of ground dwelling cuckoos, which unlike many other cuckoos, incubate their eggs and raise their young themselves. Only these two species are in this genus. The Renault's Ground-cuckoo ranges from Indochina to Thailand and appears to still be fairly common in its thick undergrowth habitats.

The Sunda Ground-cuckoo is found in two forms on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. The Bornean subspecies, *C. r. radiceus*, seems to be quite rare and has only local distribution. The Sumatran subspecies, *C. r. viridis*, is found on the Barisan Range from Singgalang southwards to Dempu ranging from heights of 300 m (980 ft) to 1700 m (5,500 ft). There has been no recent observation of this sub-

species and it is considered as being rare to very rare.

The Renault's Ground-cuckoo is the species from which good captive experience has been collected, while I have not found anything on the Sunda Ground-cuckoo and do not know if it has been kept in captivity.

Measuring around 70 cm (27-28 in) in length, the Renault's is a large bird and should be kept in a large well planted aviary of 100 sq meters (120 sq yards) or more. It has to be kept with larger non-aggressive birds because smaller birds (if they are not fast enough) can become a food item for this carnivorous bird. The standard captive diet consists of pieces of meat, dead mice, baby rats, and large insects (crickets, locusts, etc.). If this food is powdered with a vitamin supplement twice a week, the birds will stay in good condition.

Although R.W. Atkinson (1982) gives the world's first breeding of this species to the Metro Toronto Zoo, and the Philadelphia Zoo in 1977, the Birdpark at Walsrode, Germany reproduced this species at least a year earlier.

At the Walsrode Birdpark I had the

privilege of caring for this species for three years (1986-1989) and was able to collect some data on keeping and breeding of the Renault's Ground-cuckoo. The Birdpark's breeding pair was kept in a very large well planted walk-through aviary measuring 3,000 sq m (9,840 sq ft) and 12 m (40 ft) high. The aviary was shared by ibises, spoonbills, storks, secretary birds, ducks, Imperial Pigeons and many other birds. Although it has been written that these ground-cuckoos will build their nests on the ground, this pair built their nests in small bushes around 1.5 m (5 ft) above the ground. Their clutch size averaged 3-4 eggs but due to the danger of predation by storks and others, several clutches were removed for artificial incubation. The incubation period, whether by the parents or artificially, averaged 27-28 days and in those cases where the adult pair succeeded in hatching their young, they proved to be perfect parents.

The incubator-hatched young had to be hand raised and this proved to be fairly difficult as a great number of these young birds did not survive. A small number, however, were successfully reared. These young were placed in a brooder and fed every two hours from 7am to 9pm. Their diet consisted of freshly skinned mealworms, crickets (with their spiny rear legs removed) and strips of meat. We later gave them insect food made into small balls. The process of rearing these young birds followed the literature described by Atkinson on the birds reared at the Toronto Metro Zoo.

The data we have collected with the Renault's Ground-cuckoo could be very useful in setting up a breeding program for the closely related but much rarer Sunda Ground-cuckoo, especially the Sumatran subspecies.

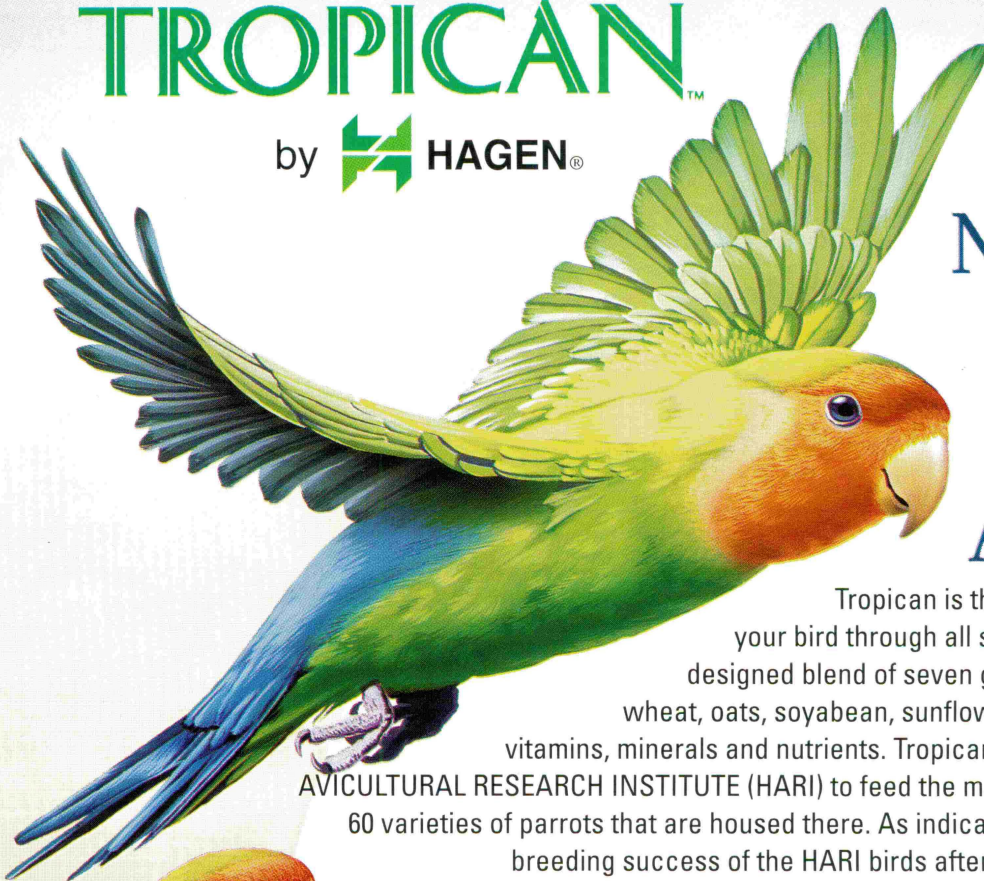
The Renault's Ground-cuckoo has been bred at Birdpark Walsrode (Ger.), Philadelphia Zoo (USA), Toronto Zoo (Can.), Washington Zoo (USA), Bronx Zoo (USA), San Diego Zoo (USA), Minneapolis Zoo (USA), and the Pittsburgh Aviary (USA).

Literature Cited

Atkinson, R.W. (1982) Breeding the Renault's or Coral-billed Ground-cuckoo (*Carpococcyx renauldi*) at the Metro Toronto Zoo. *Intl. Zoo Yearbook* vol 22, pp 168-171. 🐦

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