

OPINIONS

On the third day after hatch the parent birds begin stuffing the chicks with celery. Celery is rich in sodium, potassium, and the necessary fiber to get the chicks off to a good start. Carefully wash and feed extra stalks for the next 10 days in addition to the soft food mix and seed.

It may be necessary to feed soft foods more than once a day when the chicks do hatch, and there should be no food volume restrictions during breeding season. Parent birds should have as much food as they need for the growing brood. The volume of food needed at first will be small, and increase as the chicks grow.

During breeding season parent birds usually choose vegetables over fruit to feed the growing chicks. We provide fresh fruit during the summer months to all birds, including the newly weaned birds. Plum-headed Parakeets especially favor red apples, oranges and pomegranates.

The need for clean fresh water may seem to be obvious, but many aviculturists let the cleaning of water dishes slide for longer periods than what may be safe. Cool, clean, fresh water is a must and water bowls should be changed daily. With young birds, water dishes need to be changed more frequently than once a day. Young Plum-headed Parakeets have a penchant for turning the water bowl into the most disgusting soup. They'll drag or drop anything they can find into the water.

Consistency

Production is greatly improved with consistency in feeding practices and daily maintenance. Whatever routines are chosen, be sure you are consistent with them especially during the breeding season. A break in the routine of feeding soft foods for example, could mean the death of the chicks. The parents might spend all day waiting for the soft food to show up and let the chicks starve. This could happen even if seed was available.

Color Mutations

Color mutations of the Plum-headed Parakeet include lutino, pied, par-blue or turquoise, gray-green and a mutation with a gray body and plum colored head. Most of the mutations haven't been bred in enough numbers to be seen by many people, much less available for sale. In time, these Plum-headed mutations may be as widely available and popular as those of the Indian Ring-necked Parakeet. The potential for some beautiful and striking color combinations is unlimited. ➤

Dear Sheldon

I just received the July/August Watchbird and would like to proffer some points of clarification regarding items found therein.

The article by Rae Anderson was very interesting. However, there was one point, probably inconsequential, which could be clarified. I believe the journal of the Avicultural Society has always been *Avicultural Magazine* whilst that of the Avicultural Society of America was originally entitled *Aviculture*. There was some sort of liaison between the two bodies many years ago although I do not know all the details. There was also collaboration between the *Avicultural Magazine* and *L'Oiseau* in producing a work entitled "Aviculture."

Turning to the correspondence concerning Caiques, I can concur with Fran Gonzalez regarding the so-called Lime-thighed Caiques, in that *Foreign Birds* here in the UK published an Anglicized version of her paper given in New Orleans in 1995. In that, the passage is reproduced as quoted except that the word "offshoot" is used instead of hybrid. However, the meaning of that passage is totally unambiguous and the production of Lime-thighed Caiques is not condoned.

I suppose the foregoing could be construed as the pedantic ramblings of a hypercritical Englishman. So be it. Then I looked across the page to the letter from Ms. Heere.

Dear me, Ms. Heere! It certainly is pleasing to know that I and many thousands of my compatriots have suddenly been elevated in stature. Does this mean a Peerage for all bird keepers? I hope so, but only if we all suddenly have the wherewithal to go with it. I was never aware before that aviculture is solely the preserve of the rich. As in all things, a person with greater financial means can afford more expensive chattels. That does not mean that a rich person is necessarily a better aviculturist than one with more modest means. Why, even our ex-prime minister, Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher and her *socialistic* government would agree with that. But then again, I suspect that even Ghengis Khan was a bit of a softy according to Ms. Heere.

Regarding the comments directed at Rosemary Low and John Stoodley, let me make it clear that I don't agree with everything they say—and indeed why should I? Neither am I on anything other than passing terms with them both. In

the case of Mr. Stoodley, my only conversation with him was in passing at the AFA convention in New Orleans in 1995, while my only meeting with Miss Low was nearly 30 years ago. I doubt either remembers me. That being said, surely the accumulated avicultural experience of nearly a century (and with results to back that up) can hardly be dismissed as a means of "bashing U.S. bird breeders."

It may well be, that by listening to and digesting what they have to say, Ms. Heere may just realize that there is a connection with what they say and the tale of the goose that laid the golden eggs. I believe that neither Miss Low nor Mr. Stoodley would ever wish people to stop selling birds. Indeed, what they preach can lead to birds being sold not only by this generation but by our children and our children's children. What will ever be the long term good of birds that for generations have been propagated with regard only to the numbers produced rather than to the "quality" of those birds and the quality of the life they enjoy.

I can imagine the scenario in Monmouth, Oregon (my apologies now to those good people) whereby human babies are taken from their parents as they are born and taken to a communal feeding station where they are fed perfectly nutritious formula. This formula, because of its added nutrients, allows these babies to grow faster and better and to reach puberty at a much earlier age than other children. Of course this gives them a much shorter time to do the things that children do but then again, they have an important job to do. That's right—to produce children continuously from the onset of puberty until the menopause. As soon as one baby is born then another one is conceived. There is no need for parental bonding nor parental care on the part of these parents because all these babies, too, would be taken away immediately to the communal feeding station. At the end of a productive lifetime each mother is sent off to another community as being "Proven."

Finally, there is one suggestion submitted by Ms. Heere which would certainly meet with my approval—that being to move the AFA offices (including officers?) to Europe. We can certainly do with as many hard working, devoted aviculturists as we can get over here!

Yours sincerely,
Daniel Shearing
Cheddar, Somerset
United Kingdom ➤

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Directions:

Mix with pure, warmed water (check temperature carefully) and feed via spoon or syringe to psittacine chicks, usually 2-6 hours after hatching. Feed small amounts frequently; allow crop to empty completely between feedings at least once every 24 hours. See chart for water to formula ratios. Keep young birds under high humidity (80%+) and warm temperatures (see chart). As baby grows, increase concentration of solids. You can begin with regular **Tropicant™ Hand Feeding Baby Formula** (item #'s B-2260 to B-2262) after 2-3 days. Adult birds requiring special care (injuries or illnesses preventing normal feeding) may also be maintained via crop tube or from a syringe. Ask your avian veterinarian about this technique and about equipment safety.

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