



PSITTACULA SIGHTINGS

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African Ring-necked Parakeets

Psittacula fanciers were found in great abundance at the AFA Convention this past August. Breeders came from all over the country to share information on the various species and the newest mutations.

Interest and sales for color mutations of the Indian Rose-ringed Parakeet is at an all-time high. Since so many of us conduct business by long distances telephone, it's imperative that we're all speaking the same language. There are some difficulties concerning the identification and naming of many exciting new mutations. In spite of the difficulties and, indeed, because of them, the many breeders attending the convention felt a standard nomenclature should be adopted.

This column begins the forum for creating the American Standard Nomenclature of *Psittacula* Color Mutations. The "Standard" will follow traditional genetic identification and naming where ever possible. Future articles will cover genetic and visual identification of the new mutations. Readers are invited and encouraged to participate in the process. Please send information, photos, comments and questions to the AFA Watchbird Journal, Attention: "*Psittacula* Sightings."

Looking back just a few short years, many of us can remember African Ring-necked Parakeet, *Psittacula krameri*, selling for about \$20.00 each from any quarantine station. The majority of bird breeders ignored such so-called "junk birds" and most of them were sold into the pet trade and disappeared into the hinterland.

Now that quarantine doesn't exist anymore, some of the more forward looking breeders are beginning to realize what has almost slipped through our collective grasp. Quietly, they have begun the diligent search for the remnants of this previously ignored population in hopes of establishing a viable breeding program.

It would behoove each of us to

rethink our attitude toward some of the forgotten "junk birds." This would be an excellent opportunity to pay back part of the gold we've extracted from some of the more glamorous species. Surely, we could each find a little space to devote to restoring some previously ignored species, such as the African Ring-necked Parakeet, to its rightful place in aviculture. Mother Nature does not make junk.

Along this same vein of thought, many of us have proudly acquired a long desired pair of birds. They have been set up and have raised a clutch or two of babies which have been sold immediately, with no thought to the future,

When the next breeding season comes around, one of the pair is killed or dies from an illness and the season is lost. Worse yet, another mate can't be located so another breeding pair is wasted.


This is a worst-case scenario that can be avoided by holding back one or two chicks and trading for some unrelated stock. We need to realize that the birds we have *now* are all we will have to work with, EVER. There will be no more birds coming in to replace our mistakes. We must make every effort to learn good husbandry techniques from each other and maximize our successes.

Work with each other share your

knowledge, or soon it will be too late. Every species we lose in aviculture will not be replaced. We will just have to do without it, and none of us would like that.

The aforementioned African Ring-necked Parakeet is an excellent example of a forgotten species. It is the nominate species of the ring-necked group. While it is the smallest of the four known subspecies, it is a desirable bird for its own unique good looks and personality. There is no great proliferation of color mutations, but the lush green shade and handsome black trim of its natural coloration is dazzling to the beholders eye.

The African Ring-necked Parakeet is generally not as easily bred as the more well known Indian subspecies, *P. k. borealis* or *P. k. manillensis*. It is a worthy challenge for even the more advanced breeder. There is something very satisfying about success with a project that is considered difficult. This gorgeous creature certainly deserves the attention and effort to bring it back to its proper status in aviculture.

Enjoy each species for itself. Don't make the mistake of comparing species and thinking one isn't as desirable as another because of more vivid color or larger size. Each one has its own redeeming quality if we but take the time to look for it. 



Male Ring-necked Parakeets : Indian on the left, African on the right.

Photo by Fred Perry