

Indian Ring-necked Parakeet Trivia

or the History of the
Lutino, Blue, Turquoise, and Albino Mutations

by Rae Anderson, Sierra Madre, CA

In the archives of Roman history there are records of Octavian obtaining parrots from India in the first century B.C. Also, according to Pliny, the prices demanded for exotic (foreign) birds precluded all but the very wealthy from participating in aviculture.

The lutino mutation of the Indian Ring-necked Parakeet has been in aviculture for a long time. In 1918 the Duke of Bedford at his Woburn (England) estate had at least one lutino female. He reported rearing normally colored young from it that year. Further, he laments his frustrations for many years wherein the male offspring from the split males (the genetics of the lutino were not understood at that time) were weak and died very easily. This occurring before hatching, before and shortly after leaving the nest.

By 1932, Bedford had a few healthy lutinos and the mutation was well on its way to becoming firmly established.

In 1934, Alfred Ezra, after eight years of effort, successfully reared two good lutinos. Both the Bedford and Ezra aviaries held some wild caught lutino females. By this time, the Keston Foreign Bird Farm was also breeding lutinos.

In the 1920s, Masauji Hachisuka in his paper "Variations Among Birds" stated that at least one and more probably two blue Ring-necked Parakeets were being kept by the potentate Mr. M. G. Mallick in Calcutta. From conversations with people who had seen these birds it appears that these were probably both males. They were said to be kept in individual cages of gold and no attempt was ever made to breed them (with normal birds obviously) in order to perpetuate this color phase.

Then in 1941, Bill Sheffler, in his Arizona aviaries raised one blue from normal appearing parents. This bird was accidentally killed when Mr. Sheffler tried to catch it for relocation to another aviary. During the next 12 years of successful breeding, the parent birds never produced another blue.

Right at the end of World War II a British aviculturist soldier in India located a nesting hollow within his compound. The parent birds both green, fledged four young, one of which was blue.

By 1947 the British Psittacine Registry showed almost as many lutino as normal colored Ringnecks in England.

In 1948, when Sidney Porter visited California and spent some time with Mr. and Mrs. F. Harold Rudkin, Jr., he was surprised that there were no lutinos in the U.S.A.. Then in 1949 the Rudkins visited England and with the help of Mr. Porter obtained two green split to ino males and two lutino females. These were brought back to the Rudkins' aviaries in Fillmore, California, and formed the nucleus of the lutinos in this country.

Also in 1949, an Indian dealer from Calcutta offered two blue Ringnecks to Harold Rudkin and George West (Dave West's father) for \$1,000. At that time they were believed to be the only ones alive in captivity in the world. The U.S. laws at that time prohibited the importation of psittacine birds. The only way to bring in any psittacines at all were to show proof that the birds had been in one's possession outside the U.S. for a minimum of 30 days. If that were the case, a U.S. citizen could legally bring in two birds per year per family as family pets. Because neither Rudkin nor West could show the proof, the birds were returned to India.

It is most likely that these were the same two blues that the Duke of Bedford obtained from India later that same year.

In 1950 Harold Rudkin's lutino breeding program was in full swing and very successful (probably even Sheldon Dingle remembers this).

In 1952 the Duke sent two young, blues to Dave West plus two additional in 1953. These were the foundation of the blues in the U.S.—the birds, not the music.

In 1953, Ray Thomas, a wealthy aviculturist resident of Bel Air, California, imported two birds from a Calcutta dealer. These birds were advertised as Blue "Simon." (meaning pure). They were in fact the first turquoise known. Because they were not the pure blue as advertised, Thomas refused to either pay for or return them. He used to laugh about this while at the same time admitting to being very pleased with them. Dave West and Gordon Hayes obtained these birds and their offspring upon Ray's death and they are

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responsible for establishing this mutation in aviculture.

The possibility of an albino was being discussed in 1953 when the Duke of Bedford bred a blue male with a lutino female. At that time it was obvious to any experienced Budgie breeder that once you have a lutino and a blue, albino is in the picture. It was now just a matter of years, hampered by the scarcity of lutino males.

In early 1954, there were 14 blues known in captivity. Four of them belonged to Dave West in California, nine were in England and one was on the European continent. Later in the year Dave West raised some young.

Later in 1954, Harold Rudkin obtained four blues from Dave West. These were one adult pair and two juveniles West raised just that year.

After the Duke of Bedford's untimely death in 1954, his original breeding pair of blues went to Edward J. Boosey at the Keston Foreign Bird Farm. Here they were also in very competent hands.

In 1955, Dave West successfully raised two blues from the 1952 young which he had received from Bedford. This same year, Mr. Boosey raised four blues from the Duke's original breeding pair (he had raised only one in 1954) and five more in 1956.

In 1956, Mr. Boosey found a green and yellow "pied" (harlequin) in a local pet shop. This bird was described as being green with large yellow blotches, the outer tail feathers yellow, some yellow on the forehead and mantle and flights pure bright yellow.

In 1963 the Keston Foreign Bird Farm raised the first albino from a young male green split to ino and blue crossed with a female lutino split to blue. This baby left the nest in July, 1963. Unfortunately it died at a few months of age.

In 1966, the first albino in the U.S. was produced by Harold Rudkin from a brother x sister mating, the green male being split to ino and blue while the female lutino was split blue. In that first nest were a lutino, a blue and an albino. The Rudkins decided to let the parent birds raise the entire clutch. This proved to be a fatal decision. When the albino was partially feathered, the parents attacked it inflicting

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fatal injuries. This was especially disappointing since Mr. and Mrs. Rudkin were very experienced in hand rearing many species from day one. The skin of this bird is now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History collection.

In 1968, another albino, was hatched by the Rudkins from a pair of blues (male split to ino). This baby was hand reared to maturity without difficulty and was of course a female.

In 1969, Dr. Swaenepoel in Belgium raised an albino from a male green split to ino and blue and a female blue. This bird also died at about two

years of age. Following this, in 1970, Dr. Swaenepoel with a male blue split to ino and blue and a blue hen reared another albino female. He had this baby hand raised in order to avoid the Rudkin's experience. This bird also died within two years.

In 1970 Max Sanders obtained a pair of turquoise Ringnecks which bred true. At that time the genetics of the turquoise were not known.

When the Rudkins' second albino died as did Dr. Swaenepoel's, the world was left without an albino. Then in 1972, I successfully raised an albino from a male green split to ino and blue and a female lutino split to blue. When this bird was mature and I tried to pair it, every bird I put with it, regardless of color, shunned it. To overcome this, I dyed the white bird and a blue female from their natural colors to a normal looking green by using food coloring in water with a small amount of detergent to penetrate the feathers. This was painted on the birds with a small brush. The birds then accepted each other without hesitation. After their next molt to their mutant colors the pair bond continued without incident. In subsequent generations where the young developed in the presence of albinos, no rejection was observed.

In the few years following this, several other people successfully produced albinos. The rest is all obvious. There are now plenty of all. ➤

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