

developed weight problems when kept indefinitely in a standard 3 ft. cage. They are very active and rapid in flight and should be given as much space as possible.

Orange-cheeked Waxbills have become established on the island of Puerto Rico. I do not know the size and extent of this population, but it must be quite extensive, as large numbers of this species are now coming in from that island. This would explain the completely unexpected appearance of several Orange-cheeks at local pet stores in this area. How long this importation will continue is unclear but it may end at any time since Orange-cheeks are no longer legally imported from Africa.

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Identification of Cape Parrot Subspecies

by Rosemary Low, England

I was pleased to see an article on the Cape Parrot—a neglected species—in the May/June 1997 issue of A.F.A. Watchbird. The authors rightly state that more emphasis should be placed on breeding this declining bird. A major problem, however, is the identification of the subspecies. This can be difficult.

In the article it stated that the nominate race has a much browner head. This statement needs to be clarified. The color is not brown but nearer to khaki or golden-brown. The authors infer that the nominate race is not sexually dimorphic. However, adult males have no orange on the forehead and in females this color is less extensive than that of the other sub-species. Also, the nominate race has a noticeably smaller head and beak. It is almost non-existent in aviculture outside South Africa. I was surprised to learn that there was a pair in the United States. My photographs depict a pair in a private collection in South Africa.

The main confusion arises in identifying *suabelicus* and *fuscicollis*. Ron and Val Moat have kindly lent me excellent photographs of both subspecies to illustrate these notes. The photographs were taken at the same time under the same conditions. Note that the head is more silvery in adult *suabelicus* and that there is a dark patch on the shoulder in some birds. Size and beak size are the same. In young birds of both subspecies the head may be browner—more so than in an adult bird of the nominate race but gradually becomes grayer. In adult *fuscicollis* the head is darker gray or brownish-gray but not truly brown. In some birds the feathers of the lower cheeks remain quite brownish.

Some immature female *fuscicollis* have orange extending right over the crown. This is lost when they molt into adult plumage at about nine to 11 months.

Incidentally, identification by photograph can be difficult as an overexposed *fuscicollis* can appear like a *suabelicus*.

Dale Thompson and Eb Cravens mention the hazards of ringing this species. Because their beaks are so powerful in relation to their body size, they can remove almost any ring. In attempting to do so, they will place something between the ring and the beak to grip it better. I believe that this is why some birds pluck themselves on the side on which the ring has been placed—not due to an allergic reaction. They pluck a feather and place it over the ring. If acceptable to the relevant authorities, micro-chipping is preferable to ringing, where Cape Parrots are concerned. I have also seen Hyacinthine Macaws placing



Photo by Slash and Carol Anne Buckley

Young Orange-cheeked Waxbills (center) are flanked by their parents.

material over the ring before biting at it. This is another species which can remove rings. The great danger is that the ring will be crushed into the leg. Regular inspection should be made of the ring leg of both of these species.

I am very concerned about the status of the Cape Parrot, in aviculture and in the wild. Aviculturists have the opportunity to ensure its survival in aviculture. But it will not survive if most of the young are hand-reared. Can anyone contradict the statement in the article that "there is still no record of a handfed male *robustus* having successfully reproduced in captivity"? ➔

Male of the nominate race—note golden head coloration.



Photo by Rosemary Low

Male P. r. suabelicus—note the silvery head.



Photo by Ron Moat



Photo by Ron Moat

Male P. r. fuscicollis—note the brown-tinged cheeks.



Photo by Ron Moat

Two young P. r. fuscicollis. In some females the orange coloration extends to the nape.

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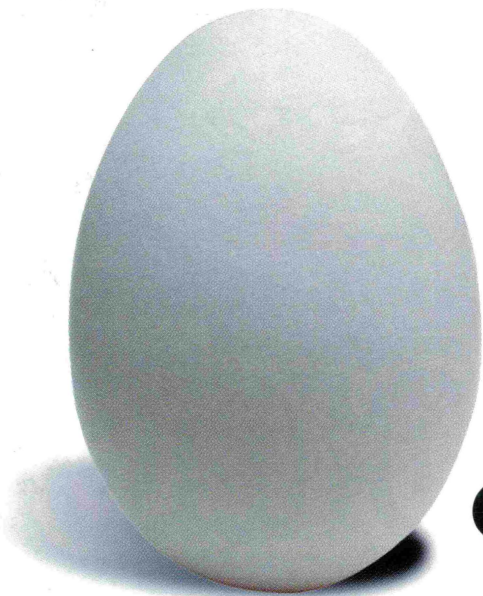
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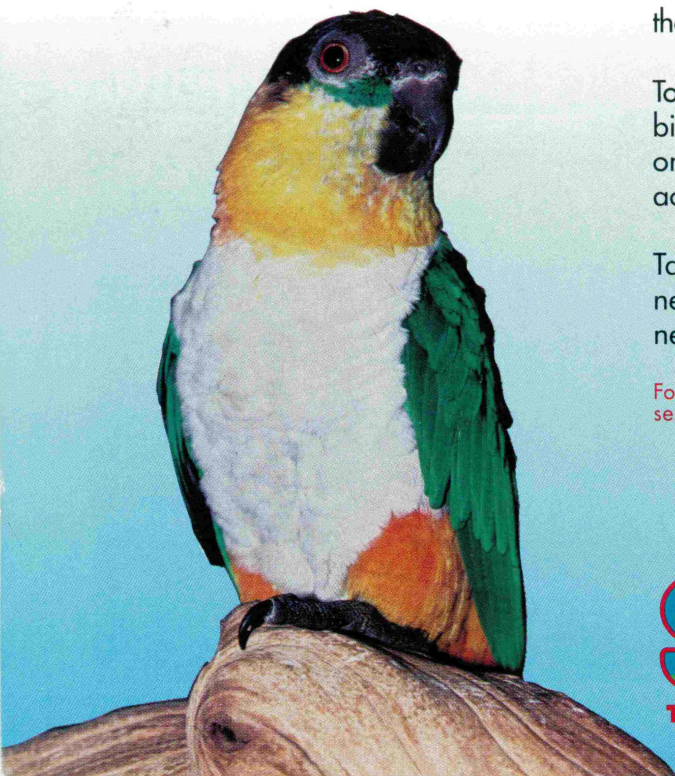
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