

# The Golden Conure

(Formerly: *Aratinga guarouba*  
Now: *Guaruba guarouba*.)

by Glenn Reynolds, Sarasota, FL

**T**he Queen of Bavaria's Conure has been one of my personal interests for many years. Common names used for this species in aviculture are the Golden Conure, Queen's, Goldens, and as listed in the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the Golden Parakeet. Much discussion has been given in the past few years toward giving this species its own genus. Most aviculturists who know this bird feel that in many ways it is different from other conures and all other parrots in general. It has recently been assigned the genus of *Guaruba* and the specific name of *guarouba*.

There is very little written information on these birds in the wild or in captivity. I will do my best to give you the information that I have found. I am by no means an authority on this subject and after much research I don't think that anyone in the world is. Which brings about the purpose of this article. I would like to raise awareness of the current issues surrounding this very rare species. Much of this information has been compiled from *Parrots of The World* by Joseph M. Forshaw, *Parrots in Aviculture* by Rosemary Low, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Office of Scientific Authority, and Dave Followill of Followill Aviaries. Mike Reynolds of the World Parrot Trust has also been of great help in the compilation of this information.

The range of this species is very small, restricted to North-east Brazil, south of the Amazon River, in eastern Pará and adjacent northern Maranhão

to the western side of Tapajos. I have recently been informed by the Office of Scientific Authority that there have been reports of these birds in areas that they have never been seen in before. I would assume, as with most other animals, as their habitat is being depleted, they are on the move trying to find other areas to establish themselves. I have found conflicting accounts of this situation. One source states as mentioned above and the other suggests that the birds in question were seen in captivity and were in the areas mentioned as the result of trappers. I can not confirm either opinion but Queen's are considered to be somewhat of a nomadic species.

Man is reducing the size of their range rapidly with the construction of roads, (two major highways have been cut through their range in recent years), the Tucuruí dam which flooded 888 sq. miles of land, and human colonization. Queen's are still being trapped for the illegal bird trade and are even still being hunted for food.

Golden Conures are rarely seen in the wild and are extremely rare in avi-

culture. They were noted as becoming increasingly rare as far back as 1946. In the United States these birds require 50CFR Captive Bred Endangered Species Permit. The permit is considered to be relatively difficult to acquire. In the permit process the USFW Service is looking for proof that the applicant is able to care for the birds properly, house them suitably, maintain their health, possesses the ability to raise their young, keep accurate records, and provide a good opportunity for propagation. The permitted breeder is also required to grant inspection of the area that the birds are kept in if requested.

The last known formal study, that I can find at the writing of this article, was done on these birds between 1981 and 1984, which indicated that they were not in imminent danger of extinction at that time because of the remote region that they reside in. Their numbers were estimated at about 5000 birds left in the wild. As a result of this study, as aviculturists, we may have taken on an unwarranted lax attitude about this species.

Since that study, there has been



Photo courtesy Glenn Reynolds

*A beautiful Golden Conure photographed in the wild.*

considerable destruction of their habitat. The completion of two major highways has made their range dangerously accessible. More recent brief and informal studies indicate that this species is most likely in immediate danger. The local human population needs to be educated about these birds. Surveillance of their habitat needs to be established. The preservation of this species will require protection against hunters, trappers, and the continued deforestation of their range.

The only way to accomplish this is to implement field studies to ascertain the real requirements necessary for the survival of these birds. Mike Reynolds (no relation) of the World Parrot Trust and I found that we had a mutual interest in this species when we met for the first time in Tenerife during September of 1998. As a result of our mutual admiration for this bird The World Parrot Trust has recently initiated a fund to finance a field study. The study will be done by Dr. Carlos Yamashita, Brazil's leading parrot biologist.


Information about the WPT-USA Golden Conure Fund can be found at:

**[www.breedersblend.com/  
goldenconurefund.html](http://www.breedersblend.com/goldenconurefund.html)**

This special fund has been set up within the WPT-USA fund to guarantee that 100% of the money collected will go directly toward this field study. The WPT-USA will match the first individual donation of \$1000.00. Mike Reynolds and I have started the fund with donations of our own. A formal proposal written by Dr. Yamashita will be available for viewing at the web site in May of 1999. As more information comes available, the web site will be updated. The outstanding wildlife artist David Johnston of the UK has agreed to provide a painting of the Golden Conure and tee-shirts bearing the painting will be available in May 1999. The painting will also be auctioned off.

Donations can be sent to:

**World Parrot Trust-USA  
Post Office Box 49766  
Sarasota, FL 34230**

Make Checks Payable to the WPT-USA Golden Conure Fund. 

# Building a Finch Aviary

by Myra Markley  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

**Y**ou might never know it now but, like most people, I started out with a single bird, a male Zebra Finch. It was less than a month later when I bought a female for him. Two birds quickly became four, then six, and so on. Many years later I have a flock of around 80 finches.

I started out with a cage for each pair but after my flock grew to eight pairs, I realized I was running out of space for cages. I also found that I was spending a lot more time than I liked cleaning cages and changing food and water for the birds.

I tried buying a few large cages for my pairs to share. That led to some fighting, though nothing more serious than a few plucked feathers. At the time, I really had no idea what size cage should be used to house a few pairs of finches, but now I realize that the flights were small and that I have some very aggressive females.

After talking with local finch breeders, I decided to try to construct an aviary. This aviary would allow my finches plenty of room and fulfill my greatest wish – to be able to stand amongst my finch friends. Then the

reality of the cost set in. One small walk-in aviary could cost from \$500-\$1,000. I do not breed birds for a living, and there was no way I could afford that expense, so I talked the



Photo by Myra Markley

*Details of the aviary inside.*

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