

OPINIONS:

Dear Mr. Dingle:

Thank you for your detailed review of *Parrots, A Guide to the Parrots of the World* by Tony Juniper and Mike Parr. Due to your positive review—and rightly so—I bought the book. I sincerely hope that many more serious parrot fanciers did the same. The book is, without any doubt, the best bird publication of 1998.

Allow me to add a few minor notes to your review, so *Watchbird* readers will be able to make some additional notes and/or corrections if they so desire.

One serious remark beforehand, however: the reader shouldn't rely too heavily on the books bibliography: I noticed, for example, in the introductory section, 12 references, of which four have not been listed or were incorrectly cited in the bibliography. It was, obviously, impossible to check the entire, rather extensive but very useful bibliography.

It is also not clear what standard was used for the English names as they may not always match those familiar to most of us; the names given by Forshaw in *Parrots of the World* (1989).

The authors cooperated with five illustrators but various techniques (styles, if you like) were therefore inevitable. Some of the 80 color plates are very accurate while others are "somewhat off," especially when one compares the illustrations of birds in flight versus birds perching. Some plates even show birds that were not finished and were missing colors. Therefore, allow me some samples (and please understand that these don't take anything away from the overall quality of this important book.):

- Plate 15: In reality, the back of the Salmon-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua moluccensis* has pink, as a matter of fact a lot of pink, and by no means equals the white back of the illustrated White Cockatoo *Cacatua alba*. I have seen both bird species many times in the wild, and the difference is prevalent.

- Plate 55: The text states correctly that the facial skin of the Red-bellied Macaw *Orthopsittica manilata* is yellow, although the illustration shows a bird with a white and gray facial skin, with red markings. Also illustrated is the Blue-headed Macaw *Propyrrhura couloni*. This bird has impressive green and red central feathers but the illustration gives only blue feathers;

additionally, the nape of this macaw is green, not blue.

- Plate 70: The tails of the Plain Parakeet *Brotogeris tirica* and the Gray-cheeked Parakeet *B. pyrrhopterus* are about the same length in the drawings while the former is known for its rather long tail feathers; approximately twice the length of those of the Gray-cheeked.

The same plate seems to show an adult Canary-winged Parakeet *Brotogeris chiriri* but with the white flight feathers of the closely related White-winged Parakeet *B. versicolurus*, and is therefore labeled *versicolurus*. The bird, however, that looks like a White-winged Parakeet and doesn't have the white flight feathers, is labeled *chiriri*.

We now know that both bird species, once considered subspecies of the Canary-winged Parakeet, are recognized as two full nominates or "independent" species. Both species, by the way, are often seen in Florida, especially around Miami, and also in California. Relying on these illustrations one might conclude hybridization between the two birds is occurring regularly in the wild, while in reality there is little or no hybridization. Readers who would like to know more about this matter should consult D.J. Bright-Smith's "White-winged Parakeet and Yellow-chevroned Parakeet" in *The Birds of North America* (A. Poole and F. Gills, Eds.) Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, and American Ornithologists' Union, Washington D.C. (1999).

All in all, not bad for a book with 584 pages. Indeed, a book well recommended; it is extremely useful and, as I said before, perhaps the best bird book of 1998.

Sincerely M. Vriends, Ph.D.
Rocky Point, NY



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