

Experienced Bird Entrepreneur at Sixteen

Clayton Edwards
of Atascadero, California

by Susie Christian, Morro Bay, CA

When asked to find a person who makes a little "seed-money" from their birds I thought immediately of my ambitious young friend, Clayton Edwards. It seems today that the only time we hear about our country's youth is when we read the "bad" headlines in the newspapers. I am thrilled to report this enthusiastic teen is successful in breeding and selling his parrotlets.

Clay read an article about parrotlets



Clayton with just-fledged parrotlets including a visually blue Pacific.



A view of Clay's bird room set up for parrotlets.

in a bird magazine a few years back and upon investigation he found the species to be small birds with great big personalities. In typical fashion, he found he couldn't have just one.

I was thoroughly impressed with the rustic charm of the family home, nestled in a woodsy area of the Central Coast. Clayton, a very adult looking teen, met me with his perpetual big cherubic grin and led me to the spacious room where his parrotlets are housed. They are kept in cages stacked three high, all very orderly, neat and clean. The cage set up is well thought out for easy maintenance, feeding and cleaning. Cages themselves are 16 inches wide, 18 inches high and 32 inches long. The wooden nest boxes are mounted on the outside of the cages and are 6 inches by 6 inches by 7 inches with a perch mounted by the nest entry hole.

Background on Clayton is four years of focused interest on birds, and even in his earlier years he always kept small hookbills such as Budgies, Cockatiels and love birds. He bought these birds from pet stores and they weren't particularly tame. When he and his mother, Pam Clark, bought a handfed baby Cockatiel then another, he began to realize just how nice birds could be. They then built an aviary and after his first visit to a bird mart Clay was thoroughly hooked on birds.

Young Edwards won his Blue and Gold Macaw, Goldie (unknown sex), at

a bird mart. That in itself is an interesting story of his bird-enthusiasm! By helping carry cages to cars for people at the bird mart he earned 10 dollars. The whole amount was used to purchase raffle tickets for the Blue and Gold and Clay won it. Goldie wasn't the tamest macaw in the world when Clay first brought her home but with patience and perseverance he worked with her until she became the delightfully sweet, calm companion she is today.

Instead of going to public school, for the last three years, Clay has been home schooled by his mother. He's worked for bird breeder, Tani Smida the last several years part time, two days a week. This job entails cleaning, feeding, and watering her many pairs of birds. He said that while she was away speaking at this year's AFA Convention he helped hatch out, (from an incubator) a Blue and Gold and a Spectacled Amazon.

Still another job he has held the last four months is with a local bee-keeper. Clay works there three eight hour days pulling honey from hives, building and painting boxes, and generally tending to the bees. He finds this job interesting as well and laughingly says, "It's better than working at McDonald's for sure."

He started with one pair of parrotlets and in a year they bred successfully. Clay kept getting a few more and now has 12 pairs including mutation Blues, American Yellows, and Fallows, with

the rest being normal Pacific Parrotlets. For the last two years he has had regular pet store customers in California and New York.

He is happy to make enough money from the birds so he can reinvest in new unrelated stock for making up more pairs. He gets \$500.00 per bird for his Blues and 95% of the pairs produce four to five babies per clutch. Clay avoids buying proven pairs because he feels they can be thrown off by the move and sometimes do not produce for him. He prefers to pair young birds and let them bond, growing up together. This method has been the most successful for him.

The parrotlets' diet is a wonderfully varied one and I am sure this is a big factor in their breeding success. They are fed 50% fresh food, 25% enriched Tiel seed and 25% Roudybush Breeder Crumbles. The fresh diet is two or more different types of greens a day along with a sprouted mix. Bell peppers, grated carrots, broccoli, chayote squash, frozen vegetable mix, apples, and oranges are just a few items that make up his birds' cuisine.

It seems to me that so many of us who are passionate about birds are at least 50 years old and I notice so few young people involved with birds on their own. There are always the kids that tag along with mom or dad to bird marts and club events, but will they ever be as absorbed in birds as their parents were?

It does my heart good to see a youngster sincerely "into" bird keeping, strictly on his own. The future of aviculture truly lies in the hands of our youth. To find a 16-year-old having good success with breeding mutations and marketing them equally well, really makes my heart happy.

Way to go Clayton! 

Susie Christian, with over 20 years of psittacine breeding experience, now lovingly tends her flock of Eclectus and Rose-breasted Cockatoos in paradise by the Pacific Ocean. She has been a regular contributor of art work, photography, and articles for Watchbird Magazine since 1995.

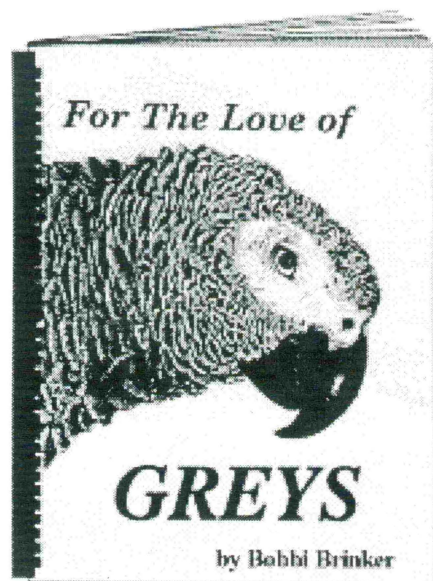
For a closer look at Christian and her feather-crew, check on line at:

<http://members.aol.com/Eclectusville/index.html>

Ex Libris

*Book Review
by Carolyn Swicegood
Hollywood, Florida*

FOR THE LOVE OF GREYS
by Bobbi Brinker, 49 photos or illustrations, 130 pages, soft cover, 8 1/2 x 11 inches, US - \$30 includes shipping; outside US - \$35 includes shipping,
Publisher - Companion Birds Press



The information about African Grey Parrots shared by the author goes well beyond simple description. She offers clear and relevant direction regarding all aspects of the care and breeding of African Grey Parrots. Her love and respect for these birds is obvious throughout the book.

This extensive collection of thought-provoking articles on the Grey Parrot

species represents the author's years of observation and experience with breeding, and hand-raising Greys. The reader gets the distinct impression that the offering of information represents a sincere educational effort. The book is filled with sound, practical knowledge and deep convictions about the best way to manage African Greys.

Geared toward all audiences associated with African Greys, the articles cover a wide range of topics such as The Egg, From One Breeder to Another, Life After Weaning, Bringing Your Baby Home, and The Adolescent Grey. Detailed information is provided on diet, average weights, wing clipping, and managing stress in African Grey Parrots. There is something for everyone in this excellent book and no stone is left unturned.

Although the title, *For the Love of Greys*, leads one to conclude that this book is exclusively about African Greys, it is sure to become an important guide and reference for owners of all parrot species. I highly recommend this "must own" book for the novice and expert alike.

Author Bobbi Brinker has been breeding and hand-raising exotic parrots for over 10 years. She is well known for her contributions to the education and ongoing support of pet owners and fellow breeders, and her writings are widely distributed nationally and internationally. Bobbi's book-order information and her many educational, species-specific, Internet bird mailing lists can be found online at <http://www.Parrottalk.com>. Her book can be ordered toll-free by calling;

1-877-84-Birds (24737). 