

Crimson-bellied Conures Come to the U.S.

by Rick Jordan, Dripping Springs, TX

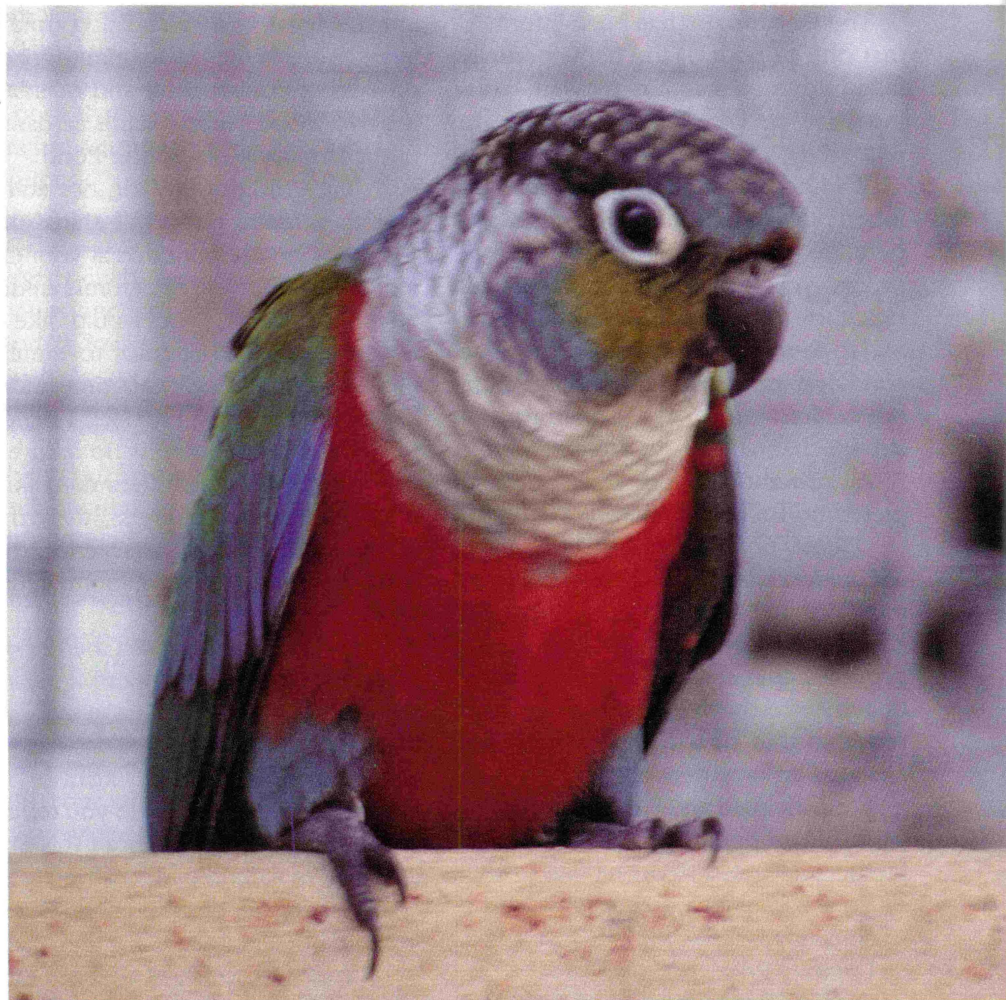
In 1992, the United States passed into law, the Wild Bird Conservation Act (WBCA). This law brought about the end of parrot importation as we knew it. After the law was enacted, there were to be no more shipments of any CITES listed psittacines (which is virtually all of them) brought into the United States, except under very special circumstances.

One of the exemptions under this law involved what are called, "Cooperative Breeding Programs." Very basically, these are self-designed programs, approved by an oversight avicultural organization and the U.S.

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Photo by Rick Jordan



The Crimson-bellied Conure, *Pyrrhura peralta peralta*, is one of the most beautiful of the *Pyrrhura* genus.

Fish and Wildlife Service, which strictly control the import, keeping, and sales of imported birds or their offspring.

Cooperative breeding programs can be designed to import birds of certain species that are to be utilized in breeding programs of the participants and members of the approved program. Wild-caught or captive-bred birds can theoretically be imported under these programs, but it would seem that approval is easier if programs are designed to utilize only available captive-bred birds from foreign breeders.

I will not lie and say this system has been totally workable and easy for us. But, on the other hand, I can't say it was impossible either.

The USFWS has been helpful and they appear to "encourage" these programs and their development. The biggest problem encountered to date is the requirement to track the whereabouts of all offspring produced by the imported birds. When dealing with a species that is not very prolific, this

would not be such a difficult task, but if you are planning to import a species that is a heavy producer, the studbook and records could become very burdensome in only a few short years.

Program directors are responsible for reporting the whereabouts of all imported birds under the program, and any offspring produced from these imported birds. That means that anyone desiring to breed the species and wanting to acquire birds from your program must register with the studbook of the program and must be willing to report breeding results, banding information, and sales or final dispositions to the manager.

Since many of us are approached by and often deal with persons that we do not know, this situation could result in a real "jam," if the participant suddenly decides not to participate. On its face, these requirements seem to place the Program Director in a legal bind between participants and the WBCA.

The arrival of Crimson-bellied

Conures into the United States presents a unique situation and some very interesting opportunities. To date, there have not been any legal imports of this species into the United States. That means that the founder stocks of this species are in a controlled situation, and that we can actually track the progress of a species from day one of its arrival in this country.

The establishment of a prolific species such as this should go rather quickly with F2 generation offspring of imported birds being available to breeders in as little as two to three years. Anyone desiring F1 or imported stock will have to enroll in the program and be approved by the Program Director, the oversight organization (the American Federation of Aviculture, Inc. in this case), and finally the USFWS in Washington (for imported stock).

In order to keep some type of control on this species and track its establishment through legal breeding, transfers, and sales, all imported birds have been bled and DNA fingerprints will be on file with the USFWS forensics lab and a private DNA lab in Texas. In addition, one of the program requirements is that breeders will have to use specially coded bands that will be available only from the studbook holder and program director. This tracking system is being developed as a means of hampering any attempts to include smuggled or illegal birds into the breeding population of this species here in the United States. If all goes well, this means that there should be no question as to the legality of any and all, program banded, Crimson-bellied Conures held in aviculture here in our country. As well, it will demonstrate to the USFWS and others, that breeders can and do breed parrots to many multiples of generations in our aviaries.

Won't it be nice, for once, to have no questions regarding "legality" asked about birds that you are keeping?

The Crimson-bellied Conure *Pyrrhura peralta peralta* is a striking bird and probably one of the most beautiful of all members the *Pyrrhura* genus. Aviculturists in the United States have often looked at pictures of this species and have aspired to someday be able to keep it in the aviary.

Although this species is very common in the wild, the legal export of this Brazilian native has been limited, and aviculturists all over the world have worked very hard to establish it in captivity from the birds that were available.

The members of the program here in the United States now plan to contact the Brazilian government and seek out registered breeders of this species in its native country. This will provide American breeders with F1 or F2 generation bloodlines that are not available outside of the country of origin.

The establishment of this species in U.S. aviculture will be an accolade for our avicultural community and should open many doors for bird breeders as well as reduce the tension between bird breeders and their government.

For more information on the Crimson-bellied Conure, Write to:

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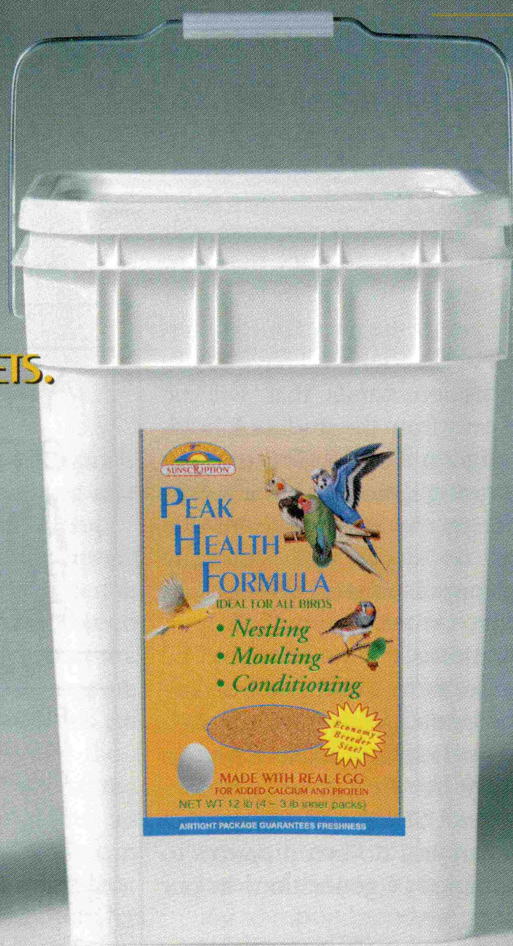
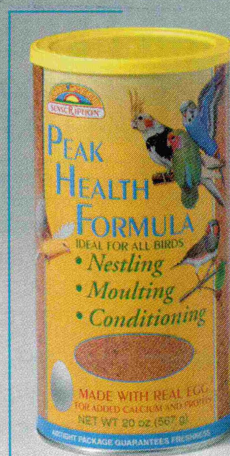
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