

International Parrotlet Society

The International Parrotlet Society (IPS) was founded in 1992 by group of parrotlet owners and breeders to promote the proper care, breeding, exhibition, and conservation of parrotlets. The first IPS meeting was held at the American Federation of Aviculture convention in Miami during August of 1992. IPS has certainly come a long way from when those first 16 people met and decided to form this organization.

IPS is proud to state that it now has over 700 members in 13 different countries and is one of the largest specialty organizations in the world. IPS is affiliated with many avicultural organizations including the American Federation of Aviculture, Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors, Bird Clubs of America, and the North American Parrot Society.

Members receive a bimonthly newsletter produced by parrotlet owners and breeders with help from veterinarians, researchers, and conservationists. Each issue is broken down into three categories: pet care and training, breeder information, and general parrotlet husbandry. Each newsletter contains a different color photograph of a species or color mutation parrotlet. Classified advertising is free to members.

IPS members also receive and can be listed in a membership/breeder directory at no charge. The International Parrotlet Society also has a free traceable banding system that allows members to trace birds back to their original breeder. An annual survey is taken regarding all aspects of parrotlet ownership with the information reported in the newsletter. IPS also sponsors cooperative breeding programs for rare species parrotlets. IPS members meet twice a year at the American Federation of Aviculture convention and the National Cage Bird Show.

IPS encourages the showing of parrotlets and has written standards by which parrotlets will be judged. These standards have been adopted by both the Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors and the North American Parrot Society. IPS also presents awards for the Best Parrotlet and Best Novice Parrotlet in Show at both the Great American Bird Show and the National Cage Bird Show.

IPS sponsored Sandee L. Molenda to speak about parrotlets at the American Federation of Aviculture's convention that took place in Los Angeles during August, 2000. IPS also held its own annual membership meeting at the convention and had a booth which a number of folks visited where they learned more about the IPS as well as about parrotlets in general.

IPS has recently undertaken a fund raising drive to raise money for Texas A & M's work with megabacteria in exotic birds. All funds raised will go directly to Dr. David Phalen to help his research into this elusive organism. If you would like to help, please send your contribution to the International Parrotlet Society and note that it is for megabacteria research.

Dues are \$25.00 for individual, \$30 for family and \$30.00 a year for international membership. For more information, contact:

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Saving Mexican Parrotlets

by Sandee L. Molenda, C.A.S.
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Mexican parrotlets are one of the most beautiful, gentle and unusual species of parrotlet. Unfortunately, very few people are willing to work with these magnificent parrotlets because they have a reputation for being difficult. Hopefully, this article will alleviate some of the anxiety associated with breeding these parrotlets and persuade more breeders to set up pairs. Our opinion is that if nothing is done to stop the smuggling and habitat destruction, without more captive breeding, these fabulous parrotlets will become extinct in a relatively short period of time.

One of the larger species of parrotlet, *Forpus cyanopygius*, is one of the most beautiful species. Bigger than Pacifics, Mexicans are more than five inches in length and weigh approximately 40 grams. As with all parrotlets, Mexicans are sexually dimorphic. Primarily bright green, males have deep, rich turquoise on the wings, backs, and rumps. Females are almost chartreuse they are so bright green. Both males and females have gray beaks and legs but females' beaks do not turn gray until they come into breeding condition.

There are three subspecies of Mexican Parrotlets. One subspecies, *Forpus cyanopygius pallidus*, is found from south-eastern Sonora to north-western Mexico. In both males and females the plumage is lighter green with a gray tinge and the under parts are more yellow than in the nominate.

Forpus cyanopygius insularis is



Mexican Parrotlets – a male on either side of a female.

found on only two of the Tres Marias Islands and are endangered in their native habitat. A dark green head, back, and wings as well as blue on the chest and stomach identify this subspecies. The face is yellow-green and the males' rumps and wings are darker turquoise than in the nominate.

Mexican Parrotlets are very different from their more common *Forpus* cousins in many ways. First, they are the most northerly-found species as the others come primarily from Central and South America. Unlike other species, they come from a dry desert climate instead of rainforest. Mexicans also breed once a year, sometimes every other year, and almost never double-clutch. Finally, and this is a big one, Mexican Parrotlets are extremely susceptible to stress, especially after moving. Many times all will seem fine then they just stop eating, start losing weight and then die.

Mexican Parrotlets can be bred in a colony situation, which is impossible in the other species of parrotlets. We have found an aviary that is at least 3 feet wide, 6 feet long and 4 feet high

is the minimum size needed. Of course, bigger is better. This will work comfortably for four pairs of Mexicans. It should be well planted with lots of non-toxic plants. More nest boxes should be provided than pairs. We use boxes that are 7 inches wide, 10 inches tall and 7 inches deep and filled with untreated pine shavings.

Although we have bred Mexican Parrotlets in a colony, we prefer breeding each pair in individual cages. This way, we are not only certain of bloodlines and heritage but can avoid the possible spread of diseases. We use cages that are 18 inches tall, 24 inches wide and 24 inches deep with dividers between each bank of cages. These are our standard parrotlet breeding cages. All of the pairs are housed together with no other species of parrotlet near them.

Whether colony breeding or cage breeding, we have found that the pairs should be separated during the non-breeding season to be the most successful. Back in the days of importing wild birds, either you would find flocks of male or female Mexicans in

quarantine; rarely was there a mixing of the sexes. Reports of sightings in the wild seem to confirm that when not breeding, males and females flock with their own sex.

Breeding season is in the spring and the summer. In the fall, we take all of males and place them in large flights (eight birds per flight) together. We do the same with the females. Of course, you *must* make sure there are more perches than birds and plenty of feed and water areas. Although Mexican Parrotlets are not as aggressive as Pacifics, they are still parrotlets and aggression can occur. Always monitor the birds carefully for several weeks after moving them into flights for signs of aggression. In the spring, we set up the proven pairs together but will switch last year's non-producers with new mates. Using this method, we have gone from 20% success rate in our pairs to 80%. We have been using this method for the last five years.

As with all breeding, nutrition is very important in order to insure success. However, with Mexican Parrotlets, again you have to be careful. They seem to be sensitive to too many supplements when not breeding. They seem to thrive on a rather sparse diet of seeds or pellets and fruits and vegetables. Ours have access to cuttlebone and mineral block that are pretty much ignored until breeding season. We do not give them vitamins or any kind of supplements. We also discontinue feeding egg food or sprouted seeds. When we set them back up for breeding in the spring, we then start feeding the breeder's diet of egg food and sprouts as well as vitamins, Spirulina™, wheat grass powder, bee pollen, and calcium powder. We also give them Bird Calm™ and Avian Stress Formula™ by Avian Medicine Chest prior to and after moving them to help reduce stress.

Breeding Mexican Parrotlets requires patience and dedication and is not for everyone. But, if you have a place in your heart for these wonderful birds perhaps you can find a place in your aviary for them. After all, extinction is forever and we are the keepers of the wild – especially when the wild is growing ever smaller. 