

Our Story of the "Golden Macaws"

by Gary and Lynn Redden, Midlothian, Texas

Imagine our surprise at finding these unusual birds in our nest box! This is Gary's story – of his most extraordinary birds. I have tried to help him out by writing it up. The style is "first person" – Gary speaking as events took place two year ago. I hope you enjoy this!

In Texas, towards the end of July, weather is really starting to get hot. Having had a very good year hatching babies from "Mickey and Minnie," a pair of Blue and Gold Macaws, I try to let them hatch and raise their last clutch of eggs. They are a young pair that had bred for three years in a row, each year increasing their clutch number and size. This was the last clutch of the season, and because I have a problem with rat snakes, I always check the nest and watch for any trouble

that might happen.

Today when I looked inside the nest, there were three babies. When I looked closer, something caught my eye. Two of the babies did not look quite right. Thinking there was something really wrong, I went ahead and pulled the babies to hand raise them.

Two of the three had very pale skin and even with their eyes closed, you could see that the eyes had a reddish color. What was the problem? Vitamin deficiency, or what? Everything possible was going through my mind. I gave the parent birds a pelleted diet, supplemented with fresh fruits and vegetables sprinkled with Vionate. They are from a well known breeder that sold them to me as non-related chicks. I had bred them for three years and always had good, healthy chicks.

While hand raising the two pale siblings, I observed that they were as strong and vigorous as their normal sibling was. They ate very well, and one of the pale chicks was definitely the dominant chick of the three. They grew without any problems that I could tell – but their skin was white, their beak and claws



Worth his weight in gold.



Reddens' baby macaws, it's easy to recognize gold.

remained white, and when their eyes opened, they were red.

From college genetics classes of long ago, I started thinking they might be albinos. Knowing the problems albinos might have, such as sensitivity to light, etc., I watched them closely. They never showed any signs of weakness or light sensitivity, and were just as healthy as their normal sibling.

When pin feathers started coming in, they had a slight yellow tinge to them, turning into the beautiful coloration that you see in the pictures – all shades of yellow or gold. They have gone through a complete molt, as they are now two years old, and there has been no change in the color patterns.

They were DNA sexed with

both being male, and I had this done twice by different companies, with the same results.

In the late winter of 2000, I moved them outside to a large, well-shaded pen. The Texas winter was very mild, and they seemed happy in their new quarters. Fearing the bright sunlight would affect their eyes, I tried to keep them in the darker, more protected areas. Birds tend to have a mind of their own, though, so they would stay in the tallest trees and most sunlit areas they could find. They showed no signs of the sunlight being a problem. The pens are about 100 yards away from my house, and they always call out and fly over when they see me coming, bringing them fruits and treats.

I talked to several people about them, trying to get more information. Most people were surprised that there were two males in the one clutch. Most folks said I was very lucky and it would not happen



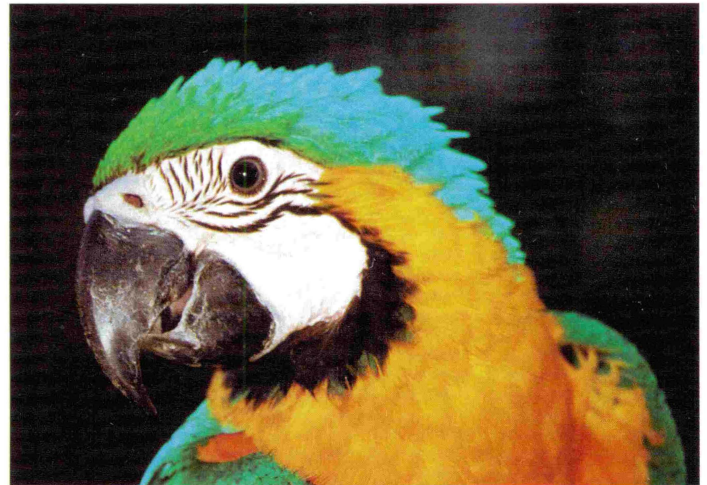
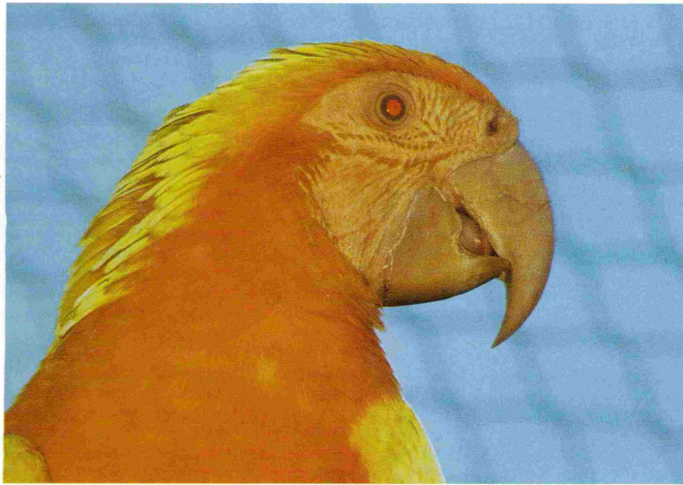
again. Some thought it would be a sex-linked gene, and all the Golden Macaws would be male.

Time seems to be proving most of those theories incorrect, and I don't think anybody can predict the

Photos by authors and Bill Haas



It's all in the family. Birds of a different feather flock together.



Side by side view of immature nest mates.

future here.

Spring hatching rolled around in May 2001, and with high hopes, the first egg hatched. A nice, normal chick – not surprised, but a little disappointed. Then the second egg hatched, and there was my number three Golden Macaw baby, which was DNA sexed as a female. The third egg was a male yellow – now I had four. “Minnie” laid three more clutches, and in the last clutch, I

hatched my fifth yellow, a male.

With a total of five Golden Macaws, four males and one female, I wanted to talk to more people about my birds. It just so happened that the AFA National Convention was in Houston that fall. I took a few pictures and met and talked with many people there. The word quickly spread about my birds, and my new friend, Sheldon Dingle, requested an article with pictures.

Bill Haas came up to help me out with pictures, which are really difficult to get because these birds climb all over you and look for treats and definitely will not stay in the branches and pose for pictures!

I have had a great time talking with others about these unusual birds and am happy to share what I can about my experiences. If you have questions, you may e-mail me at:

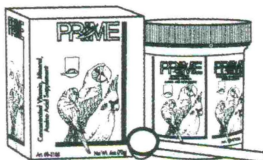
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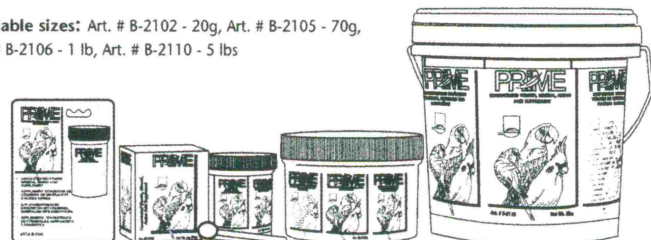
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