

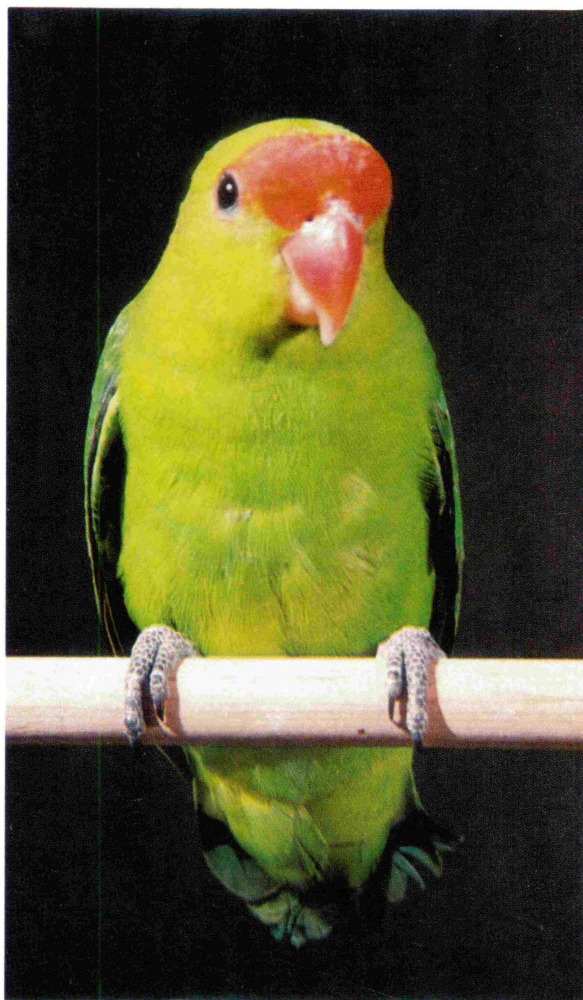


Photos by D. Petruša/J. Chellman

*Abyssinian Lovebirds, pair,  
(Agapornis tarantia tarantia)*



*Abyssinian Lovebirds, hens,  
breeder/owner, Agapornis Acres*



*Abyssinian Lovebird, male*

# Breeding the Abyssinian Lovebird

by Conrad Meinert

*Much of what has been written about Lovebirds in our journals during the past five years deals with the Peachface or any of the four white-eyering species. It is therefore of considerable interest to report on a successful attempt to breed the Abyssinian Lovebird. I would like to hear from others who have bred the Abyssinian, Madagascar or Redfaced Lovebirds so we can have another update at a future time.*  
R. Erhart, Lovebird Editor

My collection of birds has always included a fair number of Lovebirds but until recently I have never attempted to breed any of those species which can be visually sexed. I had always been told they were difficult to breed, and due to their pugnacious nature should be kept one pair to a flight.

Late in 1977 I had an opportunity to acquire two pair of Abyssinian Lovebirds (*Agapornis taranta*). How could I resist: the birds were beautiful, the price was right, and the possibility of breeding them was to much of a temptation.

One pair was noticeably more relaxed and I decided to place them in a cage measuring 30 inches by 24 inches. A nest box (6 x 6 x 8 inches high) was partially filled with peat and cedar shavings and hung inside the cage. The number 2 pair was placed in an aviary to compare which breeding environment might be preferred.

It was nearly March, 1978, before the hen of the #1 pair started to pay attention to the nest box. She was obviously disturbed with the contents of the box, because before long she had nearly carried out all peat and shavings. After adding some more, she again proceeded to clean out her house and dump all shavings on the cage floor. I gave up and hoped that if any eggs were laid they would be safe and sound on the concave bottom of the nest box.

During the third week of March the hen

had settled down with her nesting chores and she remained in the box day and night. After about another week my curiosity got the best of me and a brief inspection revealed 3 white eggs. All three hatched sometime halfway through April, but I was unable to record the exact number of days of incubation.

Now the real fun began. Just as the birds had hatched we experienced a prolonged period of heavy rain, and coupled with the large amount of ground moisture stored by one of the worst winters on record, the ground was unable to absorb nature's bounty. As a result there was standing water everywhere, and our basement, where many of our birds are housed, looked more like a swimming pool rather than a comfortable bird breeding room. Our work seemed endless, and the water came faster than we could empty it. To reduce the risk of accidental drowning in the aviaries we left all basement lights burning day and night.

Naturally, I was very much concerned about my Abyssinians. High humidity and molding feed as well as the constant commotion of removing the water could have easily led to a failure of rearing the three young. But the hen seemed undisturbed and by early May I was able to close-band all three babies. The bands were accepted without complication and after another few weeks the youngsters were out and flying.

All young Abyssinians look similar to the mother, i.e. there are no red feathers visible on the forehead. Yet the feathers under the wing clearly differentiate the sexes: those of the males are black and those of the females green. Using these sexing marks I could identify two males and one female.

The second pair which I had set up in an aviary during 1978 showed no signs of wanting to breed. So I switched them to a large flight cage during the early months of 1979. The hen showed immediate interest

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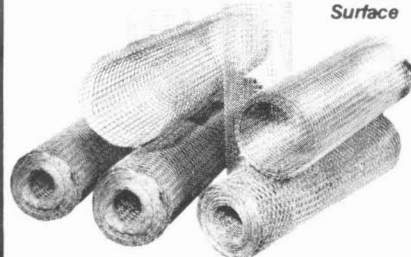
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Abyssinian Lovebird youngster 2 months old.

in her nest box, but for some reason decided to completely demolish the perch in front of the entrance hole. Naturally I wanted to help out and so replaced the perch. But after my kind gesture the hen refused to re-enter the box and instead decided to lay her 4 eggs on the litter of the cage floor. I in turn decided to improve the situation placing the litter and the 4 eggs into a round feeding dish. To my surprise she continued to incubate and finally hatched her first baby. Unfortunately it was trampled and died. At this point I decided to remove the remaining eggs and found that only one of these was fertile. This fertile egg was placed under the #1 hen which was sitting on 3 fertile eggs again. Eventually she hatched all four eggs and raised four beautiful babies.

One final note about my feeding program. I offer a good quality parakeet mix both dry and soaked. A separate dish is filled with a cockatiel mix. Canned or frozen corn is also offered on a regular basis, particularly during the breeding season. All my Abbies like endives and an occasional slice of sweet apple.

I am really looking forward to the next season because I am sure both old pair will raise for us again, and I can also set up one additional unrelated breeding pair of my own cage-bred Abyssinians.

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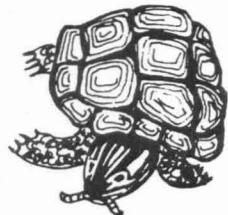
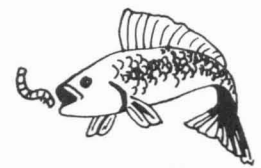
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