

# Hand-Raising Peach-Face Lovebirds and Parakeets

by Carol A. Moore & Raymond J. Moore  
Florida

## Introduction

In this article we will explore our experiences in hand-raising peach-face lovebirds and parakeets. We will be talking about the different aspects of breeding and hand-raising along with such items as food, supplements, cages, equipment, etc. This article is broken down into parts for simplicity. These parts are (1) The Feeding of the Parent Birds, (2) Equipment and Cages, (3) Feeding of the Baby Birds, (4) The Nursery, (5) The Results, and (6) A Summary.

## Feeding of the Parent Birds

The feeding of the parent birds is a very important aspect, not only during the breeding season, but throughout the whole year. Let us first examine the parakeets basic diet for the whole year. Our parakeets are fed the following:

- Parakeet Seed consisting of canary seed, millet, & hulled oats
- Dry Kiblet Dog Food (this is put into a blender and ground to a power substance)
- Wheat Germ Oil
- Cod Liver Oil
- Vitamins (everytime the water is changed)
- Carrot Tops
- Petamine
- Hard Boiled Egg Yolks
- Grit & Gravel
- Cuttlebone
- Lettuce
- Apples
- Parsley

During the breeding season the following items are increased: Wheat Germ Oil, Petamine, and Hard Boiled Egg yolks.

The feeding of the parent peach-face lovebirds is the same as the parakeets except, that the sunflower seeds and a mixture of wild bird seeds are added. The mixture of wild bird seeds consists of millet, milo, sunflower seeds, cracked corn, and cracked wheat.

## Analysis of the Parakeet Seed

Crude Protein	12% minimum
Crude Fat	4% minimum
Crude Fiber	8% maximum
Ash	8% maximum
Moisture	12% maximum

## Analysis of the Wild Bird Seed

Crude Protein	(MIN) 10%
Crude Fat	(MIN) 4%
Crude Fiber	(MAX) 14%

## Equipment and Cages

With this section, the size, type, etc. of cages and equipment may vary because of personal tastes, space that is available to you, etc. We will only attempt to explain to you what has worked and is continually working for us. The cages for the parakeets vary from a cage that is 2 feet long by 8 inches wide by 3 feet tall to a cage that is 2 feet long by 2 feet wide by 3 feet tall. In these two examples of cages we have had equal success. Only one pair of parakeets is kept to a cage. The nest box for the parakeets is the standard parakeet nest box, which you could buy from your pet shops or make yourself. The cages used for the peach-face lovebirds vary from one cage that is 2 feet long by 1 1/2 feet wide by 1 1/2 feet high to a cage that is 2 feet long by 2 feet wide by 3 feet high. Again, as with the parakeets, we have had equal success with each of the cages. The nest boxes for the peach-face lovebirds is the standard lovebird nest box, but we have had equal success using a cockatiel nest box.

## Feeding of the Baby Birds

The baby formula is the same for the parakeets as it is for the peach-face lovebirds.

Here is our formula:

- 1/4 cup of yellow corn meal
- 1/2 cup of High Protein Baby Cereal
- 1/3 cup of Petamine
- 1/3 cup of Parakeet Conditioning Food
- 1 cup of Sunflower Seeds

The sunflower seeds are hulled and they are ground in a blender until they are powder. All of these ingredients are mixed together and put into containers for

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Photo by Dale Thompson, Calif.

*Pair of normal peach face lovebirds.*



storage. Only enough formula is taken out for each feeding. Each feeding is a new batch of formula. At each feeding a few drops of ABDEC Baby Vitamins is added to the formula, along with a few drops of warm water to mix the formula up. Once every 2 to 3 days a few drops of cod liver oil is added to one feeding. Once every 3 days hard boiled egg yolks are added to one feeding. If any of the formula is left over from the feeding, it is placed into the nursery until the next feeding. This helps to encourage the baby birds to start eating on their own faster than not putting it into the nursery at all. If there is any formula that is still left over, it is then discarded. The formula is fed to the babies in an eyedropper until they are full, and before they are returned to the nursery they are checked to make sure that all the air is removed from their crops. We prefer to use a plastic eyedropper, but if you can not find one, a glass eyedropper will suffice if adequate caution is taken in using it.

Parakeet seed mix and Finch seed mix is introduced to the babies at 4 to 5 weeks of age. Again, as with the left over formula, we are trying to get the babies eating on their own. The babies are closely watched and they are still subsidized with feeding of the formula if they need it. As they improve on eating on their own, small amounts of water are introduced into the nursery. They are closely watched from the time the water is introduced until the time it is taken out. This is a safety measure to insure that none of the babies are injured by the water.

#### The Nursery

The nurseries consist of the following equipment: a 15 gallon aquarium, a standard aquarium lid with lights, towels, cedar wood shavings, a thermometer, and a heating pad. At the bottom of the aquarium we put 2 folded towels. On top on the towels we put 2 inches of cedar wood shavings. The aquarium is set on top of the heating pad. The heating pad is a standard heating pad with a 3 setting switch. The lid is the standard aquarium lid that fits this size aquarium, with lights and ventilation holes in it. The temperature of the nursery is kept between 75° and 80°, with efforts to keep it as close to 80° as possible. The temperature of the nursery is controlled by the heating pad, the lights, and the towels that cover the top of the lid. The heating pad is always kept on low and the lights and towels are utilized to their fullest. That way the heating pad is never set too high for the babies. For example, at night when it is cold, the heating pad is set on low, and the towels on the lid are placed to completely cover the ventilation holes. This maintains the

temperature perfectly. During the day if it is cold, the lights and the towels are utilized to maintain the temperature. As a safety measure, the lights are not left on during the night. If it gets too hot, the towels are shifted to uncover some of the ventilation holes to maintain the correct temperature.

As soon as the babies are observed eating on their own with no more need of formula feeding, and it is a warm day, they are taken from the nursery and put into a flight cage. They are closely watched for 3 days. If they are not doing well they are fed the formula to subsidize them. When this happens, they usually make a full adjustment to being on their own in about 2 days. They are watched over for 5 more days. If at the end of a week and a half, they are completely independent, healthy, etc., they are separated. The birds that we are going to sell are sold. The one that we are going to keep for future breeders are put in a holding flight cage until they are ready to breed. The birds that are kept as breeders revert back to the wild state and become excellent breeders. The birds that are sold become excellent pets.

#### The Results

First let us take a look at our track record for baby birds before we started to hand raise them. We are not proud of this record, but as bird breeders, we keep learning every day of our lives. Before hand-raising them 1 out of 10 baby parakeets died. For the lovebirds the death rate was 1 out of 4. Since we have instituted our plan of hand-raising them, our death rate has been 0! The birds that are hand-raised turn out to be larger, healthier, have better plumage, are better pets and future breeders, and have a better start on life. It is this higher quality in birds that we all are looking for.

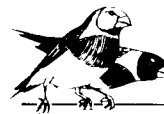
#### A Summary

If you do not hand raise the babies, you are usually limited with having 2 or 3 clutches per season before running the risks of over-breeding your hens. With the foods, seeds, vitamins, supplements, etc., that we feed our birds, plus coupled with taking the babies from the parents and hand-raising them, we can let them have 4 to 5 clutches per season without running the risks of over doing the hens and end up with a higher quality of bird. You might ask yourself, "Why go through all that trouble hand-raising parakeets and lovebirds?" The answer lies in the birds you raise. They are of high quality as future breeders and as pets for your satisfied customers. Isn't that worth it all? Besides "WE LOVE IT!".

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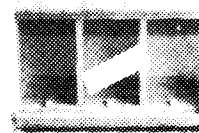
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