

# A beginner's approach to Rosella Breeding

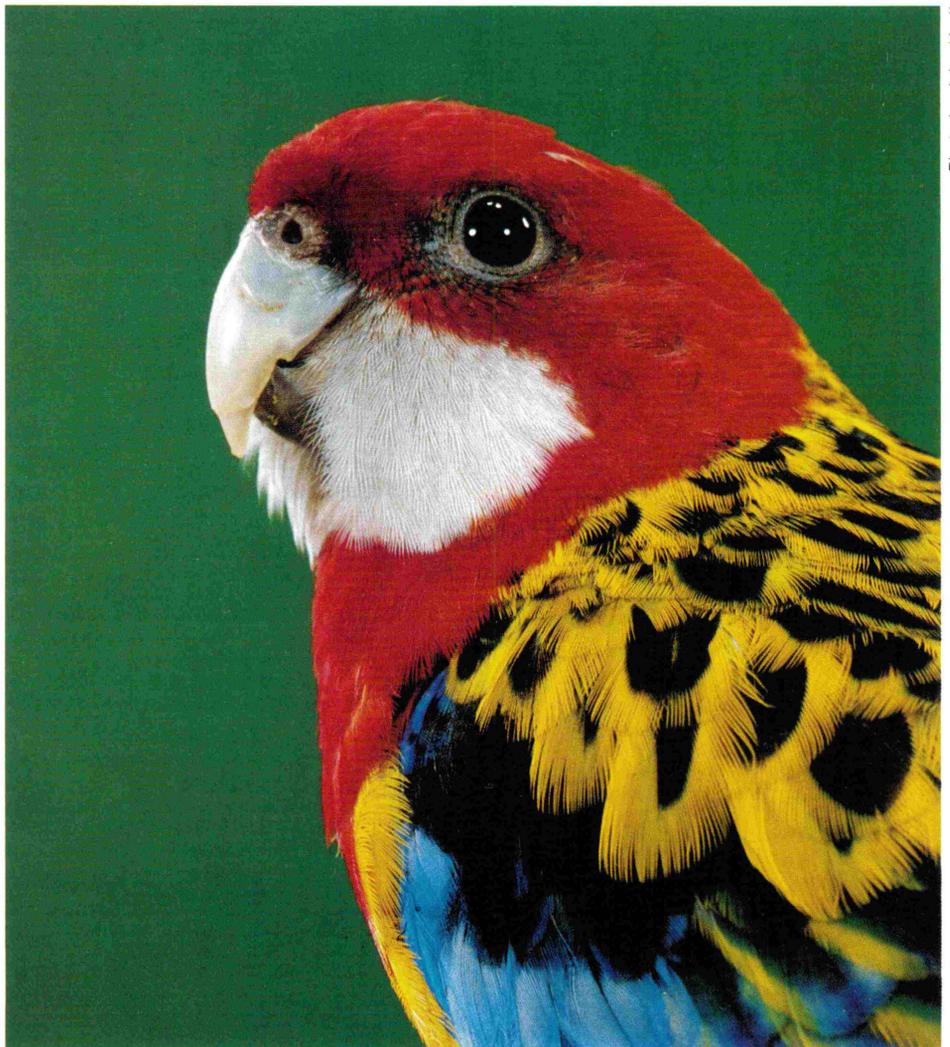
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During June of 1979, a pair of 1½ year old golden mantle rosellas were purchased from a quarantine source and placed into a table top flight measuring 4' x 4' x 2 ½' in our uninsulated attached garage. Also present in the garage were 100 English and domestic budgies, 10 cockatiels, and one amazon parrot. The rosellas were fed: parakeet mix (fortified with linatone, vionate, powdered milk, kelp, wheat germ, and brewer's yeast); deluxe parrot mix; fresh greens and fruits 3 times a week; and fresh water daily with vitamins and iodine added. A supply of mineral block and cuttlebone was always available.

After about six months, in November 1979, a nest box 8'' x 8'' x 12'' high was attached to the end of the wire enclosure as close to the top as possible. After 3½ weeks of no observable activity the box was removed. In late January 1980 it was reinstalled and filled 1/3 with cedar sawdust. The first clutch of five eggs was started in February. The birds threw the first two eggs out and they were lost to breakage. Three remaining eggs were taken as layed and placed beneath one pair of sitting cockatiels. All three were fertile. The cockatiels abandoned the eggs after sitting well for two weeks and the eggs were lost to chilling.

Later in February a second clutch of five eggs was started. The first egg was thrown out and broken. The others were taken as layed and placed within an incubator set at 98°-100°F and 86% humidity with an automatic turning capability. All four eggs were fertile. However, all four turned dark and failed to hatch.

In March a third clutch of six eggs was layed, the first egg again being thrown out and broken. The second through sixth eggs were taken as layed and placed within the incubator. All eggs were layed between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. every other day. On the twentieth day of incubation



Golden mantle rosella, *Platycercus eximius*.

at 4:45 p.m. the second egg was found cracked open 3/4 of the way around the middle of the egg. We helped open the egg by gently prying the halves apart to crack the unpipped portion. Within two minutes a healthy chick pushed the egg apart and marched backwards into the world with long, wet, white down looking much like a three-day-old cockatiel with giant eyes and a too-heavy head.

The chick was placed into a small box, 3'' x 3'' x 3'' high, lined with tissue paper and returned to the incubator to fluff dry overnight. After 21 hours it was transported to foster parents. Attempts to foster with two different pair of feeding cockatiels failed and the baby was found unfed and dead the next morning.

Egg number three turned dark and failed to hatch. It was subsequently opened and found fully formed but grey and lifeless. No evidence of shell pipping was present. Egg number four was discovered partially pipped on its twentieth day at about 4:00 p.m. The pipping could be clearly heard by holding the egg to the ear. After one hour with no visual evidence of egg cracking and out

of fear the chick may die trying to open the egg, we attempted to assist by cracking the egg carefully with a needlepoint. A drop of blood appeared from the membrane surrounding the chick. After a 1/4'' diameter hole was opened in the vicinity of the chick's head, the head was seen to be moving. We placed the egg back into the incubator in hopes that the chick would do the rest. After nearly three hours we decided to open the egg up and see what happened. After removing the shell and remaining membrane, the chick, still alive, was placed into the box inside the incubator. It was assumed that morning would find it dead. Wrong again! At 7:00 a.m. a healthy, fluffy peeping chick greeted us. At 11:00 a.m. it was transported to foster parents.

At the foster site the chick was placed in between three small cockatiels (about five days old) under reliable parents. The foster cock covered the chick immediately but wouldn't feed it. At 6:00 p.m., after about six hours, the three cockatiel chicks were found well-fed, but the rosella baby had no trace of food in its crop. Since the cockatiel cock wouldn't

give up the nest to the hen that evening as was expected, the chick was moved to the nest box of a red-rump hen on eggs. Four of seven of her eggs were removed to the incubator and she was left with the rosella chick and three eggs. Within one hour she had fed the chick and was sitting well on it.

Egg number five began pipping on the nineteenth day and finally hatched out at 4:40 a.m., or exactly 20½ days. This chick seemed healthy in all respects and was left within the incubator to fluff dry prior to being transported to the foster site. The foster red-rump hen took it immediately.

Egg number six turned dark and failed to hatch. Upon opening the egg, the chick was fully formed but grey and lifeless. This egg seemed to turn dark on about its eighteenth day in the incubator.

The younger rosella chick began appearing weak after two days and finally died on the third day under the red-rump parakeet. Nothing externally appeared to be wrong with this chick nor the care being offered by the foster parents.

The remaining rosella chick continued to grow well and by its 22nd day was considerably larger than its foster parents. It also appeared that starting on about its 20th day the foster parents could no longer keep the chick's crop full. The rosella chick was removed from the foster nest box and returned home to hand feeding and residence in the corner of an unused cockatiel nest box sitting atop a heating pad in the kitchen. Fir shavings lined the bottom of the box. At about this age the chick's color was beginning to show with vivid blue flight feathers and red upper breast feathers. Hand feeding was initiated using a large plastic dropper and a mixture of protein concentrate cereal, egg yolks, Karo syrup and water, cooked to a thick soup consistency.

The hand feeding progressed first with a dropper six times per day for one week to four times per day for the second week, to a teaspoon four times per day for two more weeks. By this time the bird was regularly refusing spoon food in favor of parakeet mixture and budgamine from the bottom of the cage. This bird always let us know when it was finished eating by just walking away or starting to play.

Much handling has resulted in a very affectionate, curious young bird. With wings clipped it is most happy to ride on shoulders and be with people. At this writing, age 2½ months, it has turned into a quiet, graceful, colorful bird who is beginning to act and whistle similarly to the adult male ●

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