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# a breeding diary for yellow- collared macaws

(*A. auricollis*)

by Janet Fuqua

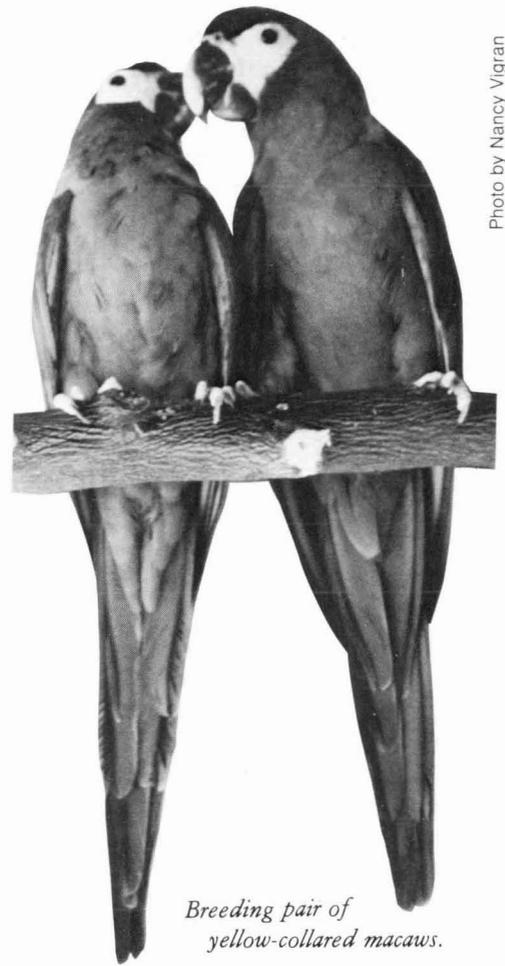


Photo by Nancy Vigran

Breeding pair of  
yellow-collared macaws.

I acquired my pair of Yellow-collareds in October of 1979. Both had been purchased by separate parties for pets approximately 3½ years before and had remained as pets until September 1979.

They were removed from the house and put in separate cages in the garage to get acquainted. When they were put together they seemed very compatible, and looked like a pair, one was larger with a broader beak, etc. They were surgically sexed and were indeed a pair.

I could find only one article on the breeding of the Yellow-collared and had much difficulty finding any useful information about them.

I brought them home and had to put them in an area with a lot of action. The flight was 4' x 8' x 8' and exposed to children, barking dogs, and the weekly use of a lawnmower. The birds took it very well and were not particularly nervous, perhaps because they had been pets previously. The male was never a really tame bird, his cage was in the family room and he said, "Hello", but was not let out and handled. The female was tame and easily handled by her owner and friends, says "Hello", but was kept in a bird room and was not dependent on people for entertainment and not unduly attached to humans. Therefore, both reverted to being just birds very quickly. Both are calm

when you enter the flight, but even the tame female would never come to me after being given her freedom in a flight.

After a couple of weeks in the flight I put up a box, about 12" x 14" x 16" deep. The pair immediately started inspecting it and went in and out for about three days. After that, I didn't see them go near it again.

In April, we noticed that the macaws were getting progressively noisier, so we decided to hang a new box (12" x 12" x 22" deep) up for them. They just seemed to ignore its presence for a couple of weeks. Finally during the week of April 13th — 19th both birds were often seen going in and out of the box and acted very nervous if caught doing so.

The following week of the 20th, the hen spent much of her time sitting in the nest and chewing the wood on the back of the box. Her vent was beginning to look swollen.

Upon inspection on Wednesday the 23rd, she looked even more swollen, but the shavings were not even arranged for nesting. On Thursday, she was only seen once very briefly and the male was feeding much more frequently than usual.

I had lost a lutino ringneck to eggbinding the week before, so when I hadn't seen the macaw hen by Friday noon, I decided that I'd better check again.

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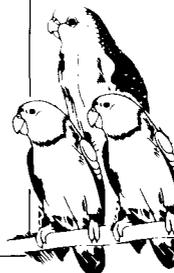
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Lawrence McPhail, Show Chairman  
Tom Ireland, Co-Chairman





*Yellow-collared macaws 5½ weeks old.*

The male scrambled out when he heard me coming, I carefully opened the side door and the hen moved just enough to reveal a concave and her 1st Egg, April 25, 1980.

On the 26th, the male was seen periodically during the day, eating and then going back into the nest box. At about 3:30 p.m., she came out and was seen eating, carrying on a loud conversation with her mate, breeding, eating some more and finally returning to the nest after nearly 30 minutes. I presume incubation

has not started because of her lengthy stay from the box. At 5:00 p.m., she was again out sitting with the male but headed for the box when she saw us.

**April 27th** — 6:30 a.m., only the male was out, she peeked out to see what the alarm was as I approached. I never saw her out today.

**April 28th** — Male goes in and out frequently, haven't seen her again today.

**April 29th** — Caught her out briefly at 3:30 this afternoon. She now has 2 eggs.

**May 5th** — I have gone out every 15 minutes for several hours in the evenings and have yet to see here out again. I've looked in the box several times, but I can't even get a glimpse of the eggs.

**May 6th** — My curiosity got the best of me today. She had chewed a small hole in the back of the box, so as I was looking in the side door, I tilted the box just enough to put my finger through the hole and poke her, she moved just enough to reveal 3 eggs.

**May 13th** — I pushed her off the eggs with a paint stick and took 1 egg out, it was a cloudy day and the egg was mottled looking so I couldn't decide if it was fertile or not. I reached for another egg and she reached around the stick and bit me, I decided I'd better just leave them alone, before "I" broke an egg.

**May 15th-17th** — Each day I have moved her aside to look at her eggs. I've decided to leave the eggs and let her try raising them on her own.

**May 18th** — At about 4:00 p.m., I was heading towards the flight with greens, when to my surprise, both birds were out. I ran and beat her to the nest box! To my complete surprise the egg I picked up was pipped. I picked up the second egg and it was also fertile, the third egg was a mottled grey color, so I believe it to be only par-

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tially developed. She wasn't at all aggressive, but headed straight for the box before I was even out of the flight. Well, the suspense is over concerning the fertility of the eggs, but now comes the worry as to their care and feeding.

**May 19th** — No baby yet, I "WONDER" did it die in the shell?

**May 20th** — Looked in at 10:00 a.m., still no baby and I can't see if it has pipped more, I'm getting discouraged! 5:00 p.m., A BABY! 48 hours from pipping to hatching. Born on the 26th day from the first egg.

**May 21st** — Baby is alive and fed.

**May 22nd** — Baby is well fed and growing. I couldn't see if the other egg has started to pip. The male is seen eating frequently and is in the box much of the time.

**May 23rd** — 10:00 a.m., Baby well fed. 5:00 p.m., Baby number two. Both fed. The first baby has doubled in size.

**May 27th** — 1st baby is 1 week old and has black toenails, horn colored beak and white down. The male eats sunflower, safflower, peanuts, small amounts of apple, banana, romaine lettuce and celery greens. I find it unusual that they continue to refuse bread and corn.

**May 31st** — The beak on #1 is beginning to turn black and dark pin feathers can be seen under the skin. I took a friend in to see them and she was not disturbed.

**June 1st** — This is the first time I've seen the hen out of the box, the male stayed in the entrance hole while she was out. When I came out she immediately headed for the box. I can now hear the babies begging for food when I'm in the flight. Took another friend in to see the babies today.

**June 3rd** — First baby is 2 weeks old, second 11 days old.

**June 4th** — Both babies have their eyes open and pin feathers are coming through.

**June 9th-28th** — I check them morning and evening, she's picking the down off, but I'm reluctant to bring them in as I've "NEVER" done any hand feeding.

**June 29th** — Nancy Vigran and I removed the nest box to photograph the babies through a hole about six inches around that the hen had chewed in the back of the box. She was extremely reluctant to leave the nest, I finally had to remove her bodily. She was very watchful and nervous while we finished taking pictures, but she didn't make any aggressive moves except to her loving mate who was trying to nuzzle her.

We replaced the box and I gave them peanuts and greens which she really seemed to relish — so much so, that she still hadn't returned to her babies two hours later.

Just as I was sure that I was going to have to bring them in, as it was almost dark, she finally went back in the box. I

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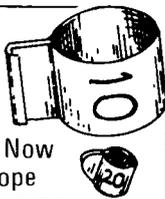
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was to be gone or busy most of the following week, but noticed 2 or 3 days later she was beginning to pick them more. I kept a close watch but left them with her.

**July 7th** — when I went to remove them for handfeeding, she had practically scalped them. The oldest will be seven weeks tomorrow. She has been a perfect mother until now, I wonder if it was our disturbing her for pictures or if she wants to lay again?

The babies are very shy and not eager eaters from a spoon, but neither are they refusing food.

Following is the formula I used which I got from Gerda Miller of Thousand Oaks, Ca. She has successfully hand-raised many lovebirds, grasskeets and cockatiels on it. This is the simplest recipe I'd seen which really appealed to me as an amateur at handfeeding.

2Cups Gerber's high protein cereal

1 Cup wheat germ

½ Cup yellow corn meal

⅓ Envelope of non-fat dry milk

Mix and store dry, add boiling water to amount needed for each feeding. I added a couple of drops of "AVITRON" twice a day and occasionally added Gerber's applesauce or green beans and bone meal.  
**July 14th** — I feed the young every 4 hours from 7 a.m. — 11 p.m. They now make a cry that sounds like a lamb when they hear me in the room.

**July 17th** — They have two distinct personalities, the larger is shy and backs up as I approach, but eats well once out of the box. The other tries to climb out of the box to be fed.

**July 23rd** — 9 weeks — I'm moving them to a cage today. I suspect they should have been there before this, but with their feathers plucked, I thought they needed the extra warmth. they now have down in the bare places.

**July 24th** — the largest and apparently the oldest is saying "Hello". The other cries everytime he sees someone.

**July 25th** — Their personalities are developing much faster since in a cage, I had to clip the wings of the oldest as he was taking off as soon as he was out of the cage.

**July 28th** — I'm offering bread, spray millet, and canary seed but they aren't attempting to eat anything yet.

**July 29th** — 10 weeks old.

**July 30th** — Parents have egg, probably laid last evening, three weeks after removing the first clutch of babies.

**August 1st** — Babies started to pick at Cheerios. 5:00 p.m. — 2 eggs.

**August 2nd** — Both babies are picking at Cheerios, hulled sunflower, and apple.

**August 3rd** — Youngest saying "Hello"

**August 4th** — 3 eggs, Babies 11 weeks.

**August 8th** — Both saying "Hello" clearly and are eating apple, hulled sunflower, bread and spray millet.

Their feet are still partially black.

**August 24th** — We returned from the A.F.A. Convention in Las Vegas and found a NEW baby in the nest.

**August 30th** — 14 weeks, Smallest is more aggressive and almost refuses food from me, other still eats well from the spoon and is much more lovable. Smaller says "Hello Baby". Added cat chow to diet.

**August 27th** — Second new baby

**August 28th** — Third new baby, all babies fed and progressing well.

**Sept. 12th** — Larger handfed baby is eating more and beginning to refuse food from me.

**Sept. 5th** — 17 weeks old. I am only feeding them twice a day. This is the first day I didn't check the new babies morning and evening, when I got home at 5 p.m., I found the oldest dead and mutilated. I brought the other 2 in for handfeeding, they will be three weeks on 9/17 and 9/18.

**Sept. 20th** — Nancy took pictures of the new babies. 3½ weeks old. They eat every 3 hours but not between 11:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m. Takes them about 20 minutes to quiet down after being fed.

**Sept. 27th** — 18 weeks old, they are finally self-sufficient and spend much time on a set of bamboo rings and in a small patio flight. They still have some black on their feet.

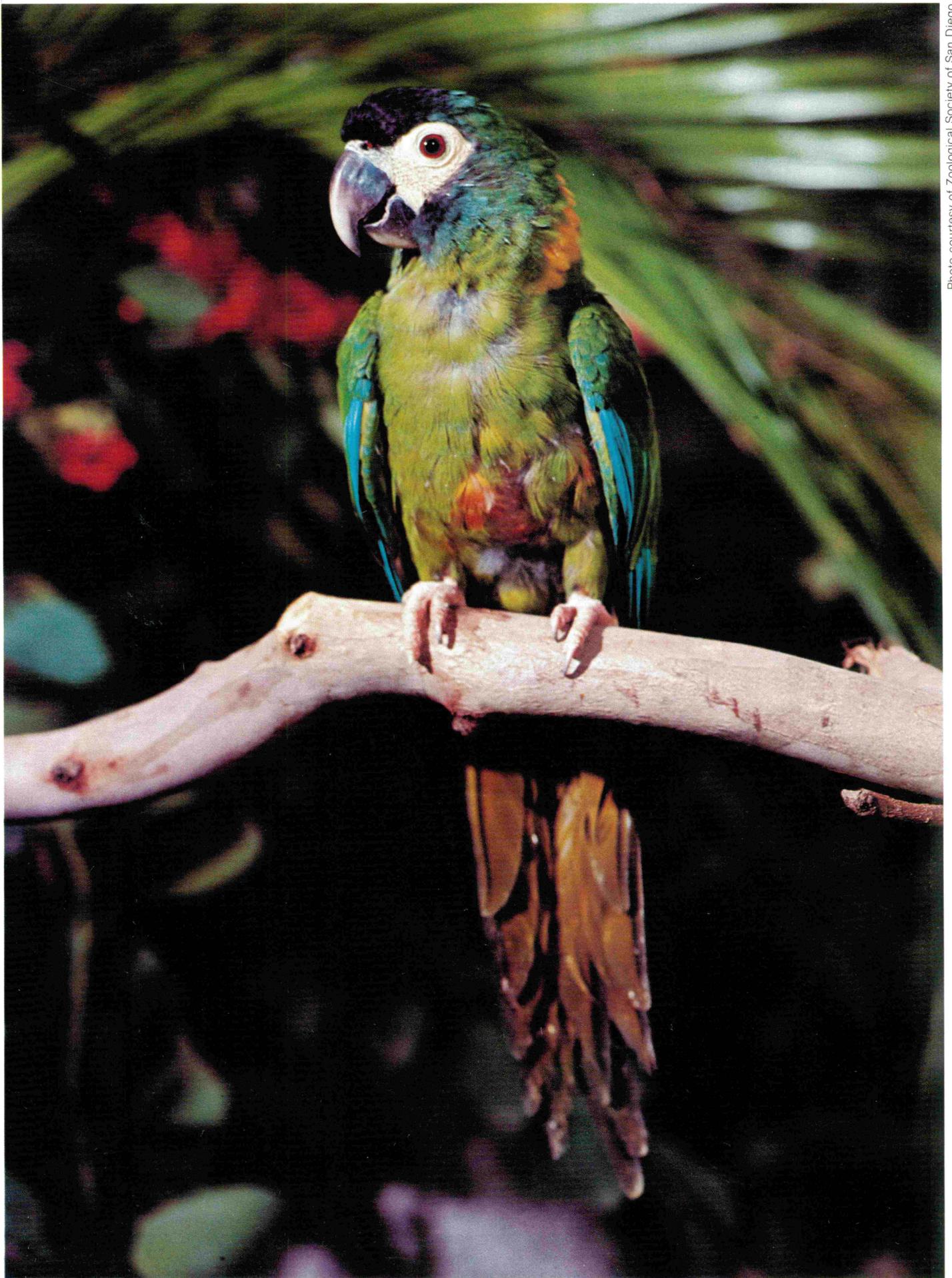
When the second clutch reached 7 weeks, I moved the older ones outside permanently as I needed the cage for the new babies. By this time they were also saying "Hello". They progressed much faster than the first babies as they were in a cage much sooner.

They were beginning to eat on their own by 13 weeks and were self-sufficient by 15 weeks. I sold one at 15 weeks and had the other until 20 weeks. It said, "Hello", "peek-a-boo", and "come here", and was beginning to go through it's first moult.

I kept the first two babies and plan to follow them right into maturity and breeding. They are now almost 7 months old, and their feet haven't turned pink yet, (I keep mentioning this as I am sure the pink feet denote some sign of their age) nor have they gone through a complete moult as they still have clipped wings.

The parents didn't go back to nest after the second clutch was removed.

This is now February 1981, and the parents are getting very vocal and are spending much time in the nest box. We completed the new flights but never moved the macaws from their temporary home. I don't feel I want to mess with THEIR success ●



*Yellow-collared macaw.*