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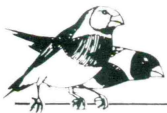
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Photos by Fred Harris



A blessed event inside the jenday's nestbox.



A jenday conure at eleven weeks of age.

breeding Jenday Conures

by
Fred and Robbie Harris
Sunland, California

Many people ask us how we breed Jenday conures and after our reply we receive many raised eye brows. It's not the food we feed or our automatic watering system that people react to, but the bird's housing. All our jendays are cage bred with a plain old ordinary cockatiel nest box attached to the outside with pine shavings inside. Some of our cages are 18"x 18"x 24" tall and a few are larger. All our metal cages have metal rabbit feeders attached to them with each one containing parakeet mix, safflower and sunflower seed. They also receive a daily bowl of sprouted seeds (sunflower, safflower, millet and canary), apple, oranges, peas, corn, beets, carrots, vitamins, cod liver oil and wheat germ oil all mixed together. Each cage has a crock pot with fresh water for drinking and also for bathing in. They also each have a mineral block and grit.

But now lets get down to the nitty, gritty pairing! We have heard of many ways of sexing jendays by their looks. Well, we're still looking! We've read that the skin around the eye in the hens is very white and the males is an off-white. When I tell my proven male that he's supposed to be a hen he looks at me as if I'm nuts! We have also read that the iris in the male is very dark and in the female it is lighter. We have found that this does not hold true for we have a proven male with a very light colored iris. Also all our hens have very dark eyes. We have been told by a pet dealer that females bite and males don't. We have had many a time when blood was flying (ours, not the birds') and believe me, both sexes bite. We have many pairs of jendays and I will say that they are all colored up beautifully. The females are just as colorful and bright as the males. Even their shape (body and head) is the same. The way we try to choose pairs is by their pelvic bones and then we have them surgically sexed to be completely sure. In the pelvic bone method the males two vent bones are sharp and very close



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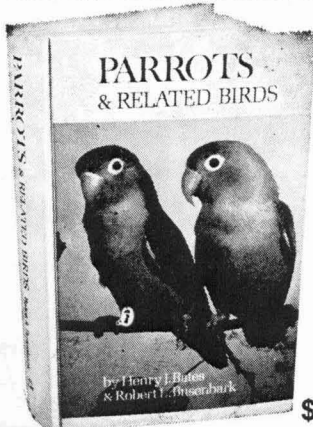
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together and the hens' are usually somewhat duller to the touch and are further apart. It does take some practice but soon you can tell that there is a difference. Of course there are quite a few birds where this method of sexing doesn't hold true, especially in very young birds. We have found that selecting them first by the pelvic bone (my husband being 90% right) has saved us many unpaired birds sitting around waiting for mates.

Now, about the question of how old a jenday has to be to go to nest. We have had jendays go to nest as early as nine months of age, but it is best to wait till they are between eighteen and twenty-four months old. We have found that at a very young age they will go to nest but sometimes not hatch their eggs or feed their babies. We have even had some young pairs break and eat their eggs. It seems like once they reach about two years old they stop all the monkey business and get down to work.

Another question that is usually asked is how long does it take for a pair of jendays to go to nest? An honest straight answer is; when the birds are good and ready to nest that's when they'll nest and not before! We have one pair that a lady owned for three years. They were set up in hopes that they would breed and produce young but they never did. She tired of feeding them and waiting so she sold them to us. Less than three weeks after we purchased them they were on an egg and soon after raised two babies. Some jendays, if compatible, will go to nest in a matter of weeks and some will wait over a year! I have another interesting story on one of our pairs of jendays. We had a proven male jenday that was someone's pet at one time. We went out and purchased a female who also had been a pet and was surgically sexed to find it was a hen. We put the hen in with the male and he instantly attacked her, so we removed her. (By the way, this was a new cage for the male also at that time.) We tried again and the same thing happened. We then removed the male, put the hen in the cage first, and then put him in with her. He again attacked her chasing and biting her. We were about ready to give up when we decided to try one more thing. We took the two jendays and put them in the cage right next to the one they were fighting in earlier. It was just like love at first sight. They started preening each other instantly and he started to feed her. Within five minutes the two were together in the nest box. Less than two weeks after that she was on her first egg! To this day we have never been able to figure out why he would attack her in the other cage. Both cages were set up the same, actually the

cages were identical (including the metal feeders, crock pot of water, and nest box). The only difference was that the cages were set up about six inches apart and sitting side by side.

Now let's get down to the subject of eggs and babies. Once we have a true pair set up we hope that they are compatible. If everything goes well a pair bond will be developed. By pair bond I mean cleaning and preening each other, male feeding the hen and, hopefully, copulating. Once the pair starts breeding and gets ready to raise a family, the hen starts spending quite a bit of time in the nest box during the day. Most jendays roost in the nest box at night whether they are a true pair or not. Soon, the vent on the hen will swell and within a couple of days the first egg is laid (hopefully in the nest box). Most jendays lay on the average a total of four eggs an egg being laid every other day. We have had clutches as small as one egg and as large as six.

When incubating the eggs, each hen is different. We have pairs that start to incubate as soon as the first egg arrives, some that wait till they have three eggs and even some pairs that wait to incubate till the last egg is laid. The average incubation period for jenday eggs is 26 days. With some pairs the hen does the total incubation with the male only entering the nest box at night to sleep. And, on the other hand, we have pairs where both male and female incubate. So just remember that what seems right for one pair may not be the right way for another.

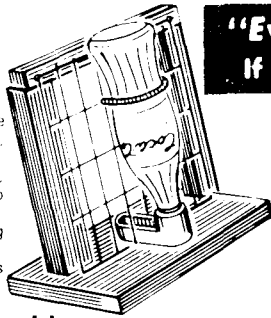
Once the babies hatch it is vitally important that the pair has plenty of fruits and vegetables and ours even receive wheat bread. I inspect the nest box twice a day (morning and evening) to make sure everything is fine. The jenday babies grow so fast that by the time they are six weeks old they are almost feathered, and between ten and twelve weeks old they are usually eating on their own. All our babies, however, are hand fed from the time they are two weeks old (sometimes even younger if there is a problem). The formula we use is very similar to Velma Harts' in Bates and Busenbark *Parrots and Related Birds*. Having the jendays hand fed can have many advantages. The jenday parents get a rest and the babies turn out so tame they make excellent pets that learn to talk and do tricks. And even the tamest jendays will breed and raise babies.

We feel that the Jenday conure with its bright sunny golden head, fire red chest and under wings, blue flight and tail feathers and deep bright green body is one of the most beautiful of the conure family. ●

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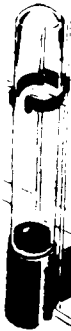
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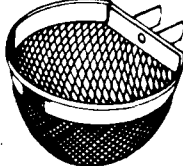
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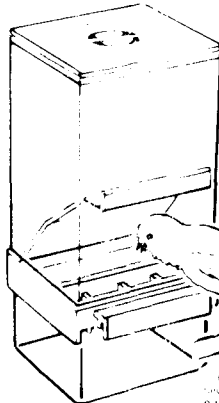
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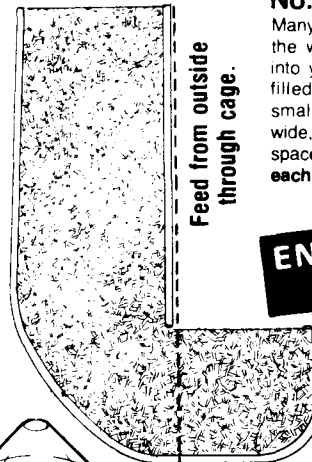


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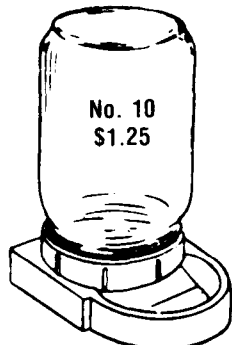
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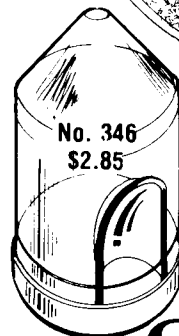


No. 10
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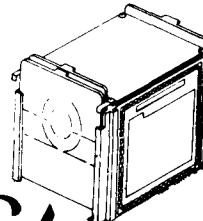
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