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# a spectacular psittacula— the lutino ringneck

(*Psittacula krameri manillensis*)

By Tom Marshall  
Great Falls, Virginia



Photo by R. Middaugh

Tom Marshall with a tame Indian ringnecked parakeet.

In my estimation, there is not a more striking bird than the lutino mutation of the Indian ringnecked parakeet. I have Willie Peratino, formerly of the National Zoo, to thank for introducing me to my first ringneck, a four-year-old lutino male, sold to me for what I later learned was only half of what it was worth. Lutinos are of a particularly vibrant shade of citron yellow, with pink-red eyes, flesh-colored feet, and a completely red bill. Only the male sports the pink neck ring with the white mandibular stripe. This stripe is black in the normal ringneck male and runs from under the chin and then follows the cheeks to the nape where it blends into the pink collar. These colors are enhanced by the elegant proportions of their bodies, their extremely long tails, and their handsomely contoured heads—the best conformation of any parrot I have seen.

I was, and still am, proud of my original lutino male, and I quickly purchased for him a normal green hen as his mate. She was raised by hand by Lee Phillips, AFA's First Vice-President, and was not yet two when I got her.

Ringnecks are labeled non-pair bond

birds because they do not maintain an affectionate nature toward one another throughout the year, and even when they are breeding, their love making is more ritualized and stilted than one observes in the typical South American parrot or in other pair-bond birds. Moreover, the female is dominant, and this fact has an inhibitory effect on the male, causing him to be less than confident in his amorous pursuits.

From my experience with the three pairs of ringnecks I have, relations improve with time when a spacious flight is provided or if the male reaches sexual maturity a year or so before his mate.

Such was the case with my first pair, a four-year-old lutino male and a barely two-year-old normal green hen. When she was put into his flight, they were compatible from the start. I was surprised to see the male snatch, albeit gingerly, a coveted peanut directly from the beak of the hen. Later he and she were about equal in boldness when it came to peanuts or to other choice tidbits in the possession of the other. Another surprising habit which this pair had and which tended, somewhat, to belie the

non-pair bond designation was their willingness to share a six-inch hanging perch taken from a standard parrot cage. They sat very close to each other and were seldom at the opposite ends of the flight. Although preening is not a usual aspect of their behavior, I have seen, on more than one occasion, the male tuck his head under the female in such a way as to allow her to preen briefly areas on the back of his neck.

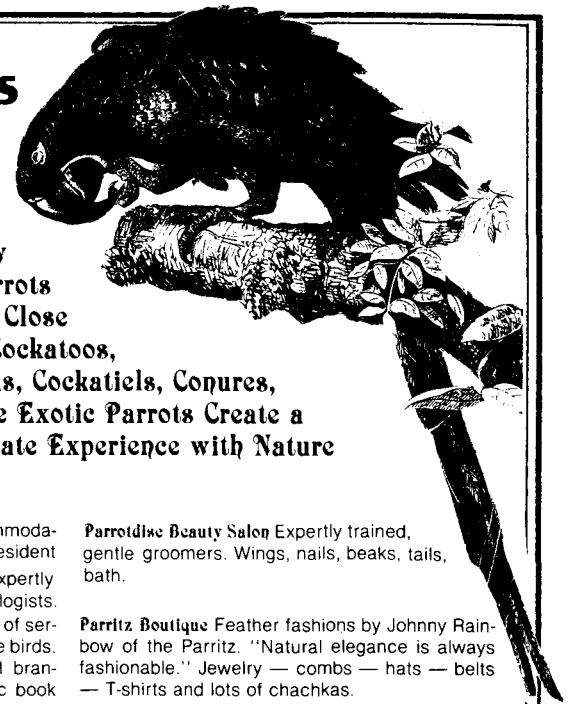
#### THEORETICAL EXPECTATIONS OF LUTINO-GREEN PAIRINGS

1. Male Lutino  
Female Green (normal)  
Produces:  
Males, Green split to Lutino 50%  
Females Lutino 50%
2. Male Green (normal)  
Female Lutino  
Produces:  
Male, Green split to Lutino 50%  
Female, Green (normal) 50%
3. Male Green, split to Lutino  
Female Green (normal)  
Produces:  
Male, Green (normal) 25%  
Male, Green split to Lutino 25%  
Female, Green (normal) 25%  
Female Lutino 25%
4. Male Green, split to Lutino  
Female Lutino  
Produces:  
Male Lutino 25%  
Male Green, split to Lutino 25%  
Female Lutino 25%  
Female Green 25%

My original pair first went to nest for me in October, 1981. They were housed in a suspended aviary, a la Ramon Noegel, ten feet in length, three feet high and three feet wide. Living outside of Washington, D.C. my birds are constantly kept in the basement. The flights are hanging from the ceiling rafters. The nest box, which hangs on the outside of the back end of the flight is 12" x 12" x 24" deep. The entrance hole is three inches in diameter with a wire ladder leading down into two to four inches of pine shavings. The hen throws out a good deal of the shavings prior to laying her eggs.

I was thrilled when on October 31st I got a belated birthday present of one small white egg and then another on November 2, and another on November 4 and a fourth egg on the 6th. The first egg hatched on November 26, and by November 28 I thought I counted three hatchlings. I was reluctant to inspect the

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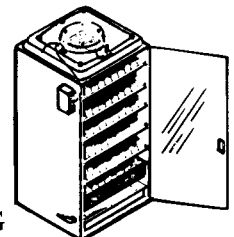
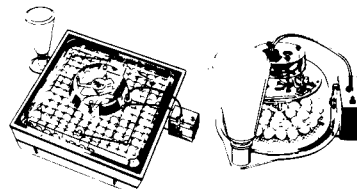
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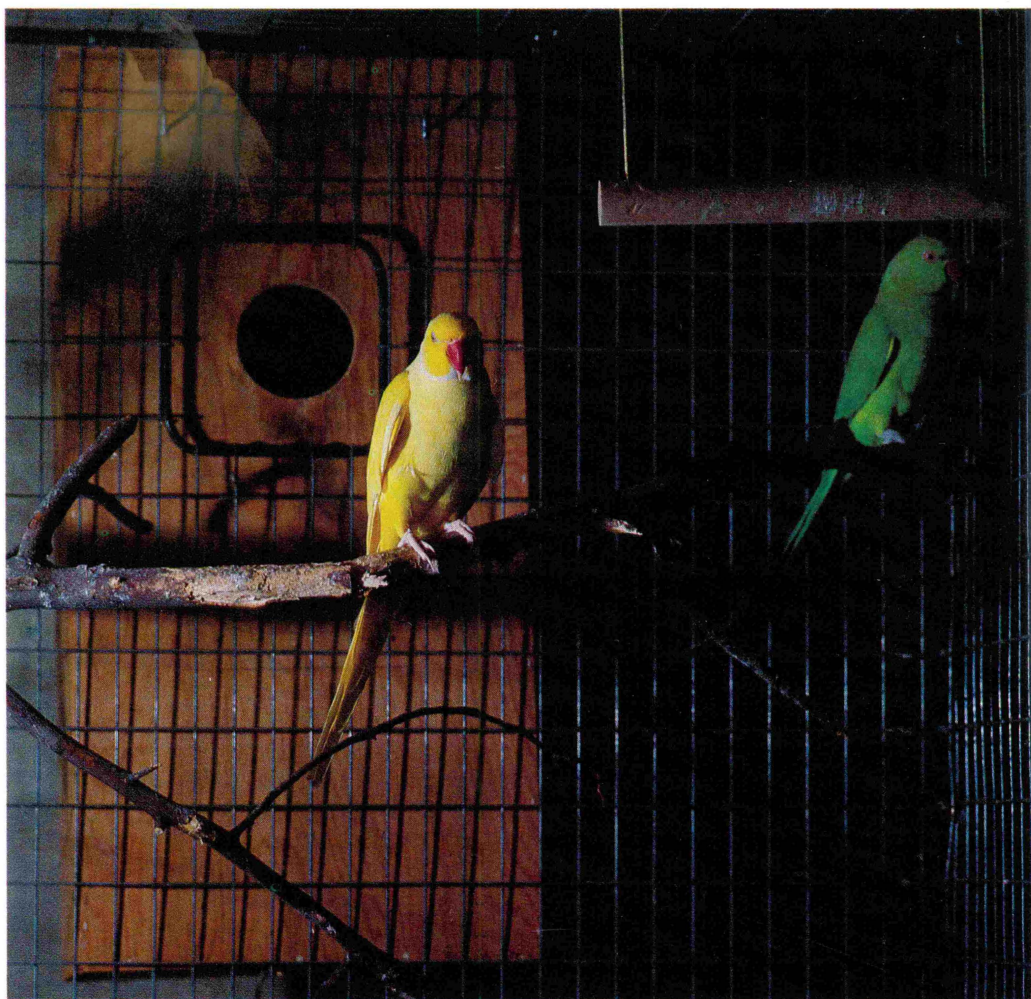
nest box for fear I would unsettle the hen and she would stop sitting. Soon after the initial inspection, however, I discovered that there were only two hatchlings and an infertile egg in the nest. The third egg or hatchling had disappeared. About a week later, I noticed dots on the backs of the babies, the appearance of secondary down follicles. One chick had lighter skin, and by using a flashlight I could see the pink eye through the membrane still covering the eyes. I was ecstatic; I now knew that I had one lutino and of course she had to be a hen, and the other chick was her brother, green split to lutino.

Their eyes were open by December 6 and the lutino hen made her debut on January 12, 1982. Her brother followed suit the next day. These chicks were big, and only their relatively short tails and clumsy movements revealed their juvenile status. The parents had proven very capable in raising their offspring. However, on January 20, the mother began to show irritation toward the young as the flight was a bit more chaotic with the four of them. I soon separated

her from the father and the babies, as he was taking on most of the nurturing since they had left the nest, and I was afraid that she would injure one of the chicks. The hen was placed in a cage right next to the flight and remained in an agitated state until I reunited the pair, which came as soon as the young started eating on their own and could be removed from the father's care.

On March 24, 1982, I was surprised to discover the first egg of the second clutch. Again, there were four eggs, but this time three hatched by April 18 and 19, and much to my delight, I soon discovered that I had two lutinos (females) and one split (male). By June 4 the first chick, again a lutino, fledged, and on June 5 her siblings were also out of the box.

Eureka! All five babies would be ready for sale by August 4, in time for the Eighth Annual AFA Convention in Washington, D.C. In retrospect, I now regret having sold all of my babies. Fortunately, Linda Rubin of Massachusetts bought one of my lutinos and she gives me periodic reports on its progress. She



*Lutino male and normal Indian ringnecked parakeets in the hanging breeding cage in Tom Marshall's birdroom.*



*Baby lutino ringneck at 50 days of age in the author's hands.*

aptly named the beautiful little hen, Lunar.

In looking back at the records I kept on both clutches, I can report the following statistics: The incubation period for both clutches was 25 days, whereas the fledgling periods were 50 and 47 days respectively.

My feeding procedures for ringnecks is rather simple. They receive sunflower seed and a mixture of mainly millet, safflower and a little hemp. They love peanuts, which I limit to two, per bird, per day and corn-on-the-cob, which I give them on a regular basis. They also will eat, and should have, frozen or canned carrots and peas, fresh spinach, wheat bread (usually soaked in 2% milk), and an occasional orange slice. I use Headstart in the water during the fall and winter months, the breeding season, and discontinue its use during the summer. I also will dust the fresh food with either Vionate or Super Preem, and that constitutes a very easy, but nutritious feeding program for my birds.

Ringnecks have a great deal going for them. They are easy to maintain and feed. They are beautiful birds, always in fine feather. They are sexually dimorphic, and their courting behavior is fascinating to watch. Once established, they breed regularly, and make excellent parents. Finally, they have a strong proclivity to produce color mutations, which adds the exciting dimension of genetics to the keeping of these special birds, and by the way, do you know which bird won "Best Parrot" at the recent National Cage Bird Show in Pittsburgh? It was a male lutino ringnecked parakeet, and I own his brother! ●

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**CLASSIFIED RATES** — \$5.00 minimum charge for 4 lines of type (average 7 words per line). Additional charge of 9¢ per word for ad running over 28 words. (28 words to include name, address and phone.) All copy to be **RECEIVED BY 10th** day of month preceding publication. One inch boxed ad - 58 word maximum — \$12.00.

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# CLASSIFIED ADS

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**STOLEN**—two Triton cockatoos. One is 18" long, female, plays with crest feathers with foot causing frayed crest feathers at base—says "I love you," "I'm a baby cockatoo," "Hello baby cockatoo,"—still brown-eyed, age 7 months old. The other one is very small—15" to 16" long, bright blue eye rings, red eyes, hisses upon approach, drops head between shoulders sticking crop out, has Furzer quarantine leg band. **STOLEN MAY 30th, 1983. \$200 reward.** Please call Scott, 24 hour phone, (206) 455-8080, Oregon.

HYACINTH MACAWS to zebra finches. Hoffman's Aviary, Rt. 1, Box 201, Kings Mountain, NC 28086. or call (704) 867-8629.

**HAND-FED, DOMESTIC-RAISED BABIES.** Amazon Parrots, African Greys, Lories, Eclectus, Cockatoos, Macaws, Pionus Parrots, Conures, and others. Some young, sexed birds from unrelated pairs available. Call or write for species availability and price list. Gail Worth, Aves International, 2808 Oregon Court—Unit L8, Torrance, CA 90503. (213) 541-1180.

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**BOOK—GREY-CHEEKED PARAKEET**, is now available. It contains information on diet and breeding. Send \$4 to Nancy Ruffalo, P.O. Box 2481, Capistrano Beach, CA 92624. (price includes postage)

**HAND RAISED BABIES:** Red sided Eclectus, Sun conures, Blue head Pionus, African greys, Citrons, Kakariris. O'Nita Buchwald, (713) 337-2781 or David Gresser, (713) 868-4596. Houston, TX area.

**BABY TRITON COCKATOOS.** Bare-eyed cockatoos bred at home and hand fed. Also Blue & gold macaws, African greys. Super tame pets. Charley Osterbrink, **NIGHT FLIGHT FARM**, Box 142, Nesbit, MS 38651. Phone (601) 368-7972.

**GOULDIANS \$100/pr., \$550/6 pr., Tri-colored Parrot Finches \$100/pr., Reds \$250/pr., Star's \$60/pr., \$325/6 pr., Shaftails \$65/pr., \$350/6 pr., Societies \$5, \$50/doz., Crested Zebras \$10, Zebras \$4.50, \$45/doz., Male Canaries \$40, \$100/3, \$180/6.** Wholesale inquiries welcome. **RUBINO'S BIRDS**, 10830 E. 98th Terr., Kansas City, MO 64134, (816) 765-0476.

**BOOK—BIRDS OF PREY** (Southern California), 8½" x 11" field guide. Covers 12 common frequently seen birds of prey—most birds throughout State. 20 color pictures, juvenile & adult. Written in simple terms for non-bird person. Send \$12 p.p. to: North County Rehabilitation Center for Birds of Prey, Rt. 5, Box 164, Cordrey, Dr., Escondido, CA 92025.

**SPRING-SUMMER HATCH.** Hand fed and hand tamed from hatching: Triton & Moluccan cockatoos, Hyacinth macaw, Bare-eyed and Rose breasted cockatoos. Also available—28's, Sun conures, and Blue rosellas. **FEATHER HOLLOW RANCH**, P.O. Box 6391, Woodland Hills, CA 91365. Phone (213) 340-5086.

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Scarlet macaw male t/t \$800, young red lored Amazon male \$250, t/t adult male \$325. **HANDFED'S** — Moustache \$150, Red masked conures \$150. **PARAKEETS** — Yellow Bourkes \$250, splits \$100, Scarlet chested \$100, Blue rosellas \$125, Lutino ringnecks \$350 unsexed, Moustache \$75. **TIARIS FINCH** — Cuban Olive and Jacarina. Also hen Red breasted black bird, Violet eared waxbill male. **COCKATIELS**, wholesale, close banded, reasonable. **D. Cavender** — **MOCTEZUMA BIRD GARDENS**, P.O. Box 1973, Escondido, CA 92025. Phone (619) 741-3421. **WANTED:** Timneh African grey hen. Trades considered, will ship.

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