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the Red-masked Conure

by Fred and Robbie Harris
Sunland, California

We had been successfully breeding many types of conures and decided that it was time to try our hand in raising some red-masked conures (*Aratinga erythrogaena*) also commonly referred to as cherry-head conures. We finally found a pair and without a second thought we immediately purchased them, and home we went, proud owners of a pair of beautiful "Red Masked" conures. Their origin was from southwestern Ecuador and northwestern Peru, but now their home would be in Southern California.

All our birds are fed an elaborate diet, which the pair of red masked conures were put on as soon as we got them home. The dry seed is fed cafeteria style which consists of sunflower, safflower and parakeet mix. This is also supplemented with apple, oranges, spinach, carrots, beets, corn, peas, and sprouted seed consisting of sunflower, safflower and millet. All our birds do quite well on this diet.

The red masked conures were set-up in a large cage with a 24 inch deep nest box. There they remained for three months, but they never seemed to settle down. They appeared to be very nervous in their deep nest box, for when I would peek into see how they were doing they would both start digging in the corner of the nest box and shavings would be flying everywhere. We decided to move their location and make some other changes. The pair was put into a 18" x 18" x 36" long cage with a plain old, standard, ordinary cockatiel nest box attached to the outside. Many breeders told us we were crazy because red-masked conures needed large deep nest boxes to breed. Three inches of pine shavings were added for nesting material to the cockatiel nest box.

In about a week the red-masked conures settled down and started to use their cockatiel nest box. This time when I stuck my nose in their box they would climb out and wait patiently on the perch. As soon as I closed the lid of their

nest box, back in they would go. The hen soon started rearranging the pine shavings in the nest box. One time I would find a pile of shavings on one side, the next time I checked the box I would find a pile on the other side, and sometimes even a pile kicked out of the nest box.

One day at dusk on my way through the aviaries, while doing my routine nest box inspection before dark, I found an egg, a little larger than a cockatiel egg, under the red-masked hen. The next day the pearly white egg was gone. After throwing a temper tantrum (me not the birds) I calmed down and realized that this is part of raising birds. The next day I discovered another egg, but it had already been broken. The third egg was soon laid, but this too looked ready for the frying pan!

Two weeks went by and I soon noticed that the hens vent appeared swollen. This time I inspected the nest box four times a day. Then towards evening at 5:00 p.m. I discovered the first egg from her new clutch unbroken. I immediately did what I considered a fair trade with her. I took her egg and gave her an infertile cockatiel egg, which she accepted. Her egg was placed in an incubator. A total of three eggs were laid and each one was switched with an infertile cockatiel egg. We candled the three eggs about a week after the last egg had been laid, and found that two were fertile. The two were placed under a reliable pair of brooding cockatiels. The two fertile eggs never hatched. Upon us breaking these eggs open for observation, it was apparent that the embryos died about two-thirds the way through incubation. Oh yes, going back to the red-masked hen with her three infertile eggs, she proceeded to attempt to make an omelet out of all three!

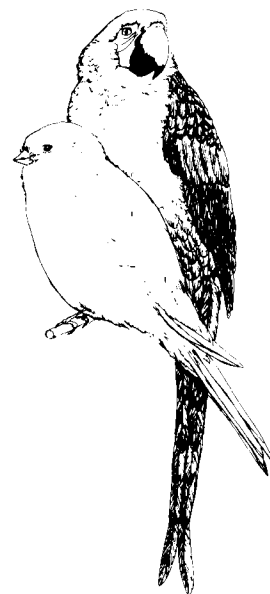
Soon the hen returned to nest again, making this her third clutch, laying a total of three eggs (persistent isn't she). We decided to leave these eggs with her and this time she incubated her eggs

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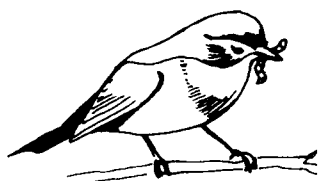
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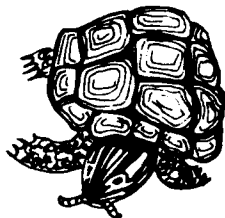
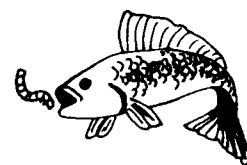
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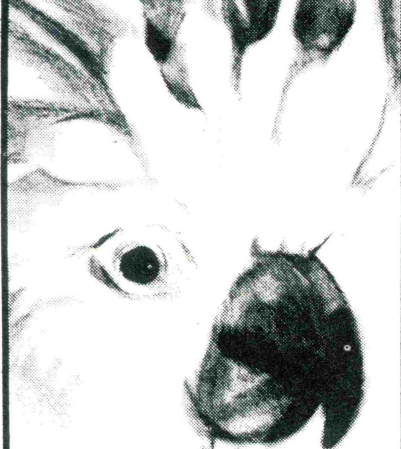


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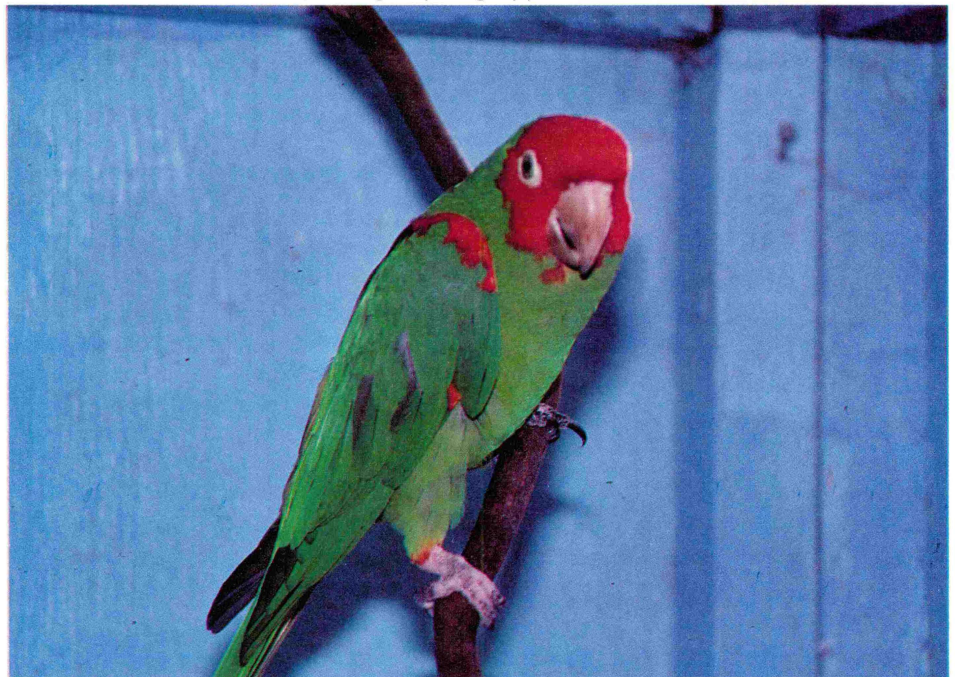
A red-masked conure at 12 weeks old. Note that the color is all green.

without breaking them. All three eggs reached hatching stage and then died. We decided that it was time to find out why the eggs were not hatching. I discussed the problem of unhatching eggs with our vet, and asked him to run a culture on the dead embryos inside the eggs. In a couple of days he informed us that all three eggs contained a bacteria which the pair more than likely were harboring. We were instructed to add an antibiotic to the drinking water for the pair of red-masked conures for seven days, to eliminate this problem.

Again she went to nest, now for the fourth time, laying three eggs. One egg developed all the way through and, not trusting the hen, I pulled the egg and placed it under a reliable pair of jendays with eggs at about the same stage of development. "Lo and behold," we soon hatched out our first red-masked conure chick! The chick was pulled for hand feeding at seven days old.

Getting back to the red-masked parents, they had already decided to have another family, now their fifth clutch. Again this clutch consisted of

An adult red-masked conure (Aratinga erythrogenys).



three eggs, two being fertile. We left the eggs with the pair of red-masked and after twenty-six days they hatched out a chick. Being the wonderful reliable parents, with their past clutches, they proceeded NOT to feed their chick. The poor dehydrated chick was brought in for hand feeding. In a day the chick became stronger and was placed under a pair of jendays with newly hatched chicks. Ten days later the red-masked chick was brought into the house for hand feeding. By having the jendays foster the chick for me I could sleep at night and keep my sanity instead of hand feeding the chick every two hours throughout the day and night, which I have done for other chicks too many times already. The second chick hatched and was fostered also.

At this writing the two red-masked conure chicks are doing well. Both chicks are all feathered with the oldest eating on its own. The overall color of the chicks is emerald green with some of the face feathers just above the cere and around the beak being a brownish-olive in color. There are some red feathers on the under wing coverts.

Oh yes, going back to the parents, they are now on their sixth clutch of eggs, again three. This time she proceeded to break one of her eggs, by accident (I'll give her the benefit of the doubt). The two eggs are fertile and so far everything is looking good. This pair is now very much at home with us. If you put your hand into their cage, for example to remove a corn cob they will both attack your hand and hang on until they feel it is time to let go! This goes the same if you stick your hand in the nest box with eggs. They are really happy here with us, we're sure! Hopefully we will raise many more red-masked conure chicks soon even if we are crazy using a cockatiel nest box that "red-masked won't nest in!!" ●

Obituaries

Officers and AFA workers were saddened by the loss of two important colleagues during the first quarter of 1983.

Rosemary Herman, Florida, southeastern regional coordinator, died January 8, 1983.

Gerald D. Perkins, California, chairman of state coordinators, died April 10, 1983. The friendship and loyal support of these two valuable leaders will be missed.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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HANDFED Green wing macaws, Moluccan and Umbrella cockatoos, others... S.A.S.E. for list. WANTED, Banksian hen. Bill Rodgers, P.O. Box 822, Gibsonton, FL 33534. Phone (813) 677-1137.

HAND-FED BABIES—Rose-breasted cockatoo—\$1750.00 ea., Triton cockatoo—\$2000.00 ea., Double yellow-headed Amazon—\$750.00 ea., Grand & Red-sided Eclectus, females—\$1500.00 ea., Black-capped lory—\$300.00 ea., Red lory—\$250.00 ea., Military macaw—\$900.00 ea., Scarlet macaw—\$1750.00 ea., African grey—\$800.00 ea., Jenday conure—\$275.00 ea., Sun conure—\$300.00 ea., others. Gail Worth, Aves International (213) 541-1180.

WHOLESALE EXOTIC BIRDS—Blue & gold macaws, Green wings, Scarlets, Yellow collars, Severes, Hyacinths, Militarys, Umbrella cockatoos, Moluccans, Lesser sulphur crested, Bare eyes, Goffin's, Yellow naped Amazons, Red heads, Double yellow heads, Red loreds, Blue fronts, Yellow crowns, Mealy's, Orange wings, White fronteds, Hispaniolans, African greys, Mynahs, Conures, English parakeets, Cockatiels, Toucans, Lorys. We also carry a full line of wrought iron cages. We ship nationwide. Quantity prices available. Live delivery guaranteed. Send S.A.S.E. to MICHAEL'S BIRD PARADISE, INC., P.O. Box 9046, Riviera Beach, FL 33404. Phone 12-6 p.m. (305) 842-1050.

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GRAND ECLECTUS male three months old, big, handfed and tame. Woodland Hills, California, call (213) 347-1107 evenings.

LOVEBIRDS: peachface lutinos \$150 each, split lutino males \$75. Scarlet chested parakeets \$200 pair. Call Beverly Degen, San Diego area (619) 582-2547, Kesslem Aviaries.

MAXIMILLIAN'S PARROT (Scaly-headed), gentle, tame, in beautiful feather, \$225. Blue-fronted Amazon, tame, starting to talk, 3 months old, personality plus, \$395. Moluccan cockatoo, beautiful male, 2 years old, tame and gentle, \$795. THE BEAKERY, (513) 523-1192. Southwest Ohio area.

AFRICAN GREY surplus breeding stock. Our birds are producing beyond our expectations and we must cut back. Handfed babies available. Will trade for Rose-breasted cockatoos. John Gibson, (503) 825-3230. Oregon.

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

LOW PRICES—HIGH QUALITY—Herds of Birds, babies to breeders. Macaws: Blue & gold \$399. Green wing \$649, Scarlet \$799. Hyacinths \$1999. Cockatoos: med. Sulphur \$699, Lesser \$399, Moluccan \$449, Umbrellas \$399, Goffin's \$159. Amazons: Yellow nape \$479, Double yellow \$349, Blue front \$259, Orange wing \$179. Hard to find birds. Quantity discounts. (213) 995-3270. Los Angeles area.

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BEAUTIFUL COCKATIEL MUTATIONS. Bred for quality and color in my outdoor aviary. Cinnamon-pearl-pieds, cinnamon-pieds, fallows, and others. Southern California area. Call Dave, (714) 827-3447.

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DOUBLE YELLOW-HEADED Amazon babies, handfed. Red-headed Amazon babies, handfed. A. Chandler, (213) 454-6971. Los Angeles area.

FOR SALE: pair of Leadbeater cockatoos \$8000. Pair of Fitzroyi cockatoos \$3500. Pair of African greys \$1000. Excellent breeding stock. Ann Nothhaft, 110 Jamaica Ave., Medford, New York 11763. Call (516) 289-1413.

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BIRDS OF ALL TYPES—Hoffman's Aviary, Rt. 1, Box 201, Kings Mountain, NC 28086. phone (704) 867-8629.

FOR SALE: Scarlet chested parakeets \$190 pair, unsexed \$75 each. Young Lady Gouldian finches \$90 pair. I have unrelated birds. Will ship in California. Joe Brungard, III, call (619) 264-8288. San Diego area.

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FOR SALE: adult female Timor cockatoo, for breeding only. Successful nester. Excellent health. Call Steve, (213) 397-4271. Los Angeles area.

DIAMOND SPARROWS, Masked grass finches. All birds outdoor aviary raised by own parents. Top quality. Call Gene Fetter, (415) 566-3262 evenings, or write, 4101 Lincoln Way, San Francisco, CA 94122.

WANTED: s/s male Thick-billed parrots for breeding program at ASDM, Tucson, AZ. Call Dr. Inge Poglajen, (602) 883-1380, ext 260.

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C. g. ophthalmica male cockatoo, previous breeder with Triton female. Desire female to buy, or place on loan basis. PARROT JUNGLE, Miami, FL. Contact J. Scherr, (305) 666-7834.

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