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RECENT ADVANCES IN THE STUDY OF RAPTOR DISEASES

Review by Rosemary Low
England

During the past few years, the enormous strides which have been made in breeding raptors have highlighted the lack of authoritative and up to date books on the management, breeding and diseases of these birds. Although entitled *Recent Advances in the Study of Raptor Diseases*, this volume does an enormous amount to redress this lack, for its scope is wider than the title suggests.

It comprises the proceedings of the first International Symposium on Diseases of Birds of Prey which was held in London in July 1980. The first international meeting ever devoted to this theme, it brought together most of the world's authorities and specialists in the field of Raptor disease. These included the British veterinarians John Cooper and Andrew Greenwood, who edited the 34 papers in this volume.

The papers are presented in three parts: pathology and microbiology, surgery and anaesthesia, and medicine and therapeutics. Among the subjects covered in the first part are the effects of chronic lead ingestion, causes of death in trained raptors, handrearing of vultures and abnormal and maladaptive behaviour (the result of imprinting).

Surgical treatment of bumblefoot is one of the papers in the second part which has a wider application than birds of prey, although it refers specifically to raptors. This is also true of the paper on

diagnostic avian laparoscopy. Not only can the laparoscope be used to determine sex, but to diagnose disease. It has been found to be a safe, rapid and effective method of direct observation of the abdominal contents and can be used to examine many organs.

Most serious aviculturists will find something of interest in this volume and to raptor breeders and falconers it will prove indispensable. It costs £11.50 (including postage) in Britain and Europe, £12 elsewhere, from Chiron Publications, P.O. Box 25, Keighley, West Yorkshire BD22 7BA.

AUSTRALIAN PARROTS IN BUSH AND AVIARY

by Ian Harman, England

David & Charles, Ltd., 1981; hardcover, 200 pp., \$32.00. Published in the U.S. by David & Charles, Inc., North Pomfret, Vermont 05053.

Review by Pat Sutherland
Jackson Heights, New York

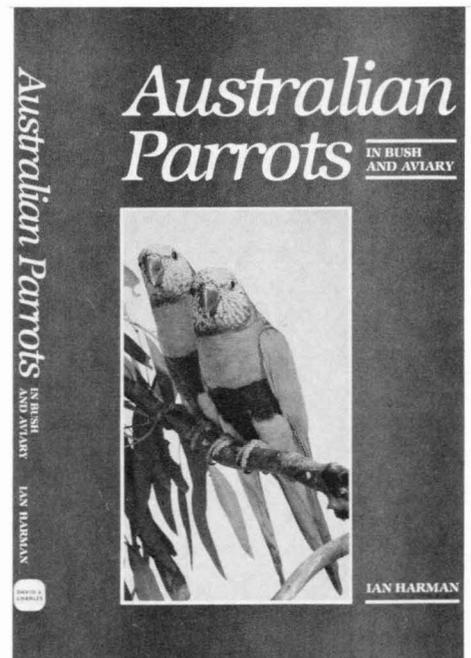
Were it not for the recent appearance of Forshaw's second (revised) edition of *Australian Parrots*, this just-released (December 1981) book by Ian Harman would have been the talk of the town. Regardless of the ominous competition, however, Harman's book is good reading and splendidly illustrated. Some of the photos are positively breath-taking — a Little Corella about to alight on a tree; a flock of Galahs feeding; a cock Crimson-winged Parrot displaying; a Galah, a

Princess Parrot and a Crimson Rosella in flight, among others. Practically every species of Australian parrot is illustrated in color (often both cock and hen) and the color reproduction is true to life. Lest I mislead you, this is *not* a picture book. Harman covers all species of Australian parrots and provides chapters on aviaries, breeding, feeding and ailments, making this a complete reference.

Harman, though born in England, spent his early years in Tasmania and now lives near Melbourne. Thus, this book is basically *by an Australian for Australians*. As a result, the reader must cope with a few minor inconveniences, like measurements in meters and centimeters, Australian common names and breeding seasons for the opposite hemisphere. On the plus side, who could better qualify to produce an avicultural book on Australian parrots than an Australian aviculturist?

The first part of this book is devoted to history and general management. The introduction describes the gradual discovery of Australian parrots by European explorers and is very interesting. Harman's subsequent chapters on aviaries, breeding, feeding and ailments are just adequate. In the chapter on breeding, Harman devotes some attention to the subject of fostering and this will interest most breeders, I'm sure.

The strength of this book lies in Harman's treatment of the species. In ten



chapters, he covers one or more genera of Australian parrots individually, e.g., Rosellas, *Psephotus* parrots, *Neophema* parrots, *Eclectus* and *Geoffroyus* parrots, etc. In each chapter, Harman provides some introductory material

about the group, then describes the species separately. For each species he furnishes information under the following subtitles: nomenclature, male, female, sexing, varieties and hybrids, distribution, field notes, aviary notes and breeding. At the risk of elaborating on the obvious, Harman supplies in these subsections: how and when the birds were named; other popular English names; descriptions of both males and females, sexual differences, juveniles; geographical races (subspecies) or variations; mutations; hybrids; habitats; natural diets; descriptions of flight and displays; and call notes. Under the categories aviary notes and breeding, he describes the birds' avicultural standings, temperaments, natural breeding seasons, courtship behaviors, broods per season, clutch sizes, incubation lengths and behaviors, rearing foods, fledging ages, notes on chicks, first breeding dates and so on — basically, what you need to know.

Although Harman covers a lot of territory in this book, he did not make a point on pair bonding, except to note that, unlike most other Australian parrots, the *Psephotus* engage in mutual preening. He also failed to mention the aggressive tendencies of female *Eclectus* parrots over their mates and did not make a special note of their alleged need of extra vitamin A, as did Rosemary Low. Perhaps the native greens and fruits of Australia provide this vitamin in sufficient quantities. Specialists in these birds may notice other, scattered shortcomings but, overall, these chapters are excellent.

This handsome book with an avicultural slant is a bargain at \$32. I recommend it.

PARROTS: THEIR CARE AND BREEDING

by Rosemary Low, England

Blandford Press; hardcover, 645 pp., \$55.00.

Review by Pat Sutherland
Jackson Heights, New York

This is a superb and comprehensive book by an author who needs no instruction to American aviculturists. To say that, "Rosemary Low has done it again," would be a touch misleading; this handsome book is unique. Not only are all the species of the order Psittaciformes (that have ever been available to aviculture) thoroughly examined, a great deal of very pointed information on the care and management of these birds is also furnished. In effect, this is two books in one and each is excellent in

its own right.

Anyone in possession of this book and the subject birds would probably first turn to the pages describing his own charges in the second part of the book. He would be rewarded with thorough and up-to-date coverage. Ms. Low devotes a lengthy chapter each to eighteen avicultural categories of hookbills, such as Australian parrakeets, hanging parrots, lovebirds, cockatoos, macaws and so on. In each chapter, Ms. Low provides information on feeding, accommodation and breeding peculiar to each group. She then describes in greater detail the members of the group, species by species, covering native ranges and habitats, physical appearance and avicultural status.



In describing the aviculture of each species, Ms. Low, in addition to sharing her own experiences in twenty years of breeding, has digested for you *volumes* (I mean, years and years) of first-hand breeding accounts from various avicultural or ornithological periodicals. Thus, you are served, in many cases, a smorgasbord of breeding data (e.g., age of parents, nesting preferences, size of clutch, incubation period, hatch results, rearing foods, fledging age, etc.) reported from different corners and various settings around the world.

One can hardly criticize this part of the book. Regarding lovebirds, however, Ms. Low could not have foreseen the profusion of books published about them during 1979 (e.g., books written by Jo Hall, P.D. Biggs, Jr. and David Alderton, among others) besides Jim Hayward's book to which she refers. Lovebird specialists, particularly

those who colony breed, will find these other books more than adequate and could skip this one. Ms. Low flatly does not recommend colony breeding, so she does not describe the methods at all. Regarding the breeding of budgerigars, Ms. Low refers the reader to the vast literature already available.

Taking Ms. Low's species description alone—although excellent, I would not advise anyone to pack away his trusty Bates and Busenbark or Forshaw books. And for readability, I direct everyone to Arthur Freud's charming book. (Freud's is the *only* book in which descriptions of species can honestly be called absorbing, even habit-forming. *No one* can breathe life into words about parrots like Arthur Freud.) However, when you combine Part II of Ms. Low's book with the general information provided at the beginning of the book, this is a real winner. In fact, it would be a pity for the reader to ignore it. I consider it to be the better half. (Part I is actually only one-fifth of the total book.)

In this section, spanning ten chapters, Ms. Low shares her practical experience, up-to-date knowledge and deep feelings of responsibility for birds with fellow parrot-lovers—in concise language anyone can understand. Although many of the topics, like management, aviaries and feeding, have been covered in countless books, Ms. Low provides a fresh and uniquely parrot-oriented look at these subjects, often including truly useful suggestions. In addition, Ms. Low discusses in separate chapters: choice of species, the pair bond, breeding, hand-rearing, mutations, illnesses and parrots as pets. Everything in these chapters reflects the latest in scientific knowledge and simply drips with Ms. Low's accumulated wisdom. Attention paid to this part of the book, I think, could spell the difference between "getting your birds to breed" and "making them want to breed."

In spite of Ms. Low's careful attention to detail, one cannot read this book without being struck by the myriad of unique problems, special situations, etc., which confront the breeder but which cannot be handled in a book. To her credit, Ms. Low immediately points out that one of the basic necessities of a successful breeder is *imagination*. Covering even this point, she has explored the underside of every possible stone and has produced a really outstanding reference. I recommend it highly. ●

NOTE: All Blandford books are made available to individuals and book sellers in the United States only through Sterling Publishing, 2 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10016.