

Blue Throated Conures

(*Pyrrhura cruentata*)

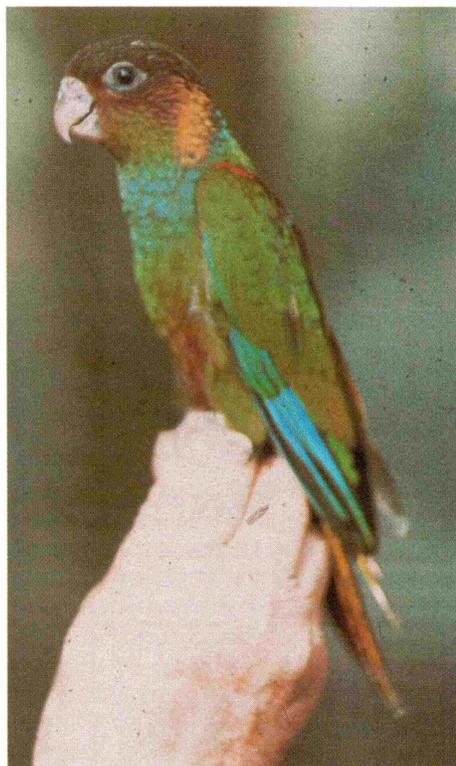
by
Mrs. J.L. Spenkelink-van Schaik
Netherlands

With a length of about 30 cm (11.8 inches), the blue-throated conure is one of the largest species in the genus *Pyrrhura*. Although it comes from Brazil in dense tropical forest it has proven to be a very hardy bird here in Europe. During the severe winter of '78/79 in the Netherlands I kept my blue-throated conures in an unheated outdoor aviary with no problems in temperatures as low as -22 degrees C.

To describe exactly the colors of these beautiful birds is really impossible as there are no two birds alike in color, pattern and size. All that this species has in common is the green back and wings and the dark blue primaries which have black quills. Some birds, for instance, have red abdomens while others have green abdomens with just a faint wash of red. The color patches on the birds vary in size and the variance is not related to sex. The only constant visual difference in adult birds is that the male's iris seems to be brighter than the hen's.

Little is known about *cruentata* in the wild except that its habitat is being rapidly deforested and is open to settlement and development. This species is surely in danger of extinction and should be protected in what may be left of its habitat.

At present in Europe I know of only 12 wild-caught pairs of *P. cruentata*. My oldest pair first bred in 1977 and hatched five young. In 1979 I put a male and a female from this captive clutch



My first raised cruentata.



Four young birds the last week in the nest.

with wild-caught mates. The young captive-bred cock fed and mated with the wild-caught hen but he couldn't drive her into the nest log. The captive-bred hen (two years old) laid eggs but they were not fertile. In 1980 she hatched a healthy clutch of babies and brought them safely out to the perch.

I think that the blue-throated conure is adult at two years of age but they won't breed until three years. Many breeders of conures think that *P. cruentata* needs to be four years old to breed.

Some breeders also think that hand reared birds make earlier and better breeders but I disagree. In 1979 I acquired a hand fed *cruentata* which never even begged its mate for food. It still hasn't bred. My own experience with many different species is that young birds brought to the perch by their own parents provide earlier and better breeding results.

The basic food for my blue-throated conures consists of paddy rice, oats, wheat, barley, hemp, linseed, buckwheat, canary seed, pine nuts, safflower, sunflower seed and leaves from various fruit trees. In the breeding season I feed sprouted seed, eggfood with carrots, and calcium.

A normal clutch consists of seven or eight eggs of which five or six are usually fertile. The eggs are not all the same size or shape. Some are round while others are more oval. The eggs seem quite large (about the same size as penant rosella eggs) to come from a rather small bird. The older pair of blue-throated conures go to nest about the beginning of April but don't lay eggs until May. Incubation time is 24 days or 26 days in colder weather.

The parents chew the inside of the nest log and must have one with thick walls (at least 8 cm) or they will chew through. They like a log that is about 60 to 80 cm high and about 20 cm wide (24-32X8 inches).

The young birds open their eyes at 16 days at which time I ring them. At the age of two months all the babies will leave the nest within a five day period although they may be considerably different in size. For two week after fledging the young will return to the nest log to sleep. Therefore it would be best to hang a second nest log in the aviary for the babies so the adult male will not chase them.

It would be a great pity and considerable loss if the endangered birds in nature were allowed to become extinct. I invite all bird breeders to set aside at least one aviary to devote to an endangered species. ●



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