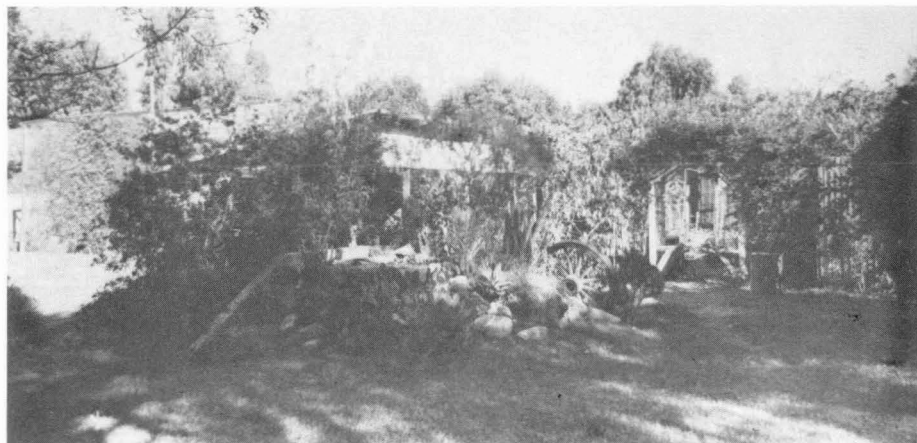


# A.F.A. Visits A Member's Aviaries

by Jerry Jennings



Tony Lopez



The Lopez aviaries have been built for birds, not for public observance. The careful use of plantings provides a privacy screen for the birds, as well as various fruits that ripen throughout the year.

Certainly a familiar face to aviculture, Tony Lopez has been interested in birds for more than fifty years.

Tony was born in Arizona and raised on a homestead north of Phoenix in the days when Arizona was still a territory. He attended grammar school in a one room schoolhouse which conducted classes for the first through eighth grades. His High School days were spent at the school in Peoria, Arizona.

Birds first attracted Tony's curiosity when he was a young boy. Living in the desert he frequently encountered coveys of quail and flocks of White-winged Doves. He quickly learned to call a covey to him, while standing close to a Palo Verde or Mesquite Tree with a few handfuls of grain. The birds grew to trust Tony, offering him one of his greatest joys.

During the hunting season Tony felt very frustrated at seeing hunters regularly bag several hundred birds a day (before bag limits were legally imposed). He took it upon himself to seek out wounded birds overlooked by the hunters, carry them home, and nurse them back to health. Those experiences imbued him with the desire to become a doctor, which unfortunately never came to pass.

At the ambitious age of ten, Tony came face to face with his first "exotic" bird — a canary in a Peoria store. He just couldn't believe his eyes that a bird could look like "gold".

With a couple of canaries in hand and his first cage, built from an old apple crate and some screen, Tony was on the road to becoming in aviculturist. Several days later an itinerant shunk terminated this venture.

Tony's interest, somewhat dampened, continued with the quail and doves near his home. In High School he began raising a few Homing Pigeons and before long he was back in the canary fancy.

During his late teens the family left Arizona for California. Settling in the San Fernando Valley, Tony again started up his bird hobby — this time with Budgies. Soon thereafter, as luck would have it, Psittacosis hit the Budgie industry. Tony went back to wild birds.

During the next couple years Tony raised a few Crows, which became quite tame. Though they were left to roam free, one learned to talk and followed him everywhere.

It was not long before Tony's interest shifted to the "two-legged chick". In 1940 one of these, Eva, became his wife. The Lopezes immediately purchased a home in the City of San Fernando, where they have lived since. They have a daughter, who lives in Fresno with her family.

In 1941 the country was calling its men to arms. Tony joined the infantry and served with a training battalion. In 1943 he received a medical discharge for progressive Myopia. At the time, doctors gave him only a few months of sight. Fortunately for Tony, their prognosis proved to be in error.

The Lopezes raised a few chickens, pheasants, and Chukars during the 40's. In 1944 they bought a farm in Sylmar and went into commercial flower growing. One morning while at work, he caught an escaped Budgie sitting in a bush. The bird stimulated his wife's interest and they were back into aviculture.

Mr. Francis Rudkin inspired Tony and Eva to breed Australian hookbills. The Rudkins and Lopezes were friends and Mr. Rudkin was Tony's mentor.

Today Tony raises an interesting variety of birds including Australian King Parrakeets, Princess of Wales Parrakeets, Many-colored Parrakeets, Rock Peplars, Red-rumps, Scarlet-chested, Turquoise, Bourke, Elegant, and Blue-

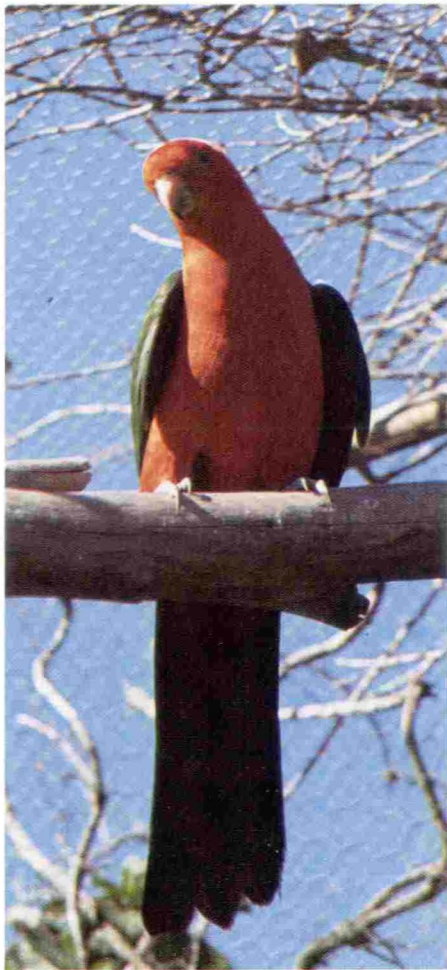


winged Grassparakeets, Stanley, Pennant and Mealy Rosellas. He also has African Grey Parrots, Luzon Bleeding Heart Doves, Blue Scale Quail, Zebra Finches, Cardinals, and a fine flock of Budgies.

Tony has a male Green-wing King Parrakeet and a female Timor Crimson-winged Parrakeet for which he would like to find mates. The Green-winged King is a gorgeous bird and very rare in captivity.

Tony has received first breeding awards for the Peter's Twinspot in 1963 and for the Mexican Solitaire in 1966. His wife Eva, however, must be given some of the credit.

At one time the Lopez collection included a number of species of Australian Grassfinches with the Crimson or



*Australian King Parrakeet*

Blood Finch taking front row. In fact they produced over twenty young per year from just two pair. Today Blood Finches are in all probability non-existent in American aviculture.

Softbills also found a place in the Lopez aviaries at one time. Species represented included eight varieties of Tanagers, Shama Thrushes, and Clarinos.

Tony has been very concerned with



*Princess of Wales Parrakeets*

the direction some species have taken. The Elegant Parrakeet, for example, has deteriorated in appearance in the domestic form. Most avicultural specimens are slightly smaller than their wild counterparts and have lost some of the brilliance of their coloring. Wild specimens have a deep, crisp blue on the wings and forehead, yellow on the stomach, and a radiant orange spot on the vent. Captive specimens almost always lack the orange spot, while the blues and yellows of the wings, forehead, and breast are somewhat washed out. These differences are easily verified by comparing skins of wild caught specimens with those many generations removed from the wild.

Tony believes the Elegant's decline is due to inbreeding. He has been working to reverse the trend by crossing the Elegant with the Blue-wing, which is nearly identical to the wild Elegant, though with more extensive blue areas on the wing and deeper, more well defined colors.

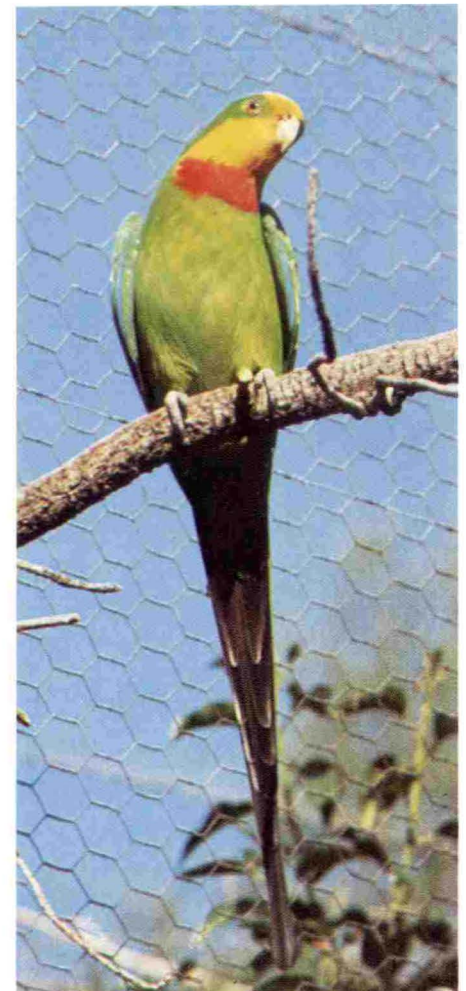
The Lopez aviaries have been built for the birds — not for their human observers. Needless to say, they are neat and clean and very well planted in most cases making it difficult to spot the occupants without actually getting inside with them. The flights vary in size up to a length of fifty feet and a height of twelve feet. Since there are only a few birds per flight, plants do not suffer visibly from the effects of chewing. Overcrowding is strictly taboo.

Tony is a great believer in sunshine and exercise along with a proper diet as the key elements of breeding success. He feeds fresh greens daily, including swiss chard and spinach, along with apples, oranges, corn, Pomegranates, and Pyracantha berries. All of these items save

applies and oranges Tony grows himself.

A special nestling food is fed to breeding pairs of birds beginning in December so that the birds will be in breeding condition by the first of February. At that time Tony hangs up the nest boxes. As soon as the second egg is laid, nestling

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*Barraband Parrakeet*





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continued from page 17

food is withheld temporarily until the chicks have hatched and are about three days old. The idea is to prevent overstimulation of the parents.

Only enough nestling food is given each pair that can be consumed in about thirty minutes. The food is prepared by combining equal parts of pound cake, which has been oven dried, then rolled with a rolling pin, and hard boiled egg, which has been cooked a minimum of twenty five minutes. To this mixture is added one teaspoon of Avitron Vitamins and enough Linatone to make the mix crumbly without becoming oily. It should be noted that the ratio of mixture to vitamins is one egg: equal amount pound cake: one teaspoon vitamins.

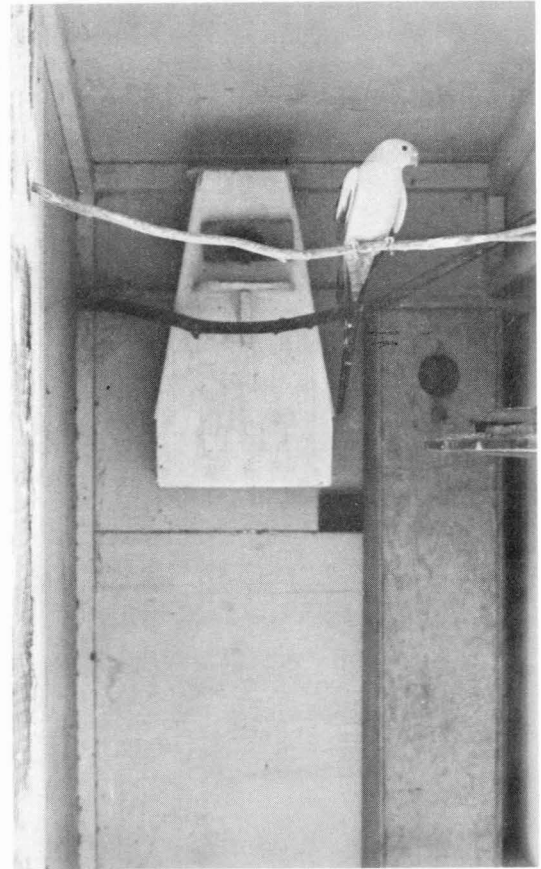
The combination of adequate housing, which contributes to the psychological well-being of the birds, and the excellent diet the birds receive have certainly rewarded the Lopezes' efforts. They are well known for the quality birds they produce.

A very successful bird breeder is usually in the forefront of organized avicultural activities, and Tony certainly is that. He has served two years as President of the Avicultural Society of America, as well as on that group's Board of Directors for a number of years. He is now an honorary life member of the society — a rare distinction.

He has also been active in the Bird Association of California for a number of years. He has been recognized as a foreign bird judge and has judged numerous shows over the years. Tony has also been actively engaged on the legislative front for many years, has made significant contributions to the preservation of the hobby, and is always ready to lend his support and encouragement to others.

His goal is to each year breed a species he has not bred in the past. He believes it is the responsibility of aviculturists to try to breed birds that are becoming extinct so that future generations may enjoy them. A bird's value is not in the marketplace, but in its beauty in the eye of the beholder.

The Lopez family, in their contributions to aviculture, have set a good example for other. We in A.F.A. are sure their contributions will continue for years to come.



Aviary with Zebra Finches and  
Diamond Doves

