



Pair of Stanley Rosellas

# Stanley Rosellas

by Ray Brode

The Stanley Rosella (*Platycerus icterotis*) is also known as the Western Rosella, Yellow Cheeked Parrot, and Earl of Derby Parakeet. The Stanley Rosella, as it is most often referred to, is an excellent aviary bird, for many reasons. This article will tell you of my experience in the maintaining and breeding of them.

First let me describe the male bird. The head, breast and abdomen are brilliant scarlet. The cheek patches are yellow and the wing margins are deep blue. The top side of the tail is dark green and the underside is a pleasant light sky blue, with whitish tips. The back is dominated by green and the scalloped mantle feathers are black edged in green. This describes the bird that inhabits the coastal areas.

The race that inhabits the interior of Australia have the black edged with red. Most of the Stanleys I have seen in aviaries in Southern California are the black edged with green. However the other type is seen also. I, myself, have the two races and I notice that most of the Stanleys I have seen coming into quarantine stations are from the coastal regions of Australia.

The female as a rule is duller in color especially on the breast and abdominal areas, and is laced with green feathers particularly at the parting of the chest and abdominal areas. The head is laced with green feathers and the yellow cheek patch is narrower and does not extend to the eye, as in the male. Most females have a smaller head, but some are almost as

brightly colored as the male. I, now, have a female, in my collection, as bright as any of the males and the only distinguishable thing about her is her small head and small green area separating between breast and abdomen.

Young birds out of the nest are predominantly green with some reddish feathers on the forehead and no yellow cheek patch, or perhaps a very few light yellow cheek feathers. The red feathers start coming in after a few months and with close observation and a little experience you can come close to sexing the birds. A big change is noticed after the first molt which varies in time because of climatic conditions. My birds have gone to molt in just about 6 months. It will last for about two months during which time a lot of feathers drop off and a big color change is noticed. However let me say that it really takes 2 years for the birds to obtain their brightest coloring.

The Stanley is eleven inches in length and does well in an aviary not less than 12 feet long and as high as you can provide, because they are very active and excellent flyers. They never cease to amaze me with their flying skill. Many times they come flying to the front of the aviary, at high speed, do a back loop over the front perch, roll over and land on the back perch, all in a flash, all of which makes it a very hard bird to catch with a net.

The Stanley reminds me so much of

a cockatiel because of its fine disposition, and it doesn't take long for it to develop a warm relationship with its owner. All of my Stanleys fly to the front of the aviaries and hang on the wire or the small shelf I have in front for placing tid bits. I always make it a point to whistle and give a few pyracantha berries or spinach leaf or bread or whatever I have. You would be surprised how fast they tame down. Also the young soon get the idea and settle down much faster.

I only keep one pair of birds in a flight except for the young which I keep in one large flight. When pairing up birds none are related. I have been able to trade young for young and introduce new blood into my flock. The Stanley is the smallest of the Rosellas, and is not a pugnacious bird like some of the other Rosellas such as the Mealy and Golden Mantle which I have previously owned.

## BREEDING THE STANLEY ROSELLA

I got my first pair in January of 1975 from a person who had one pair but no luck in raising babies. It was not a good looking pair but I thought improper diet was the problem. So I traded some Gouldian Finches for the pair. I put them in a 16 ft long, 8 ft high, 4 ft wide aviary, open with a shelter at the rear. I believed this to be adequate.

I was told to use a long deep nesting

box or a grandfather type so I put in a box 10 x 10 inches, 24 inches in height, with a hole near the top, plus wire inside to climb to the hole. I also decided to put in a cockatiel box.

After a month and a half, the male started looking in and then going into the box. Also about this time he started feeding the female. Then she would go in the cockatiel box. (NOTE: They never went near the longer nest box.) I would hear her scratching around in there and she would throw out a lot of the wood shavings I had in the box. (Now I just put in a handful which seems to be to their liking.) In about a week she started laying and after three eggs she disappeared into the box. About once a week I would take the box down to check, which she did not appreciate, but tolerated. There were five eggs and the second week they appeared to be slightly darker, which made me believe they were fertile. She had them arranged in a bunch in the concave area of the cockatiel box. The behavior of the birds at this time seems to be the same as for others, when nesting. The male spends a lot of time on the ledge just sitting there looking in the hole often. He feeds the female whenever she wishes to be fed and once in a while he will go into the box for a short period.

The hen will leave the box in the early morning and late afternoon to relieve herself and to have a fast meal at the seed dish. I also noticed that she would come out about midday if it was hot and take a brisk bath. Whenever she left the nest box, the male would get very excited and follow her every where she went making a loud racket, until she flew back in the box. Then he would immediately calm down and stay near the box. If the male Stanley in the next pen flew on the dividing wire screen, he would get all excited and fly over to where he was and try to get at him until he flew off.

I always know when the young start hatching out because the males all act alike. They get very excited, fly back and forth, across the pen, singing very loud. They fly to the ledge, stick their head in and out of the hole several times repeating this action for long periods. After the chicks open their eyes the hen will leave the nest for a little longer time and the male hops into the box to feed the chicks, which he greatly enjoys.

When I would check them they were always well fed. The only extra food I give them when the chicks hatch and when the male feeds the hen, is sprouted wheat bread moistened and sprinkled with bone meal, or brewers yeast, and also a vitamin powder. I would just put one of those additives on the bread every

other day. The chicks develop very fast and about 35 days after hatching they are all out of the box in good flying condition and not at all spooky or nervous. I try to spend as much time as possible around the pen to get them used to me. When I go into the pen the babies take very little notice of me. Since they will follow the parents to the floor of the pen I scatter seed on the floor and put a seed dish on the floor. When they see the parents eating, they start picking and in a short while they are on their own. They learn fast. The incubation period is about 22 days and the young start leaving the nest about 30 days after hatching. The clutches have been either 4 or 5 young. In a nest of 5 birds I got 4 males, 1 female — a nest of 4 had 2 males and 2 females. However, in the overall picture the sex of the birds balances out close to even.

#### FEEDING HABITS OF THE STANLEY

I will tell you what I feed to the birds to keep them in what I believe is good condition. Primarily a good mix of at least 40% canary, medium sunflower seed, safflower, as a treat every once in a while a good grade finch mix, which contains 4 different type millet seeds, lettuce, flax, rape, niger. They get a lot of natural foods such as apple, orange, celery, grated carrot, pyracantha berries, which they really enjoy, bottlebrush flowers and the buds after the bloom is over, cotton easter berries, also small orange berries from pittosporum bush, purple berries from the eugenia hedge. I feed these natural foods and berries from the yard because I see the wild birds eat them. They like an occasional treat of english walnuts, meal worms, New Zealand spinach or chard, seeding grass I find in the yard. They also love small pieces of raw hamburger two times a week. They go wild over it and almost take it out of my hand through the wire. Be sure to wash seedling grasses well. I have been very satisfied with this diet and apparently the birds enjoy it.

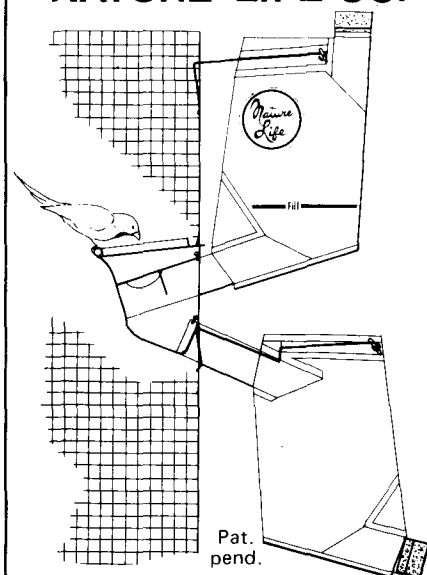
One other thing I must mention are the buds from the long leafed eucalyptus tree. Also I burn some of the wood from the tree and give them the charcoal. This is almost a must. Also give them a good mineral grit.

In conclusion let me say that if you love and enjoy your birds as I do, put them in a nice size aviary so they can get exercise, sunlight, good diet, loving care, and they will certainly multiply rapidly as I have found out.

Also remember the Rosella species is definitely NOT a cage bird.

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