

Baby Sun Conures at Busch Gardens, Tampa, Florida



Gobbling's not just for turkeys — These baby sun conures, hatched in February at Tampa's Busch Gardens, The Dark Continent, can make lunch disappear in nothing flat. The little chow-bounds, fed here by nursery attendant Debbie Atcherley, will be fully feathered within two months.

The sun conure is a well-named bird — bright and fiery with yellow and orange plumage, tinged with lime green on wings and undertail. For hatchlings, however, the picture is somewhat less brilliant.

The four little sun conures hatched in February at Tampa's Busch Gardens, The Dark Continent, are still pink and fleshy, with spiky pin-feathers just beginning to sprout at odd angles. The chicks will transform within about eight weeks, almost miraculously, into fully-feathered beauties.

Parrot-like sun conures range in the wild throughout the Guianas, southeast Venezuela and northeast Brazil, where they flock in open forests or palm groves. With their loud, raucous squawks and eye-catching coloration, they are hard to miss even in tree cover.

Busch Gardens' four hatchlings are currently being hand-raised in the animal nursery, where park guests can marvel at their daily feather progress. ●

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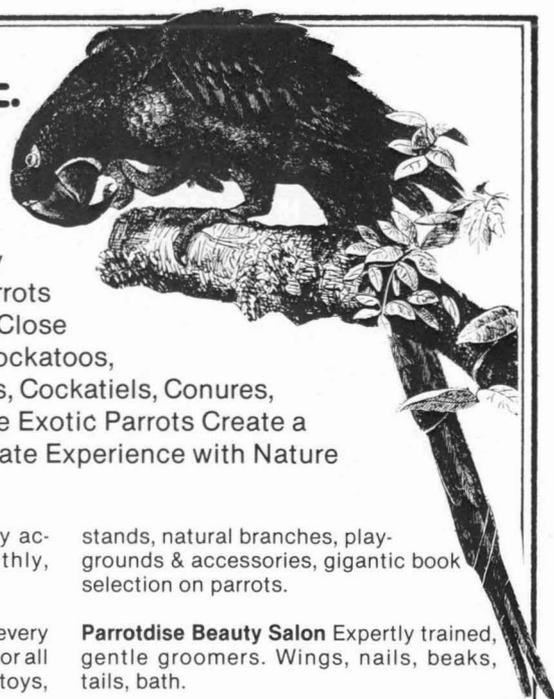
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