



Red-throated conures at their nest hole. This species was bred for the first time in the United States by Ramon Noegel and Greg Moss in 1982.

First U.S. Captive Breeding of the Red Throated Conure (Green Conure)

(*Aratinga holochlora rubritorquis*)

by Ramon Noegel
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Prior to 1982, the red throated conure was seldom imported into the U.S. Forshaw lists this rare conure as being found in the highlands of eastern Guatemala, El Salvador, and northern Nicaragua. In 1979, when Greg Moss and I spent three months in Central America, we discovered this subspecies nesting in extinct volcanos in southern Honduras. It was our responsibility to inspect various holding stations for *psittacines* destined for the U.S. We, of course, visited other stations containing parrots for Japan, Germany, Italy and the U.K. In all these collections, *rubritorquis* was rare usually represented by a single specimen. Our area of operation covered Nicaragua,

Honduras, and Guatemala.

Rubritorquis is a very distinct conure and I wonder if it should, in fact, be classified as a subspecies. When mature, it is smaller than the nominate Green conure (*A.b. holochlora*), has a darker periophthalmic ring and the bright red throat and foreneck which often extends in a circle to the hind-neck makes this conure easily distinguished from the nominate species. In behavior it is typical of the small green conures, being hyperactive and noisy.

Recently, a large number of these birds have been imported but in previous years they were only imported in ten to twenty lots. Seemingly few importers knew of them. However,

when we began inquiring for specimens two importers began seeking them in numbers. They have not sold large numbers of them because I think most aviculturists are not aware of their beauty and uniqueness. They will in time, no doubt, catch on and will prove easily bred in captivity.

We began collecting ours in 1979. All were juveniles and all sexed out as males. In 1980 we finally obtained five females. These, too, were not mature. In 1982 two pairs nested producing four eggs in each clutch. The fertile clutch was deposited July 7, 10, 13, and 16. The first egg was not fertile. Hatching occurred July 30, August 2 and 5. Thus a 21-day incubation period. They reared the young until fully feathered when they were removed and finished by hand feeding. These three chicks developed the red on their throats immediately and did not go through the first year with green throats as the imported young.

Diet determines this as we have demonstrated in many of our *psittacines*, i.e., our use of fish oil in the soft food in addition to plenty of carotene in the diet cause captive-bred young to get a year jump colorwise and no doubt in sexual development as well.

Though dealers refer to this conure as the "Orange-throated conure" this is a misleading name. The orange appearance in newly imported birds is due to improper nutrition. Specimens on a good diet soon develop a very red throat. The few I have been privileged to see in their native habitat also displayed this beautiful color.

Our five pairs are housed in one of our hotel styled aviaries. This consists of a long cage of 3' x 3' x 15' in length divided into five three-foot square compartments separated by half inch mesh wire. In this way the birds are in close proximity to each other but protected from aggression. Nest boxes are fastened on the outside and centered to each compartment.

I believe these three chicks to be the first captive bred in the U.S. Two other captive breedings occurred in the late seventies in Europe. Our three captive-bred offspring are in the capable hands of Tom Ireland, former A.F.A. president, who is an expert conure breeder as well as renowned breeder of larger *psittacines*. ●

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