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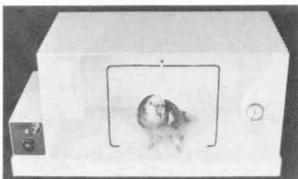


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Hand-feeding Pigeons and Doves

by Jan Parrott-Holden
Vancouver, Washington

Dave's note was emphatic. *"I will not hand-feed a bird. That's why there are big birds — to feed the little birds, dumbie!!!"*

I've saved that note for quite awhile, laughing over it each time I mix up a fresh supply of mash to hand-feed a nestling or two. True, Dave's words hold a grain of truth. I'm sure nature intended the big birds raise the little ones. And yet, you don't have to be in this hobby very long before you realize this is just another rule with many, many exceptions.

Dave tells me his pigeons number in the hundreds. (Who keeps an exact count when your loft reaches that size?) Me, I keep anywhere from 30-60 birds, depending upon the time of year. A lot of my birds are practically pets, riding upon my shoulder as I clean out nest boxes and replenish feed and water. We share a close association, leaving few surprises. Indeed, only upon one occasion did I find a bird whose lineage had me baffled. In short, if the big ones muffed their parental duties I always seemed to know about it.

Now some breeders won't pinch-hit under any circumstances. I don't condemn their view, just prefer mine. An unattended squab elicits more sympathy from me than a dozen squalling infants in a hospital. And I've found the display of gratitude from a rescued bird to be far more satisfying than that of a human child. Eccentric? I suppose. But those of you who've reared one bird or another will certainly corroborate my testimony. Won't you?

Let's say you haven't hand-raised anything. If you have an urge to try, there's really no better place to begin than with a pigeon or dove. Though there is no monetary advantage to possessing a hand-raised pigeon like there is with exotic caged-birds, you'll find that there are some rewards worth noting. First,

you'll *not* have to chase your bird after it has been reared. (There's nothing more aggravating than having a wild bird in your loft.) In addition, you'll probably find that your hand-fed bird will turn into a calm and attentive parent. Since it trusts you, you won't be denied the privilege of handling and checking progress in the nest box. Finally, as a learning experience, hand-feeding pigeons and doves is far easier than attempting the same task with young finches, parakeets or canaries. By the time you've taken a four-day-old squab to the "squeaker" stage you will feel so good about your wet-nurse skills that you'll be ready for greater avian challenges.

Let's suppose you have a baby pigeon to feed. You may have found it in your own loft or, like the good Samaritan, discovered a stranded feral tossed from its nest.

What's the first thing you do? Well, if it happens to be very young (no pin feathers) you will have to get it indoors immediately. I have kept four and five day old squabs in a brooder at about 90° until they sprouted pinfeathers. After that time period a room temperature of 70° should suffice. Warmth is not the biggest problem. Nourishment is really the stickler. You musn't throw in the towel because you haven't a beak. A trip to your local pharmacy or a good department store should take care of locating the necessary tools for feeding a young bird. A pigeon or dove from about four days of age can be fed easily through a medicine syringe, like the type used in dispensing medications to children and invalids. You will want to locate some 1/4" rubber tubing (the type used by fishermen to secure weights to their line). Purchase several inches, it's inexpensive and fits snugly on the tip of the syringe. While some recommend aquarium hose as a substitute, I don't

advocate its use. Not only is it stiff, but inserted improperly, it could seriously injure the bird. As an added precaution, I suggest a tiny drop of magic glue to reinforce the bond between the tube and syringe tip. Nothing is more frustrating than having the hose fly off into the bird's crop along with the mash.

Well, now that you have the equipment, you need something to feed. Even if you can't throw together a culinary masterpiece for your family, you can create mash for a baby pigeon. The simple way is to soak regular pigeon pellets in water, whip them to smoothness in the blender or by hand, and add a few vitamins in either powder form (Vionate, Brewer's Yeast, etc.) or through a liquid like "8 in 1." Whichever direction you take, the end result should be as smooth as bottled ketchup and not any thicker. For younger birds you may actually water this down a bit for ease in digestion.

If you have other birds to hand-feed you might opt for something different. The following recipe will feed young pigeons, as well as a host of cage-birds and can actually be frozen until needed (it keeps pretty well in the refrigerator for up to three days).

6 monkey baskets (powderize)
3 cups water
2 cups oats

Mix these three ingredients well then place in a pan.

Add: 4 cups water
¾ cup Wheat Hearts Cereal
¾ cup Malto Meal
1 heaping Tablespoon peanut butter

Cooking over medium heat, stirring constantly. The mixture should reach a thickness similar to ketchup before it is removed from the heat.

Finally add:

1 4½ ounce jar applesauce babyfood
1 4½ ounce jar Garden Vegetable babyfood
1 4½ ounce babyfood jar of water

Mix well. Prior to feeding, you may wish to supplement with powdered vitamins (grated cuttlebone is good if your recipe is for cage birds).

This recipe makes a large quantity that can be divided into freezer bags and thawed as needed. I like this aspect, as the pigeon pellet mash MUST be made fresh daily. Always offer the mash slightly warmed for young babies and room temperature for older birds.

Any squab of more than nine days old can survive adequately on two feedings a day. Of course, if time is not a big consideration three smaller meals are even

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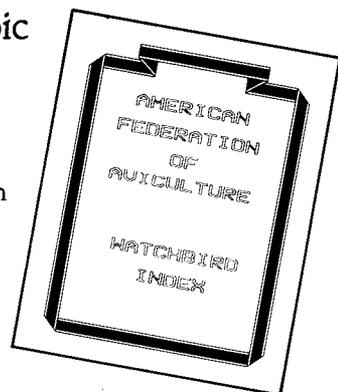
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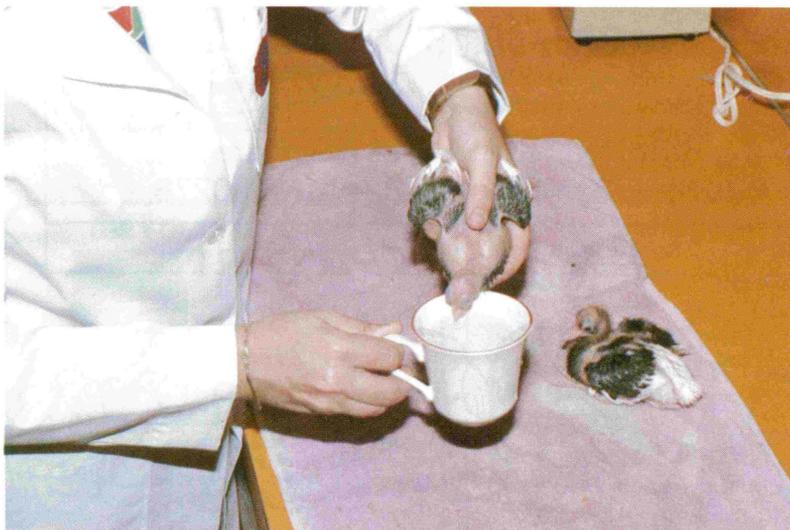
Vitamins, pigeon pellets, rubber tubing and a couple of good syringes enable nearly anyone to feed a young, abandoned squab.

better. Be careful when introducing the tube, that you pass it *over* the air passage (a small hole in the bird's tongue), gently work the tube down the throat before administering the food. This way you will be certain to get the mash into the crop and not the lungs.

After a few days of this routine you might find your squab actually opening its mouth for the syringe, which shows that they adapt quickly to methods that differ greatly from the way nature intended they eat (squabs normally place their beak inside that of the parent and suck the regurgitated food from their mouth).

By the time your bird is two or three weeks of age it will take water from a cup, while still relying upon you for the main course. Be patient. By the time it is four or five weeks of age, you can provide a selection of small seeds (say wheat, millet, maybe canary seed), and it will peck about. It may miss more than it gets, but if you harden yourself to feed only in the evening, laziness on the bird's part will be overcome by need. This is part and parcel of the weaning process.

Maybe it's a good thing I haven't birds numbering in the hundreds, like Dave. If that were the case, I'd probably share his philosophy on hand-feeding. But I've had great fun with the few youngsters I've raised, which makes keeping my numbers small a necessity. I guess for me, hand-feeding is just another intriguing facet to aviculture.

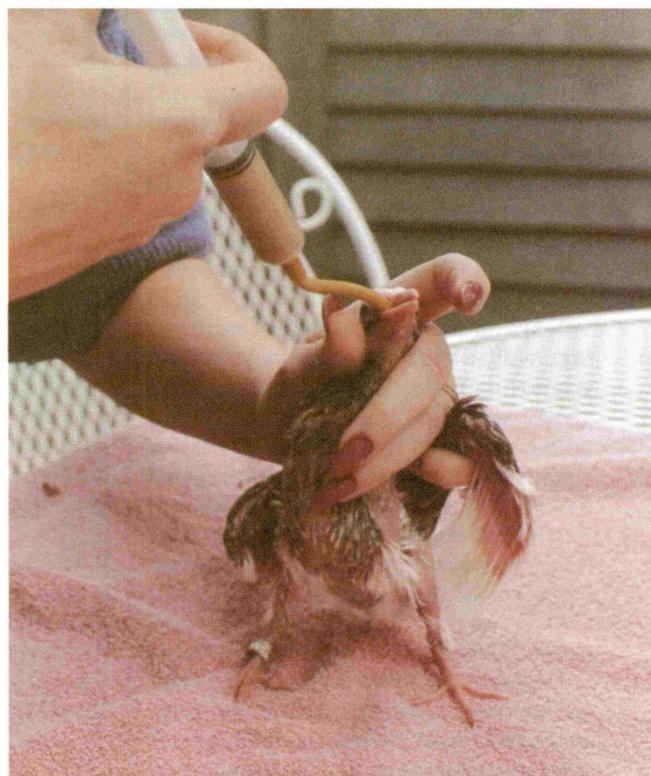


These young pigeons are taught to drink water from a cup.



Some pigeons are easy for one to feed.

Other pigeons are more than one person can adequately handle. Author resorts to a "strangle hold."



Note: In this article I stress feeding birds of four days of age and older. Normally birds that are weak prior to this development may prove too much for a novice in terms of the physical feeding process (this is not to say that it is impossible, just far more risky). ●



This two and a half week old squeaker has a flat crop and not enough skill to eat on his own.



The crop should be gently rounded when feeding is complete.

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CHARCOAL COCKATIELS, true albinos, and splits available. 6 year old rose breasted hen tame but frustrated, needs mate. Red bellied parrot pairs. Stephen Rountree, Rio Rancho, NM. Call (505) 892-4901.

OUR SMALL FAMILY BREEDING PROGRAM has domestic, incubator hatched and hand-fed double yellow-headed, yellow-naped, Panama, Hispaniolan and lilacine Amazons for sale. These baby parrots get lots of personal, loving care to produce the ultimate in a gentle pet. Goose Creek Farm, 244 S. Badger, Sheridan, Wyoming 82801. Call (307) 672-5550.

MLO'S EXOTIC BIRDS, quality handfed, closed banded babies and s/s variety of ACS cockatiel mutations, jenday, gold caps, nandays, sun conures, normal, lutino and split Indian ringnecks, moustache parakeets, Congo African greys, Eleonora cockatoos. Call for our current availability price list. We ship. Mary Lou Orth, St. Petersburg, FL. Call (813) 323-5390.

LATEST COCKATIEL MUTATIONS: large selection of closed band show quality — true albinos, whiteface, whiteface split to albino, grey split to whiteface & lutino, triple splits (whiteface, pied, cinnamon pearl), fallows, fallow-pieds, fallow pearls, silvers, platinums (silver fallows), white pied. Southern California raised. Call Elsie Burgin (714) 646-6052, or Dave Okura (714) 827-3447.

LORIES—Edward's, Moluccan, orange, dusky, chattering. INDIAN RINGNECKS—normal, lutino. Beautiful babies bred in my outdoor aviary. Purchase handfed or you hand-feed. Joleen Chrestensen, (305) 946-2190, Pompano Beach, FL.

ELECTUS, African parrots and finches, cockatoos, macaws, Australian parakeets and parrots. Rare: Major Mitchell's, B & G green winged macaw babies, hawk-heads, Tres Maries Amazons. "For the Birds," (213) 563-3367 or (714) 657-4500.

ROSE BREASTED COCKATOOS—domestic, hand-fed, tame babies. Completely guaranteed. Gail J. Worth, Aves International, 2808 Oregon Court-Unit L8, Torrance, CA 90503. Call (213) 541-1180.

SPECIALIZING IN S/S BREEDING PAIRS AND HANDFED TAME BIRDS. Big Congo greys, blue and golds, greenwings, blue fronted, yellow napes, double yellow heads, large Moluccans, lessers, umbrellas, Princess of Wales, rock pebbliers, Vasa parrots, etc. We have a large variety of large and smaller birds for breeders, pet shops, hobbyists, etc. We have more than 30 years experience in the bird business in both Europe and the U.S.A. Send S.A.S.E. for price list or phone us. Visa, Mastercard accepted. Lin-Deco, 3675 Keystone Road, Tarpon Springs, FL 33589. Call (813) 938-9009.

BABY YELLOW NAPES, blue fronts, red lored, young blue & gold and greenwinged macaws, cockatoos, Congo greys, lories, mynahs, soft bills, fancy canaries, conures, finches, personally selected. Parrot/macaw cages. Send SASE please. Bronson Tropical Bird Aviaries, 700 Cross River Road, Katonah, NY 10536. Call (914) 232-5255.

SIR DUDLEY AND PRINCE WILBUR need mates. If you have a female hyacinth for sale please call us. We promote parent raising, and your hen will be allowed to raise her own chicks. Bompert Farm, P.O. Box 6165, Helena, Montana 59604. Call (406) 933-5704.

FEATHERQUEST domestic, close-banded, handfed babies. African greys, Moluccan cockatoos, hyacinth macaws. Modern aviary under construction to offer more babies of more species. Ken & Terry Warthen, Rt. 1, Box 214, Pembroke, VA 24136. Call (703) 626-7896.

ELECTUS — Big, beautiful, handfed babies. Adult birds on occasion. Bernie Conner, Phone: (707) 526-7111.

GOULDIANS: aviary raised, normals, white breast-ed starting at \$50 each. CUTTLEBONE: large 6 " to 13" \$3.50 lb. pre-paid, shipped freight collect. SPRAY MILLET: 10" and larger, fresh, clean, shipped pre-paid in U.S.A., 5 lb. for \$15, 10 lb. for \$29. SUPPLIES: cages, nest boxes, etc. Send for free catalog. H & H Aviaries, Inc., 6225 Weyers Road, Kaukauna, WI 54130. Call (414) 788-9291.

INDIAN RINGNECK PARAKEETS for sale — white, blue split lutino, blue, lutino split blue, double splits and splits. Barbara Greenberg, (818) 345-4411, So. Calif. area.

WHOLESALE/RETAIL. COCKATIELS, handfed babies, super tame. Grey, lutino, pied, pearl, cinnamon, pearl-pied, cinnamon-pied, cinnamon-pearl, lutino-pearl, cinnamon-pearl-pied, and breeders Sun conures, electus parrots, lories, African greys, cockatoos, macaws. Will ship. John Goss, Boca Raton, FL. Call (305) 368-6921. Leave message on machine.

CLOSED BAND HANDFED BABIES: macaws: severes \$449, blue & golds \$899, Catalina \$1495, military \$899, scarlets \$1695, camolots \$2900. Cockatoos: Goffin's \$495, citrons \$995. Congo greys \$699. Sexed pairs dropped from a very reputable source. Ask about other babies. Call after 6 p.m. weekdays, (803) 559-9072. SEA-ISLAND AVIARIES, 4124 Blue Cross Lane, Johns Island, South Carolina 29455.

AFRICAN GREY BREEDERS — extra large s/s Congo African Greys, excellent feather, sexually mature, price to sell, call Pam (217) 245-5476. (Illinois)

HOME BRED, HANDRAISED — close banded cockatiels, sun conures, Bourkes', blue head and dusky pionus, Congo greys, Moluccan, umbrella and bare eyed cockatoos. Clara (312) 349-8687 (IL)

DISCOUNT PET SUPPLY — Save up to 50%. Full product line for birds, cats, dogs, fish and small animals. All prices include shipping. Send \$3.00 (refundable) to: SUNOL PET SUPPLY, P.O. Box 281, SUNOL, CA 94586.

SUPER-TAME, domestic, hand-fed babies. Large blue and golds, militarys, green wings and Hahn's macaws. African greys (congos), blue head pionus, Amboina kings and Senegal parrots. Derbyans, moustaches, Alexandrines, crimson wings, and Indian ringneck parakeets (normals, lutinos, blues and split-to-blue). Half-moon conures. Call Al or Char, (602) 973-2852. Arizona.

REDUCING OUR BREEDING STOCK! We have a good selection of high quality birds to offer. COCKATIELS only: extra heavy piers, piers, cinnamon piers, cinnamon pearls, pearl-pied, lutinos, lutino pearls, and normal grey splits. Also have about 25 handfed babies ready for pets. Call collect for prices. Barbara, (813) 299-6232, Winter Haven, Florida.

DECORATIVE MANZANITA HARDWOOD perches 36" long, excellent for parrots. Small diameter multi-branched for finches and parakeets, 15 for \$25. Medium diameter for parrots, 12 for \$25. Large diameter for macaws, 10 for \$25. Extra large diameter, 6 for \$25. All orders shipped freight collect. Send check with order to: LAURA'S BIRDS, 5693 Happy Valley Road, Anderson, CA 96007. Call (916) 357-3100. Bank cards accepted.

BABY HANDFED CONGO African greys and blue & gold, Catalina macaws hatched in our aviary and handfed to assure you a superior pet. John Gibson, Hilltop Aviaries, Oregon, (503) 825-3230.

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FINCHES, QUAIL, PARROTS, ornamental waterfowl, exotic pheasants, cranes, hornbills, touracos, jays, ratties, tinamous, plus many more. Send S.A.S.E. to Laura's Birds, 5693 Happy Valley Road, Anderson, CA 96007. Call (916) 357-3100.

DOMESTICALLY BRED — CONURES: suns, jendays, gold capped, gold crowned, australs, slender-bills, halfmoons, painted, souancei, green cheeked, maroon-bellied. PIONUS: bronze winged, dusky, white capped. LORIES: iris, blacks, goldies, yellow streaked and others. Congo greys, large and miniature macaws, several species of cockatoos, red-sided electus, Alexandrine, moustache, plumhead and Indian ringnecks in lutino, blue and splits. References gladly given. Stan or Fay, (602) 983-3028. Arizona.

RUBBER STAMPS — from Amazon to toucan. Personalized address stamp with bird designs. For brochure, send SASE: One-Stop Bird Shop, P.O. Box 17416, San Diego, CA 92117-0416.

INCUBATOR HATCHED. Hand raised baby parrots, breeding stock consists of: tritons, Moluccans, umbrellas, rose breasteds, bare eyed, goffins, hyacinths, scarlets, yellow napes, yellow heads, blue fronts. Electus and cockatiels. The young are sold at 4 - 6 weeks and weaned (11-16 wks.). Very competitive pricing. FOB-LAX. Avian vet checks and references available. Feather Hollow Ranch, P.O. Box 6391, Woodland Hills, CA 91365. Call (818) 340-5086.

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RARE FINCHES, Australian, African, Asian. Specializing in painted finches, Gouldians — normal and all mutations. Distributor of Lafaber Products. Grey Cheek Aviary, Brooklyn, NY. Call (718) 256-5298.

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WE SELL ONLY HANDFED BABIES raised on our farm. All are either incubated or removed from the nest at 10 days old. Species available: Alexandrine, moustache, crimson winged and Derbyan parakeets. Sun, maroon bellied, peach fronted and mitted conures. Chattering and dusky lories. Yellow crown, blue front and double yellow headed Amazons, African grey, napes and grand electus parrots. Blue & gold, scarlet, Buffon's military, red front, green winged, hyacinth, severe and yellow collared macaws. Umbrella, citron, sulfur crested and Moluccan cockatoos. DMC FARMS, Rt. 25, Box 6950, Ft. Myers, FL 33921. Call (813) 936-1627.

WHOLESALE — cockatoos, macaws, conures, parrots, Amazons. All types of birds. Call or write for price list. Grant's Enterprises, Route 4, Box 394, Lexington, NC 27292. Call (704) 787-5291.

MOVING TO NEW LOCATION. MUST SELL the following breeding stock: 10 pairs Australian crimson wings \$525 per pair, also '86 babies. 12 pairs Turquoisins \$150 per pair, extra male \$75. 1 pair Adelaide rosellas \$450. 5 pairs citron cockatoos \$1,100 per pair. Will ship. Ralph Lima, call (818) 709-0707, Los Angeles, CA.

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