

# Experiences with the Plum-crowned Pionus

(*Pionus tumultuosus*)

by Richard Zimmerman  
Jackson, Michigan

On October 5, 1978, I was to receive six imported Plum-crowned Pionus Parrots. A problem arose when the birds were not unloaded at the Jackson Airport, having been overlooked by the airline employees, and the birds were sent to Chicago

where they remained an additional 24 hours.

Finally, they arrived in Jackson. When I unpacked them, they were so stressed they were sitting in a circle with their heads together. They would not even move when the shipping box was opened and the top taken completely off. I reached into the box and took each bird out and set them on the floor of the aviary. Two birds were in such bad condition that they could not fly but slowly crawled up the wire. Both were dead in less than a week.

None of the birds would eat. Finally I moved their food and water up to the level of the first perch. They then began to feed. They were fed, as all of my birds are, fresh corn on the cob, grapes, cheddar cheese, spinach, apples, carrots and the Stoodley mix. A variety of seeds was also offered along with raw peanuts. The fruits and vegetables were sprinkled with torula yeast fortified with minerals.

Within a short time, a third bird was dead. Since I did not have access to a veterinarian at the time, I cannot be sure as to why they died although I am sure, in some cases, aspergillus was involved. The three remaining birds were housed in an aviary 4' x 4' x 6' long. I had no idea of the sex of these birds. They lived together in harmony from 1978 to 1982.

One day in March, 1982, when I came home from work, two of the birds were making a great deal of noise, pacing back and forth on the perches with feathers raised, tails fanned, wings dropped, and heads lowered.

The third bird was on the floor of the aviary with almost every feather on its head pulled out, bloody



Photo by Dale R. Thompson/George D. Dodge

Plum-crowned Pionus. See front cover for color photo.

wounds on its body, and its right eye damaged. This bird died two days later.

On March 17, 1982, the two remaining birds produced an egg, followed two days later by a second. One egg proved to be fertile and all seemed to be going well until March 26 when I found the female dead on the floor. She was still warm and there was a trickle of blood coming out of her mouth. The male was sitting on the perch looking at her. When I looked into the nest box, the eggs were buried and the nesting material was much disturbed as if there had been a struggle in the nest box.

At the time, there was a veterinarian in Jackson who was interested in birds. Her autopsy report showed the hen had died from aspergillosis. Her lungs hemorrhaged, causing her to strangle, hence the disruption in the nest box. Perhaps the stress of nesting had brought on the aspergillosis.

Not having an incubator, I put the fertile egg in the nest of a White-capped Pionus who was getting ready to lay. She simply buried the egg. I then took the egg to a friend who placed it under a cockatiel. However, the egg failed to hatch.

The following month I was lucky enough to acquire five more Plum-crowns from the same importer in Florida. Within a short time, two of

## Arizona Seed Crackers Society

is having a

## Bird Mart Sept. 22, 1990

at the

## Mesa Elks Lodge

243 S. Mesa Drive  
Mesa, Arizona

For information call  
Debbie Clifton (602) 946-1304

As of January 1, 1990, AFA's policy was reaffirmed to no longer allow hybrid birds to be offered for sale in its official publication, the *AFA Watchbird*

## Arizona Seed Crackers Society

presents

## Chris Davis

on

## Bird Behavior

## Modification Techniques

October 21, 1990 Phoenix Az  
call (602) 982-2125 for details

these birds were dead of aspergillosis. Later I was able to have the four remaining birds surgically sexed. They proved to be two pairs.

In the winter of 1983, a male, the last of the original six, died. In 1986, the remaining pair went to nest. The female laid two eggs in May. They proved not to be fertile. I do not believe any mating took place.

The female, from the very beginning, would not stay in the nest box. During the heat of the day, she would not stay in the box at all. She would go in only when the sun was low in the afternoon. The heat seemed to be a real problem with her and the nest box. The eggs were taken from her but the pair did not go back to nest that year. Perhaps it was too warm.

The following year, 1987, I observed them mating on several occasions. One afternoon I found the male in the outside flight sitting on the ground with his head under his wing. The female was nearby, moving around him on the ground. Since he remained in that position, I caught him up and gave him antibiotics which surely disrupted the breeding cycle.

In May, however, she again laid two infertile eggs. Since spring was hot, she would not stay in the box when the sun was on it. The eggs were removed, and the birds did not attempt to nest again.

On February 25, 1988, the hen laid a soft-shelled egg from the perch. Two days later, she laid a second egg in the box. Twenty-six days later it hatched. All went well, but even this early in the spring she would not stay in the box on warm days. Never did I hear the chick begging for food. The male fed the hen but did not enter the box.

The chick, when first hatched, was covered by a thin white down. As the days passed, I could see white tufts of down beginning to appear through the skin. These tufts quickly grew and covered the chick in a thick white down.

As the chick grew older, the female seemed to feed it less. On many occasions when I checked, the chick's crop was empty but usually had food in it at dusk — never a lot, but some.

On May 15, the chick left the nest, still not completely feathered. Even so, it flew and perched without difficulty. It begged from the parents without making a sound. The female fed it on several occasions and then within two days totally lost interest in

NEKTON®

# NEKTON®

## Experience NEKTON!

### The most Benefits . . . per Dollar.





FOR INFORMATION ON  
NEKTON-S AND OUR OTHER  
FINE PRODUCTS CALL . . .

NEKTON U.S.A.  
14405 - 60th St. North - Clearwater, FL 34620  
(813) 530-3500

IN CANADA  
Canaviax Products - 41 Links Rd. -  
Willowdale (Toronto) Ontario  
M2P 1T7 Canada. (416) 223-1165

NEKTON-PRODUKTE  
W.-GERMANY

"A Little Goes A Long Way"

## The Feather Connection



SPECIALIZING IN  
DOMESTIC CLOSED-BAND BABY BIRDS

... from PARROTS to PUPPIES!

Always Available: MACAWS

- ★ Caninde ★ Hyacinths ★ Blue & Golds ★ Scarlets
- ★ Red Fronts ★ Green Winged ★ Miniatures

AMAZONS & AFRICAN GREYS

- ★ Yellow Napes ★ Double Yellow Heads
- ★ Orange Winged ★ Mexican Red Heads ★ Blue Fronts

COCKATOOS

- ★ Moluccans ★ Umbrellas ★ Goffins
- ★ Sulphur Crested ★ Rose Breasted ★ Major Mitchells

★ TOUCANS ★ LORIES ★ CONURES ★ ADULT BREEDING PAIRS

SHOW AND PET COCKER PUPPIES ALSO AVAILABLE

for prices and information call: We Accept VISA/MASTERCARD

Cheryl (CHARLIE) Forker • (305) 257-1616 • Miami, FL





# The Bird Supply Catalog that soars above the rest!

## The exciting Wingnut Supply catalog.

Our customers call this the largest, most informative and best-produced bird supply catalog they've ever seen!

Quality products from such manufacturers as Hagen, Nekton, Kaytee, Lafeber, Mardel, Super Preen, McBaubbles Toys, TFH Books and Prevue.

68 fully-illustrated pages, packed with detailed information.

Send for yours today!



Please send me the informative Wingnut Supply catalog filled with exciting savings! Enclosed is \$5.00 (refundable with my first order.)

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

58 Providence Hwy., East Walpole, MA 02032

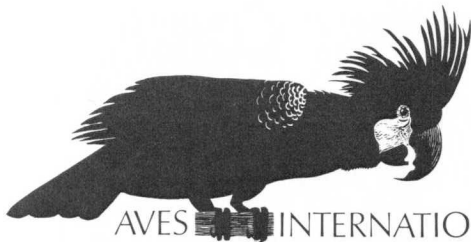
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

Order catalog and supplies TOLL FREE.

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

**1-800-999-PET1**

48-hour delivery service available.



AVES INTERNATIONAL

## DOMESTIC, HAND-FED BABIES

African Greys, Amazons, Caiques, Cockatoos, Conures, Eclectus, Jardines, Lories, Macaws, Pionus, Senegals, Toco Toucans, and Others.

**Our Specialty is  
Rose-Breasted Cockatoos.**

Gail J. Worth  
P.O. Box 1919  
Wilmington, CA 90744  
(213) 541-1180

the chick. The male was never observed to feed the chick even when the chick begged, silently bobbing its head up and down, directly in front of him. As the chick was becoming too thin, I took it from the parents and hand fed it for several weeks, leaving it with the parents for awhile and then moving it to a small cage next to the single female. When independent, the chick was placed with the adult single female.

The following year, 1989, the pair again nested in February. Two eggs were laid and two chicks were hatched. All went well for about five weeks. On warm days the hen would leave the box, and the chicks would look distressed. The hen began to look tired, not going into the nest box but sitting as far from the box as she could, looking sleepy.

As the chicks were not being fed, I fed them three times a day, leaving the chicks in the nest box. After four days of this, the hen began feeding the chicks and all went well for another week.

Then she stopped feeding again. Events repeated themselves, the hen sitting far from the box and taking no interest in the chicks. She did not look well. I took the chicks into the house for hand feeding and put her on antibiotics, but her condition deteriorated. The male seemed greatly concerned, trying to preen and feed her. Four days later she was dead. The autopsy showed that she died of an enlarged heart, a small liver, pneumonia, chronic hepatitis, and a resistance to antibiotics.

The three young have, as yet, not been sexed. I have been unable to trade with another breeder or acquire additional birds. At this time, because there are so few of these birds in captivity, I feel this bird will be lost to American aviculture unless people begin to cooperate with each other.

To sum up some observations regarding the few birds I have:

1. Plum-crowns dislike heat and heat can disrupt nesting.
2. Feather structure is different from other pionus, being denser and more water resistant.
3. Unlike other pionus, chicks do not vocally beg for food, while in the nest, or are so quiet they can't be heard.
4. Only two eggs to a clutch.
5. Very susceptible to lung ailments and stress-related problems.
6. Adults are quiet for pionus and do not seem to be as active. ●