

# breeding the Chestnut-capped Ground Thrush at the Lowry Park Zoological Garden

(*Zoothera interpres*)

by C. Lex Salisbury, general curator  
Lowry Park Zoological Garden  
Tampa, Florida

On January 8, 1988, a pair of Chestnut-capped Ground Thrush, *Zoothera interpres*, was purchased by the Lowry Park Zoo from a private bird importer in Tampa, Florida. The birds were wild-caught in Malaysia and were of unknown age when received by our zoo.

### Natural History Notes

The Chestnut-capped Ground Thrush, a bird of about six inches in length and of distinctive coloration, is found throughout Malaysia and is a resident in the Bornean lowlands. This bird is quite rare and field notes indicate that it is shy and retiring (Smythies, 1960).

### Captive Facilities

Laparoscopy determined our pair to be a male and a female. The pair, after passing through the zoo's one month quarantine, were housed in a wood framed entrance aviary in front of the zoo's one-half acre free flight aviary. This flight also housed 1.1 Gouldian Finch, *Chloebia gouldiae*; 1.1 Roul Roul, *Rollulus roulroul*; 1.1 Leclancher's Bunting, *Passerina leclancherii*; 1.0 Red-legged Honey-creeper, *Cyanerpes cyaneus*; and 1.1 Blue-tongued Skink, *Tiligua scincoides*; 0.0.4 Radiated Tortoise, *Geochelone radiata*. Two sides and the top of this 3' wide by 10' long by 8' high outdoor flight are of 1/2" PVC coated hardware cloth with plexiglas viewing panels. The ends of the aviary are stud wall construction with T1-11 plywood interior cladding. Composition of floor is dirt with plantings of ficus, bamboo, bromeliads and liriopse. One infrared strip heater (4' long) is fixed in a corner of the aviary and turned on when outside temperatures drop below about 45°F.

### Courtship, Breeding and Incubation

The birds were together 21 months before laying the blotched reddish

brown on pale grey egg that would become their first viable chick. (Please see the clutch chart for egg data.) The birds engaged in frequent mutual vocalizations (singing) and associated head moving behaviors but no other obvious courtship displays were noted. Four clutches were laid with 2, 2, 3 and 3 eggs, respectively noted. Nesting occurred from May through September. All eggs in all clutches were fertile, and both parents incubated the eggs. A 1/2" welded-wire cup placed in the crotch of a 6' ficus tree, about three feet above grade, was chosen as the nest site and was filled with primarily long-leafed pine needles. Two nest sites were made available for this species. Perches were of natural wood, dried grape vines and the tree species previously mentioned. After three unsuccessful attempts at parent-rearing this species, the fourth clutch of three eggs was pulled on October 1, 1989 for artificial incubation. All eggs hatched, with two young expiring at two days, the third and last chick, however, successfully being hand-raised and surviving to this day (now a surgically-sexed male).

### Diet

A commercial diet of Zeigler Soft-bill and Ziegler Bird of Paradise was fed the parent birds along with greens, fruit, nectar, crickets and mealworms. At least four different attendants serviced this exhibit and 500,000 to 700,000 people per year passed within three feet of the nesting site. Water was available in a four-inch deep cement pond with a surface area of about two square feet.

The hand-rearing diet, consisting of finely chopped pink mice soaked in Emerald vitamin solution, was fed with forceps for the first four days, initially at two hour intervals. On the fourth day, chopped pinks dipped in Gerber's Garden Green Vegetables (baby food) were fed. By day ten, soft fruits were added and the mixture

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\*\* Indicates 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club's state coordinator.

## SCHEDULE FOR AFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Mark these dates and plan to attend!

### WINTER REGIONAL MEETING

February 8, 9, 10, 1991  
Albuquerque Hilton Hotel  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

### SPRING BOARD MEETING

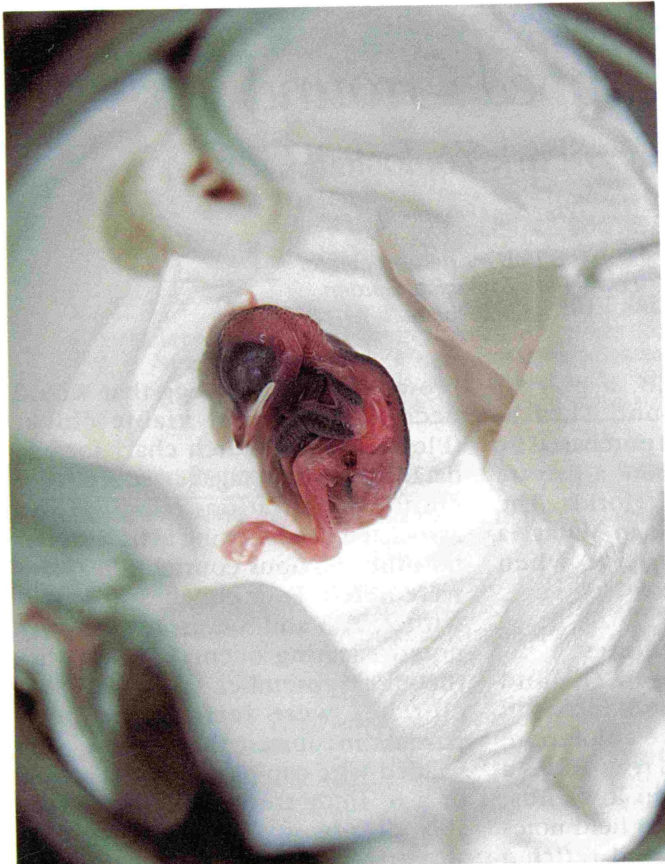
May 17, 18, 19, 1991  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

### SUMMER ANNUAL CONVENTION

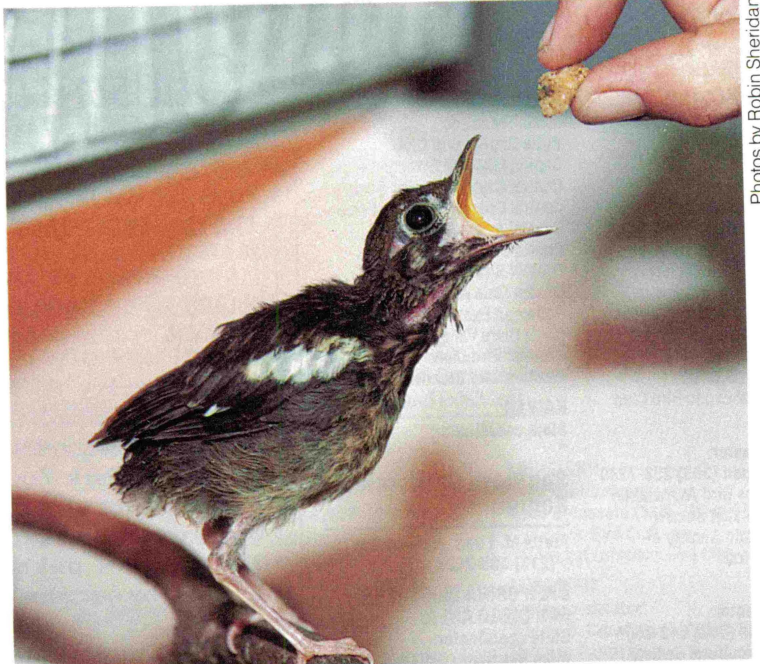
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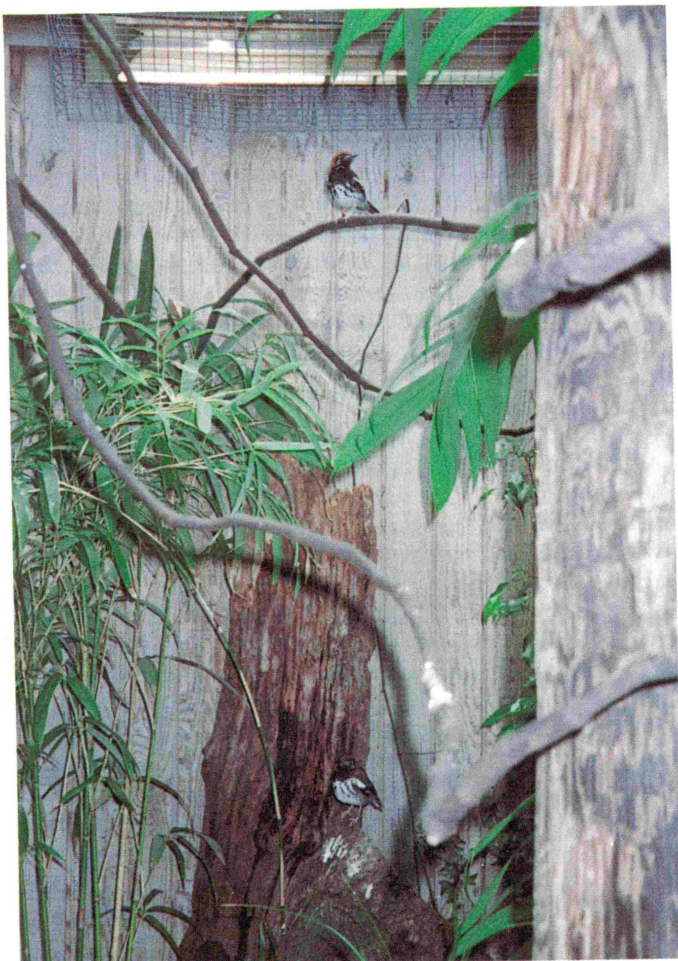
*Surviving chick at day one.*



*The young Chestnut-capped Ground Thrush is drab by color comparison to his parents, but is an eager eater.*



*This young Chestnut-capped Ground Thrush was hatched and successfully reared at the Lowry park Zoo in Tampa, Florida. This fully fledged chick was hatched on Oct. 11, 1989 and is believed to be a U.S. first breeding.*



*This is the large, planted flight of the breeding pair of Chestnut-capped Ground Thrushes at the Lowry Park Zoo.*



*The Chestnut-capped Ground Thrush builds an open cupped, natural nest and both parents participate in incubating the eggs.*



was 50 percent fruit/vegetable and 50 percent animal protein. The frequency of feeding was gradually reduced and amount per feeding increased appropriate with the chick's growth.

### Significance of Breeding

We believe that this hand-reared chick represents the first U.S. captive breeding of this interesting insectivorous/frugivorous passerine. It is noteworthy that the Chestnut-capped Ground Thrush chick is now quite retiring in spite of being hand-reared.

An additional two wild-caught male Chestnut-capped Ground Thrushes were placed in the one-half acre freeflight aviary in 1988. These individuals were observed to be quite timid. Both males were killed by a male Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*). An interesting note is both this species and the Magpie Robin have a white band on the upper wing covert. The flash of this wing band appeared to enrage the more aggressive Magpie Robin, leading to thrashings of the latter species.

### Growth Data

Date	Age (days)	Weight (grams)
10-11-89	1	3.5
10-12-89	2	4.7
10-13-89	3	5.6
10-17-89	7	17.4 (1)
10-18-89	8	26.3
10-22-89	12	35.9
10-25-89	15	26.8 (2)
10-26-89	16	27.3
10-27-89	17	26.7
10-28-89	18	29.8
10-29-89	19	31.2
10-30-89	20	32.7
10-31-89	21	34.5
11-01-89	22	34.9
11-02-89	23	34.6
11-03-89	24	38.0
11-04-89	25	36.9
11-05-89	26	40.1
11-06-89	27	37.9
11-07-89	28	39.6 (3)
11-08-89	29	41.7
11-10-89	31	42.1
11-12-89	32	43.3
11-13-89	33	45.1

- (1) Eyes open  
 (2) Beginning to take food off forceps  
 (3) Independently feeding

The 1990 breeding season is now well underway and our goal this season is to raise parent-reared chicks. It is well demonstrated that many avian species do better at parent-rearing in successive clutches and we hope our breeding pair will begin to raise their own young.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Jon Seltz and Rico Walder for putting in the long, hard hours to hand-rear this chick, as well as all members of the Lowry Park Zoo Aviculture Department. Without this support, this first breeding would not have been possible.

### References

Smythies, 1960 Birds of Borneo. The Sabah Society and the Malayan Native Society.

### CLUTCH CHART

There were four clutches. See below for details:


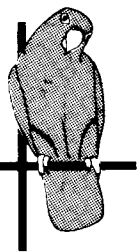
	Date of First Egg	Clutch Size	Result
Clutch 1	5-28-89	2	Kicked out two young at 24 hours.
Clutch 2	6-20-89	2	Kicked out young at 12 hours.
Clutch 3	8-17-89	3	Kicked out eggs on 8-22-89.
Clutch 4	9-28-89	3	All eggs pulled on 10-1-89 and artificially incubated. Two young died at two days. One surviving to present time (2-12-90).

We tried this species in the one-half acre freeflight aviary but 2.0 were killed by a male Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*). An interesting note is both this species and the Magpie Robin have a white wing band on upper wing coverts.

### Scientific Symbols of Gender

0.0.1 = unknown      0.1 = female  
 1.0 = male            1.1 = male/female pair

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