



Adult pair Muller's parrots.

First Breeding of the Muller's Parrot

(*Tanygnathus sumatranus*)

by M.D. Moll and K.K. Muser
Everglades Aviaries
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

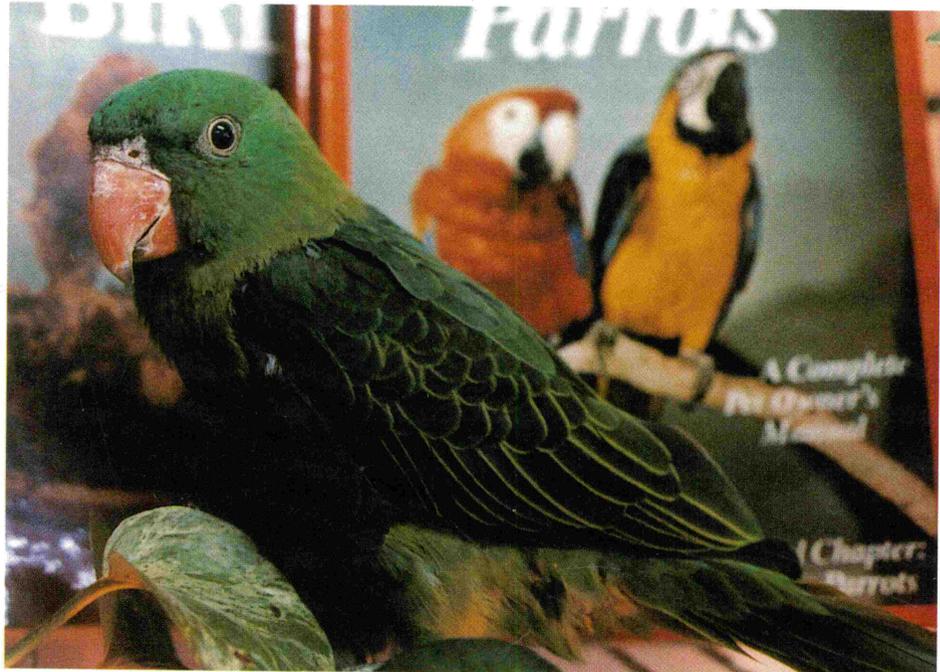
Our interest in the Muller's parrot began when we received a call from a woman wanting to know if we would be interested in taking a pet Muller's she could no longer keep. The bird was a male and a six year captive. We were not familiar with the species and made a quick check of *Parrots of the World* and several other reference books for additional information on the Muller's. Of the six subspecies listed, none were common in captivity. A range was given as covering the Philippine Islands, Sulu Archipelago, Talaud and Sangir Islands, the Celebes Islands and Indonesia. Little was given as to the breeding habits or maintenance requirements of the species. Muller's parrot can be and often

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Domestic young female Muller's parrot, age 10 months (Noel).

Imported young male Muller's parrot (Noah).



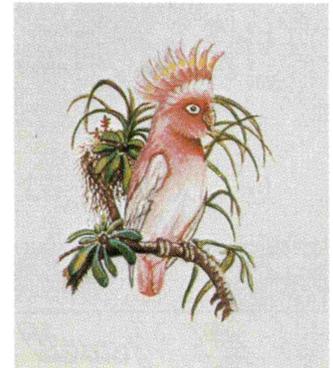


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Scarlet WT-SC

Toucans WT-TC

Amaz/African Gray
WT-AAG



Cockatoo WT-LB

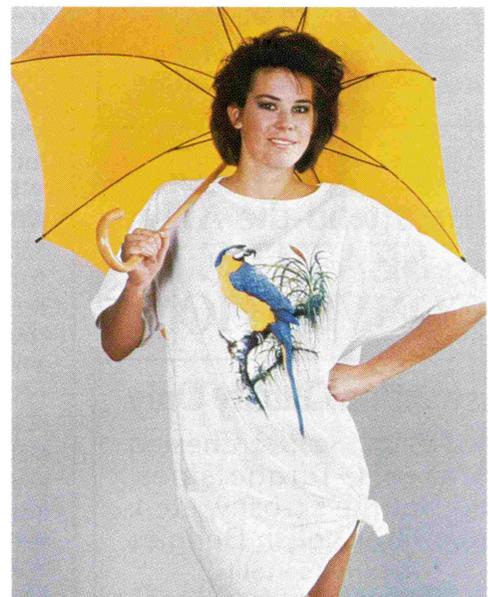
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is confused with the blue-naped parrot, *Tanygnathus lucionensis*. Both species are of similar color, body size and possess coral red bills. The similarity is even more apparent when young of both species are compared.

We were still in the development stage of our bird breeding business, and did not feel that we were equipped to handle this unusual "exotic." We looked around for possible recipients for this unexpected gift. We were able to locate two veterinarians, Doctors Theresa and John Parrott¹ who made a specialty of exotic animal medicine. They agreed to take the bird for future breeding stock. The donation was made without our ever having met either party.

Over the next two years our "hobby" grew into a business and we established a working relationship with the doctors Parrott. They worked with exotics in all forms and, like us, had a deep interest in captive breeding of rare and unusual animal species. With our business on firm footing, we felt we were ready to try our hand at breeding the Muller's parrot and spoke to the doctors about a breeding loan of the male they had. The doctors were willing to place the male Muller's on loan with us if we could locate a female.

For five months we made contact with importers and breeders in Florida and across the country. No luck at all. As fortune would have it, we finally located a female at an importer's facility thirty miles from our business location. The female was purchased and surgically sexed on the same day. Sexing revealed the presence of developed follicles on her ovaries. The female was placed in quarantine and allowed to adjust to her new home over the next several months.

During our search for the female, we built an addition onto our home in which we planned to house our breeding pairs of parrots. The addition measured 14 by 24 feet and was built of concrete block. The room had one outside window facing west which measured one foot by six feet in length. All interior windows were of one-way glass and were situated in such a manner as to allow observation of the room's inhabitants without being seen by them. The room addition was equipped with intake and exhaust fans, plumbing and electrical fixtures. Lighting was provided by the outside window as well as ceiling mounted fluorescent tubes. Vitallites² were used as the only source of artificial light and were timed for fourteen hours of operation each day. Hanging and potted plants were used

extensively to naturalize the birds' surroundings. Once the room was ready for cages, it was placed off limits to all but the one individual that fed and cleaned each day.

The cage into which the Muller's were to be placed was built of one by two inch 14 gauge welded wire. The dimensions of the cage were four by three by three feet with the top of the cage eight feet off the floor. Two natural orangewood perches were used with one set to give easy access to the food and water bowls (two by seven inch ceramic crocks) and the other set at a height of 24 inches from the floor of the cage. A hanging rawhide toy was provided for chewing.

In addition to the pair of Muller's parrots, our bird room was to be home to pairs of blue-fronted, white-fronted, double yellow headed and yellow-naped Amazons. Several pairs of small macaws included red-fronted, severe and yellow-collareds. Several species of cockatoos as well as Congo African greys and mitered conures completed the list of the room's future occupants.

The Muller's diet and nutritional supplements were fed in one common bowl once a day. Water was provided with Vitapol³ added. Seeds and grains, although comprising a small percentage (25 to 30%) of the birds' whole diet,

Baby Muller's parrot, age 5 weeks.

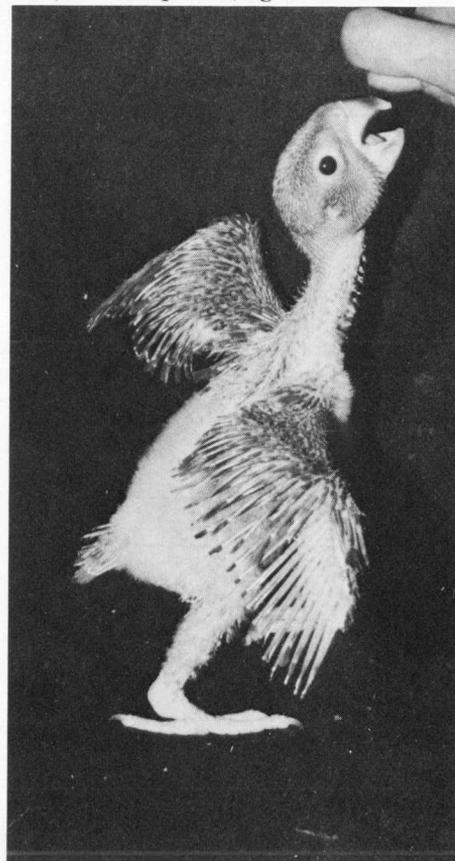


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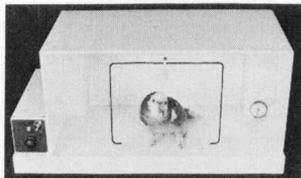
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included a wide variety and selection. Sunflower seed (black, white and Russian), peanuts, peppers, oats, parakeet seed, canary seed, hemp, squash, buckwheat, safflower and hard corn were fed every day. Dry dog food⁴ and soaked and drained monkey chow⁵ were fed on a daily basis. A feed mix was placed on top of the seed and was comprised of chopped whole wheat bread, carrots, apples, chickory, kernel corn and Bright Plumes⁶. Whole corn on the cob was given to the birds each day as well as other fruits and vegetables in season.

The age of the male Muller's was estimated to be about six years and we knew that the female was sexually mature. Both birds were placed together in late May of 1983. Courtship displays were soon observed. Courting took place while both birds hung from the top of the cage. Preening and mutual feeding were also observed in the inverted position. In early September the birds were noticed working at the nest box.

The nest box was of one inch white pine and measured 12 by 12 by 24 inches, the greater measurement being the depth of the box. A three and one-half inch entrance hole was placed off center and 20 inches from the bottom of the box. A five inch by 12 inch inspection door was placed five inches from the bottom of the box and to the side away from the entrance hole. The box was filled with ten inches of fir shavings mixed with one half cup of 10 percent Seven[®] dust and topped with a layer of pine bark mulch.

Many hours were spent watching the courting Muller's, but breeding was never actually observed. During a daily inspection of the nest box in early November, the first egg was discovered. Two days later a second egg was laid. In the third week of November the eggs were candled and found to be infertile. Both eggs were pulled from the nest and saved.

The birds continued to court and work the nest box. On January 27, 1984 another egg was laid. A second egg followed two days later. Both parents shared the incubation duties and on the 21st of February the first chick hatched. Two days after the first hatching, the second egg was checked. A chick was found dead in the shell.

At eight days of age, a routine inspection revealed that the chick's crop was empty. A second inspection several hours later gave the same results. The chick was pulled and placed in an incubator. The temperature of the incubator

was set at 93 degrees and the chick was placed on a seven-times-a-day feeding schedule. Hand feeding was done with a syringe and soft rubber feeding tube. Food was placed directly into the chick's crop. The formula for the first two weeks consisted of soaked and blended monkey chow, Bright Plumes⁶, peanut butter, fresh carrots, bananas, endive and Micro-Vet with Vitamins⁷. All the food items were blended with water to give a thick mixture that would just pass through a feeding tube. After two weeks of the starter formula, Gerber's dry oatmeal baby cereal was added to thicken the formula. Feeding was gradually reduced to twice a day and this was the standard until the chick was weaned at eleven weeks of age.

One observation made on the chick was that the eye is dark. All texts reviewed listed the iris of the young birds to be colored a pale yellow. The young Muller's we raised did not begin to show a change in the color of the iris until it reached about six months of age. A total change of color will probably not occur until the bird is at least one year of age or older.

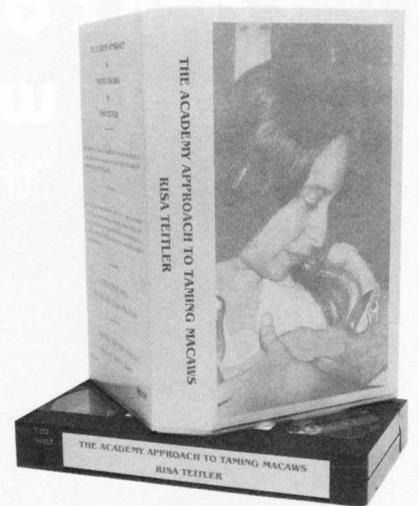
With only a minor setback during the chick's development, she has developed into a vigorous, healthy young adult. After surgical sexing revealed the presence of ovaries, a young imported male was secured for future breeding with "Noel."

It is now December and the parent birds are again busily courting. We expect another clutch of eggs to be laid in the next several months and look forward to establishing a permanent colony of Muller's parrots in the United States.

As an epilog to our breeding success with the Muller's, we feel that it is important to point out how imperative a cooperative breeding effort is between parties having access to rare or unusual birds. Without the full cooperation of all individuals involved with our breeding success, the Muller's parrot would still remain a species not yet propagated in the United States.

REFERENCES

1. Pembroke Park Animal Clinic, Pembroke Park, Florida 33009.
2. Vita-lites: mfg. by Durotest, 2321 Kennedy Blvd., North Bergen, New Jersey 07047.
3. Vitapol: Vineland Laboratories, Inc., Vineland, New Jersey 08360.
4. Hill's Science Diet Canine Maintenance: Hill's Pet Products, P.O. Box 148, Topeka, Kansas 66601.
5. Hill's Science Primate Dry: Hill's Pet Products, P.O. Box 148, Topeka, Kansas 66601.
6. Bright Plumes: Biopet Corp., 7110 N.W. 6th Ave., Miami, Florida 33150.
7. Micro-Vet SF: Bio-Ceutic Labs., St. Joseph, Missouri 64502. ●



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