

# propagation of the giant tinamou

*(Tinamus, major)*

A recollection from the past.

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There is an ever increasing number of birds that are becoming rare in captive collections. A great variety of birds once commonly seen in zoos and private collections are fast decreasing. We may never again have a chance to work with many of the unusual birds that were here only a few years ago. The Giant Tinamou is an excellent example. The following includes the details on the propagation of the Giant Tinamou at the Los Angeles Zoo in 1971.

The Great Tinamou is found from Southeastern Mexico through Central America and into South America as far as Bolivia. In 1975 while photographing in Panama with Dr. Nathan Gale, we observed a proud hunter who showed us a recently shot Giant Tinamou which was heading for the cooking pot. They are known for their excellent taste.

The tinamou is one of the few species of birds in which the male will incubate the eggs and rear the chicks. Often times one hen will mate with several males, laying several clutches of eggs, and leaving each male to do all the work.

The Los Angeles Zoo acquired three Giant Tinamou in 1966 from the Thomas bird collection that was at one time located on Catalina Island. Another crippled bird was added in 1969. Sexing of these birds was very difficult. Both sexes are similar in size and coloration. In 1970, a known female was received on loan from San Antonio Zoo where she had laid 12 eggs the year before. All of these Giant Tinamou were believed to be around 20 years of age as no records could be found showing any of these birds being imported after 1953.

These Tinamou were housed in a

*Tinamou hen over nest with egg.*



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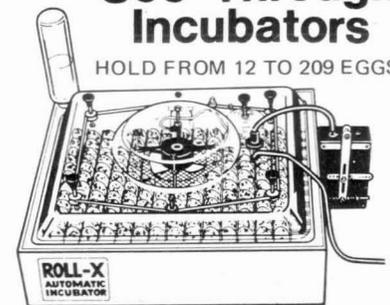
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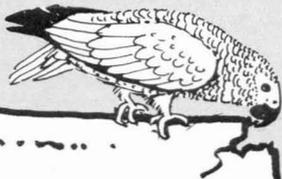


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planted ground aviary with a variety of other types of birds which included a pair of Crested Wood Partridge, pigeons, a barbet and other softbills. There were no eggs laid by the loan female in 1970, but a total of nineteen eggs laid in 1971. This female was quite aggressive and was certainly the dominant bird in the group. The crippled bird died and another bird was removed due to her aggression. There was no pairing, courtship, or breeding observed. The brilliant tourquoise eggs were laid on an average of one every four days over a period of 10 weeks starting on May 19, 1971. A single egg was laid on a clear patch of ground and was then re-

moved and placed in a Humidaire automatic incubator. The dry bulb was placed at 99.5° and the wet bulb at 84°. Chart No. II shows details concerning the fertility and hatchability of the eggs. The chicks hatched after an incubation period of 19 days and had a well developed feather structure. They were generally brown in color and white under the lower mandible and a distinctive white stripe running from the back side of the eye down the side of the neck. They lose this stripe around seven to eight weeks when they appear very dark greyish-brown in color. They then have very fine, widely spaced light spots on their

### CHART NO. 1

SPECIES - Giant Tinamou, *Tinamus major*

DATE - 1971

EGG NO.	DATE LAID	DATE HATCHED	1st DAY	7th DAY	14th DAY	21st DAY	28th DAY	34th DAY
7	6-15	7-4	65 gr	103 gr	129 gr	159 gr	238 gr	310 gr
8	6-21	7-10	57 gr	98 gr	123 gr	144 gr	184 gr	died 8/11
9	6-25	7-14	69 gr	107 gr	132 gr	160 gr	234 gr	306 gr
13	7-12	7-31	69 gr	died 8/3				
14	7-15	8-3	68 gr	109 gr	136 gr	174 gr	246 gr	321 gr
15	7-18	8-5	57 gr	died 8/10				

### CHART NO. 2

SPECIES - Giant Tinamou, *Tinamus major*

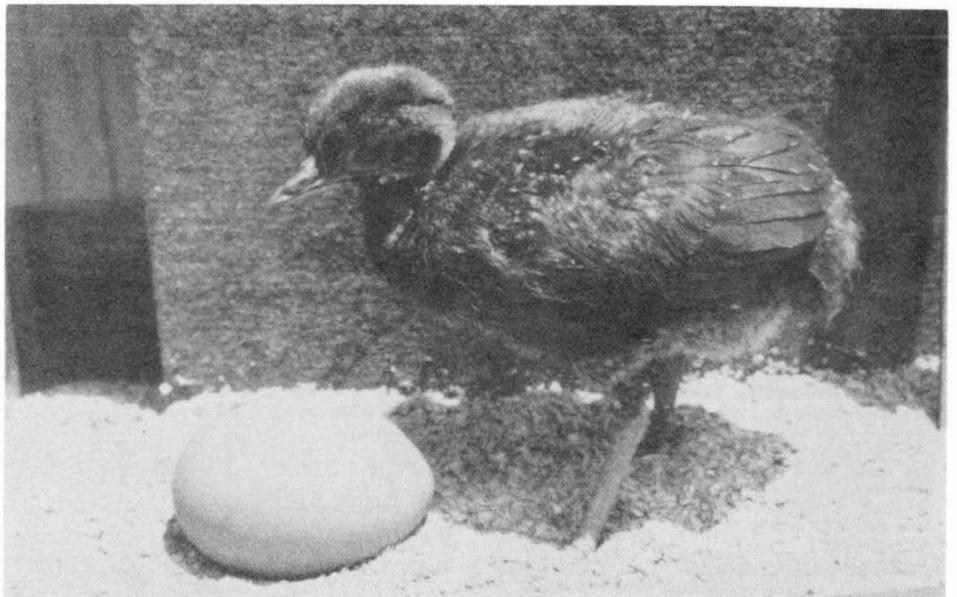
DATE - 1971

EGG	DATE	DATE	DATE	INCUBATION	LONGEVITY	COMMENTS
1	5-19					Infertile
2	5-24					Infertile
3	6-1					Fertile, died in shell
4	6-5					Fertile, died in shell
5	6-7	6-25	6-26	19 days	Died after 4 hours	Egg sac protrusion
6	6-11					Fertile, died in shell
7	6-15		7-4	19 days		Servived to adulthood
8	6-21		7-10	19 days	Died 8-11	Died at 1 month-Weak
9	6-25	7-14	7-14	19 days		Hatched in 4 hrs., survived to adulthood
10	6-29					Fertile, died in shell
11	7-3					Fertile, died in shell
12	7-8	7-27		19 days	Did not hatch out	
13	7-12		7-31	19 days	Died, 8/3	
14	7-15	8-2	8-3	19 days		Strong, aggressive adulthood
15	7-18	8-5	8-5	18 days	Died 8/10	Weak in legs
16	7-24					Fertile, died in shell
17	7-27	8-15		19 days	Did not hatch out	
18	7-31	8-19		19 days	Did not hatch out	
19	8-6			19 days		Infertile

bodies. They do not show any of the grey coloration of the adults until after four months.

Very few of the tinamou that hatched were very strong. Our experience with gallinaceous birds hatching from an artificial incubator was that those birds which had no difficulty piping and hatching were robust and survived easily to adulthood and those that did have trouble rarely survived to adulthood. So it was with the Giant Tinamou; if it had trouble piping out, it was destined not to make it. Chart No. I shows their weekly weights.

The young tinamou when growing up were non-aggressive and almost docile. They appeared very deliberate and almost slow in their reactions. They very seldom



*Tinamou chick one week old.*



*Tinamou chick two weeks old.*

ment like a mealworm when squeezed from the syringe. They started feeding on gamebird mix around the third week.

The chicks were kept in an indoor brooder for six weeks, and then were placed in a small enclosed pen that was completely covered with grass. A brush pile was added which they readily used for security.

The following year one of these three youngsters laid six eggs of which three had embryos (proving that the Giant Tinamou can be sexually mature the first year). However, none of the eggs hatched, nor were any more eggs laid after that clutch.

flew. It is wise to keep these birds with their own kind due to the fact that most other birds half their size (quail, peacock pheasants, and bantam chicks) were too aggressive for them. The smaller birds would take food, mainly mealworms, directly from the tinamou's mouths. We used young peafowl to some success.

Their diet from the first day included fine chopped lettuce sprinkled with a bone meal mix fed to the carnivores, mashed hard-boiled egg yolk, mealworms, and finely chopped fruit (apples, grapes, and bananas). Due to the difficulty of inducing these birds to eat, we supplemented their diet for the first two weeks with a Cereal Formula that was given to us by the San Diego Zoo, which they used for feeding Psittacine birds. This diet was hand-fed with a syringe (without the needle) several times a day. During the second week the young tinamou ate the mixture directly from the end of the syringe, as it had the shape and move-



photos by Dale Thompson.

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The Giant Tinamou falls definitely into the Gamebird category but it was kept and bred in a mixed collection. Shortage of space and large numbers of species force the zoos to integrate various types of birds together in a single aviary. If done carefully this principle has some advantages in the private collections also.

### Cereal Formula

Measured by volume, not weight.

½ cup Wheat Hearts cereal.

1 tsp. Karo corn syrup.

2 fresh egg yolks.

1/8 tsp salt.

1 drop ABPEC, vitamin supplement, added after boiling.

We added:

½ tsp Carnivore mix.

½ tsp super Hydramin powder.

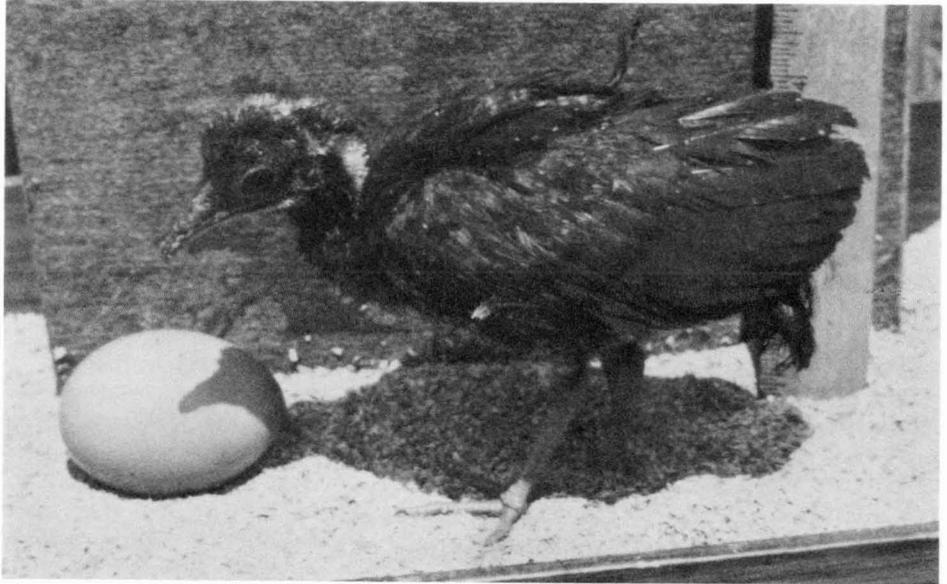
½ tsp dry milk.

Mix ingredients thoroughly, adding milk or water to make a soup like mixture. Boil 3 to 6 minutes over low heat.

Super Hydromin Powder — a human protein-vitamin-mineral concentrate. Made by Nion Corporation, 1000 N. Highland Ave., Los Angeles. Approximate analysis: Protein 65%, carbohydrates (by difference) 20.45%, Ash 6.6%, Moisture 5%, Fibre 0.6%, Fat 0.25%.

(Frank S. Todd, Corporate Curator of Birds at Sea World, in conjunction with San Diego Zoo Curator of Birds, K.C. Lint, published an excellent article on Tinamous focusing on The Breeding of the Giant Tinamou in Sept. 1973 issue of San Diego Zoo's ZOO NOOS.)

*Tinamou chick three weeks old.*



*Tinamou chick four weeks old.*

