



Photo courtesy of San Diego Zoo.

Tragopan Pheasant (Tragopan satyra) Central and Eastern Himalayas.

THE SATYR TRAGOPAN

(tragopan satyra)

by Joe Longo

(Author's note: We do not have at this time tragopans at our new home, MICHANNE ACRES. We were able to farm them to another breeder until adequate facilities could be constructed. Upon completion of our new aviaries we will once again be able to enjoy these beautiful birds.)

Description: The Satyr Tragopan is a most striking bird both in color and carriage. The male has a mostly black head with a red band bordering the crest. The upper back, neck, upper breast, and shoulders are of a deep crimson red with the lower breast being a deeper red in color. The remainder of the bird is various shades of brown, rufous and black, in a vermiculated pattern. The tail is mostly brown with the lower portion giving way to black. Almost the entire bird, with the

exception of the head, upper breast, neck and tail, is covered with various sizes of white to grey ocelli ringed in black. The iris is brown; bill, black; and legs, pink. Like all tragopans, there is a fleshy, patterned bib or lappet, and horns that are displayed to various degrees during courtship.

The female is basically brown to rufous vermiculated with black, and Paler on the abdomen with feathers having cream to white centers.

Range: The range of the Satyr Tragopan is the Himalayas from the 8,000 ft. to 14,000 ft. level, from Garhwal east to Bhutan and the forest of southern Tibet to Monyul. In the winter months it prefers the dense forest of the lower elevation, but ascends in the summer to the higher slopes.

Nesting: Being the least aboreal of the genus, it frequently nests on the ground; however, the chicks on hatching are well developed and able to perch with the parent bird within a few days. The eggs are a rusty-brown color and a clutch usually consists of three to five eggs. In the wild only one clutch is laid per year.

Captive Management: Our tragopans were kept in aviaries approximately 14' by 24' and 7' high at the covered end. The back and 8' of either side was solid with the remainder of the sides 1" wire. Ten feet of the solid end was roofed with white fiberglass to allow maximum light and yet afford protection on the many rainy days we experience in the Pacific Northwest. All the perches, which were natural branches from nearby wooded areas, were placed under the roofed area at various elevations and degrees. Our birds, as do most tragopans, spent the majority of their time off the ground. That portion of the aviary which was not covered was heavily planted with various evergreen shrubs including rhododendrons, laurel, and juniper and trees, such as fir, pine, and cedar. Some vine maple was planted and allowed to grow through the wire. Being a deciduous tree, that is it loses its leaves in the winter, it provided additional shade in the summer months, yet on dark winter days it was bare so maximum brightness was allowed. Tragopans seem to appear very uncomfortable on exceptionally warm days therefore providing heavily planted aviaries for shade and coolness is very necessary. A nest box approximately 20" square and 12" deep was placed high in the aviary under the covered area and very near a perch for easy ingress and egress. We used grass and dead leaves as a nesting material and found it more than adequate.

Our feeding program consisted of Purina game bird chow in crumbled form.

The birds were fed the Purina Flight Conditioner through the winter months, and in late February their feed was changed to Purina Layena which was fed through the breeding season. In addition, they were given apples and greens the year around, although the greens were usually ignored except during the spring and early summer months. Chopped grapes, when in season, or raisins were also fed during the breeding season as was an occasional sliced cantaloupe or watermelon. Gaines kibbled dog food was offered and eagerly consumed. Grain such as whole kernel corn was never fed as tragopans tend to become overweight easily and egg laying then becomes a problem.

Nesting usually began in the last week of March or the first week of April, although the males could be seen displaying and heard calling a few weeks prior. They were usually quite gentle with their hens and very rarely, if ever, were they seen pursuing them.

The eggs were deposited in the nest box where the hen hollowed out a bowl in the nesting material just prior to laying. They were usually not laid with any consistency, however, Four days was the maximum time between eggs. Clutches were separated by fifteen to twenty-five days and two clutches of four to six eggs each usually made up the season.

All of our incubation was performed by bantam hens and the incubation lasted twentieth-eight to thirty days with twenty-nine days being the average. The eggs were set no later than five days from the time they were laid with never more than four eggs to a hen. Once pipped the chicks seemed to emerge quickly and were very strong with well developed wings. We left them with their foster mother and found them to respond immediately to her calls. They were very eager eaters and feeding was never a problem. We fed Purina Startena along with finely chopped greens such as tender grass shoots, dandelions, chick weed and the like. We also fed small meal worms and hard-boiled egg yolk but very sparingly. Tragopan chicks are very congenial and picking never seemed to occur. They roost quite early and are easily sexed at a young age. We found with our chicks that the ratio of cocks to hens seemed to be somewhat even with the cock birds having a slight edge.

All-in-all Tragopans are magnificent birds and a fine addition to any aviary. I feel, however, that they should not be kept in areas where the temperature remains hot for extended periods of time as they do not adapt well to these conditions.

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