

The Splendid Bourke

by Joseph M. Crosby



2nd generation hybrids – male on left, hen on right.

Photos by Robert Barnes, Senior Animal Keeper, L.A. Zoo

During the Spring of 1974, due to the lack of space, I placed a pair of Splendids and a pair of Bourkes in a planted aviary approximately 12 ft. square. This is something that usually is not recommended due to the possibility of a cross breed. In April the male Bourke, who was 17 years of age, died. This left a pair of Splendids and a female Bourke (13 years old).

The week of July 15, 1974 we observ-

ed the Splendid male feeding the Bourke hen. The following week, July 22, 1974, the Splendid mounted the female Bourke on several occasions. The female Bourke entered the nest August 2 and remained there until the 5th when she laid her 1st egg. She laid 4 in all. The 1st egg hatched August 28 and 2 more on the 30th. The female Splendid helped incubate the eggs as well as the Bourke. Most people really felt that the Splendid female laid the eggs

and the Bourke was just helping incubate the eggs. After all, there has never been a recorded breeding/cross of the Splendid and Bourke or any of the other Neophemas and the Bourke.

There was much excitement a couple of weeks later when the 3 young began feathering enough to tell that the babies were definitely not young Splendids. What would they be like? Pink, blue, scarlet and green or a scarlet chested Bourke? A salmon chested Splendid? Much to our disappointment as the young began to mature, they resembled the Bourke.

On October 26 the 1st young left the nest. It was then we realized that he was much larger than his mother and much brighter than a normal Bourke male at the time he left the nest. The young hybrid's throat to his vent was a bright pink. His crown, shoulder tips, flights and tail were a very vivid royal blue. His colors were brighter than an adult male Bourke. At the baby moult, the pink from the throat to the vent became a beautiful brick red. The other two young were not nearly as bright and were lacking the color and size of the oldest. They were definitely more like normal Bourkes.

The Splendid x Bourke pair returned to nest with a clutch of infertile eggs. Several clutches of infertile eggs followed. Then in June of 1975 they had a clutch of 3 eggs and one was fertile. It died shortly after hatching with the lower



Hybrid youngsters (1st generation) of a Scarlet chested Parrakeet male and Bourke Parrakeet hen. Young hen on left, young male on right.

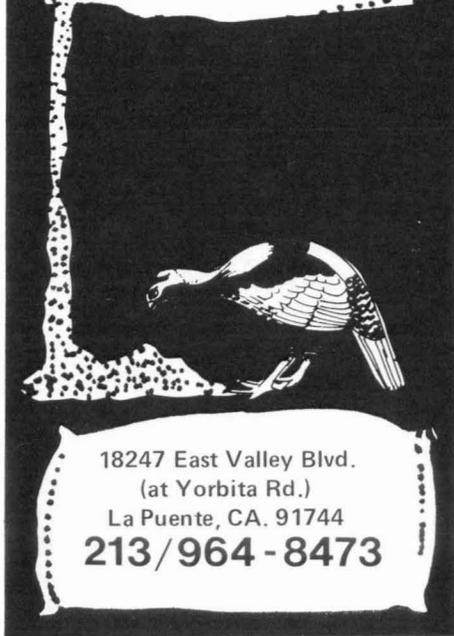


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end not being fully developed. They had another clutch of infertile eggs in 1975 and 3 clutches all infertile in 1976. The problem could be one of several. It could be the age of the hen or the fact the male has not been seen mounting her since 1975.

The 3 young raised turned out to be 2 hens and a male. One of the hens died a year later leaving a pair. In 1975 they never made an effort to breed or seek a nest. At the second moult, the young male lost some of his bright coloring, much to our surprise. He is still more colorful than normal and he has good size, customary of most hybrids.

We tried pairing both with other normal Bourkes but no success. In July of 1976 (2 years of age), the hybrid pair went to nest. Now the big question in our minds is whether these hybrids are fertile. Many felt they would not be. One other person gave them a 60/40 chance. They hatched two eggs out of three. We were very pleased with two young, one being a male, bigger and brighter than even his father. Once again he was a deep brick red instead of the usual pale pink. The other was a hen of good size but not any larger than a good size normal Bourke. I was all set to show the young male in the 1976 Nu-Color Show in November, had been getting him accustomed to a small cage, etc., when he died. The female is still alive.

In 1977 the hybrids nested in March

giving me 3 healthy young of good size but none with the bright brick red color, possibly all females. They now have 2 more young out and 3 eggs in the nest.

We may never produce the scarlet chested Bourke or the salmon Splendid but I am now content to build a good stock of large healthy brightly colored hybrid Bourke Parakeets. Many wonder how this happened after so many years without a recorded breeding. For years people felt that the Bourke did not belong in the family of Neophemas. After this breeding it was said that this proves they belong in the same family. Does it or doesn't it?

Upon some considerable searching into the history of the Splendid and Bourke I have, it was found that the Splendid male was fostered by Bourkes. He was imprinted at birth (re: article in AFA Watchbird by Klaus Immelman on imprinting).

This breeding has now been recorded in German Journals in 1976, recording it for all times as the 1st breeding of a Splendid/Bourke Parakeet.

In all the years that I have been active in aviculture, I have never seen a pair of birds more fond of each other. He totally worships her and I'm sure she has never seen anything more beautiful than him. If they never have another young, it is still a joy to have such a contented pair of birds in my aviaries.

Joseph Crosby, left, received a Silver Avy Award in 1977 for his work with the Splendid/Bourke hybrid. Steve Clause, right, presented the award.



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