

hand REARED PARROTS

by Thomas R. Currier

Two of the three eggs laid by my pair of Double Yellow Head (Le Vaillant's Amazon) parrots hatched in mid-July, 1977, after approximately 32 days of incubation; they are thought to be "Nevada's First".

The adult female was between two and three years old and the male nine years old when they were introduced in February, 1976. Both were extremely tame house pets but quickly became as vicious as they had been friendly after accepting one another.

Within two months after introduction the hen laid two eggs and sat faithfully; both were clear. She laid another set of two which were also infertile. They were then living in California and in December of 1976 were moved to Las Vegas where they were kept, in one cage, until early March 1977. They were then put into an outdoor aviary measuring four feet by 8 feet by eight feet high. A barrel with eight or nine inches of shredded mesquite bark and dampened cedar shavings in it was placed on a low table in the covered portion of the flight. Heavy wire mesh made a narrow ladder from the table top to entrance hole and down into the barrel.

Neither adult was accustomed to an outdoor situation but showed interest in the barrel early in May. There was no noticeable mating until late May and in early June three eggs were laid on alternate days starting about June 7th.

The first egg apparently was infertile but the second and third hatched on July 12th and 14th.

The male bird apparently never entered the barrel once incubation had started, nor was he observed to feed the hen.

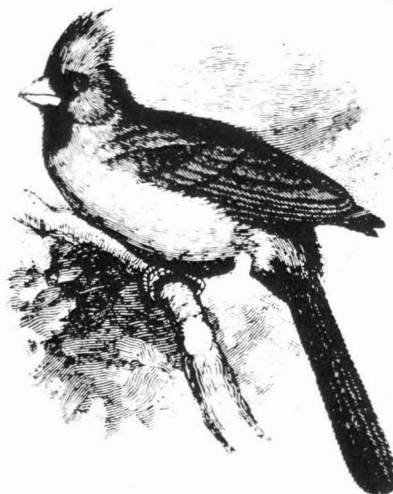
Upon the arrival of the first chick both parents were in the nest most of the time and there is reason to believe the male fed not only the young but also his mate. An enormous quantity of food was consumed daily by both parents.

Their basic daily diet of "parrot seed mix", quarter-slice of dark bread with Linatone, half-apple and Romaine was

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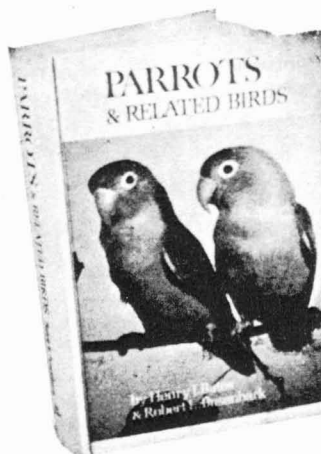
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added to as their food consumption rapidly increased. Cooked wheat cereal to which was added eggs, powdered vitamin and mineral supplement, Karo, mashed sweet potato and cooked carrots was particularly enjoyed and taken in preference to "seed".

The two babies were removed for hand-rearing on July 27th; they were large and heavy, with feet and legs appearing nearly adult size; scanty grey fuzz, no quills showing; eyes "slitted" but not quite open, beaks black and only slightly "hooked" in appearance.

They were kept warm by a heating pad above them, in a small wooden, cedar-shaving-padded box. Temperature was kept from 94 to 98 degrees for about a week when it was permitted to drop gradually to the low 80's.

They were fed six times daily, at three hour intervals (no "night feedings") starting at just before 6 A.M., via outsized eyedropper. They were fed until their crops were well rounded; when taken from their nest both babies' crops were "stuffed" and were therefore filled to that stage at each feeding.

There were no problems of any kind and development was rapid. After extra heat was no longer needed, a light cloth was used to cover half of their box; they preferred sleeping under the covered

portion and continued this until their 8th week.

Baby diet consisted of the same cereal mixture previously prepared for parent birds, to which was added crushed sunflower meats, strained corn and, occasionally, scraped "mineral block".

Feathering was complete at forty days and the youngsters were cracking seeds well but eating very little of their contents. They did enjoy apple and Romaine at this stage and ate both well.

Flight was strong and acrobatics on perches were well coordinated at forty-five days.

"Eyedropper" feedings were reduced to five times daily after the first four weeks of hand feeding; to four times daily for the next twelve days, to three times for 10 days, and to morning and night only for another five days. For the following eight days only a night time feeding was given and they were then entirely on their own and doing it easily.

Apple, Romaine, basic "parrot seed mix", a mineral block and grit was supplied as for adult birds. They actually ate a great deal more seed than would a mature bird, each day.

At three months, both babies were starting to say several very clear words and phrases and were as friendly as puppies and playful as kittens.

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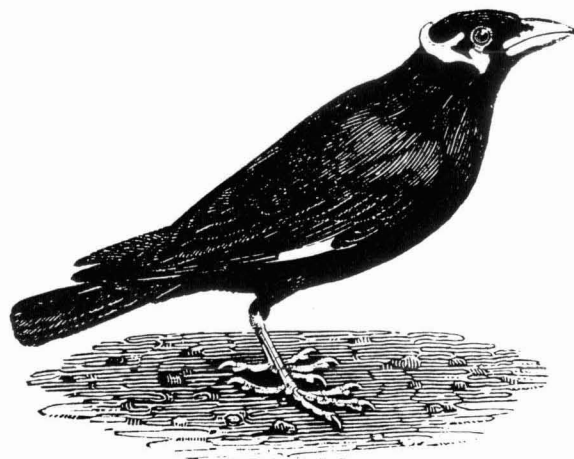
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