



Breeding Indian Ringneck Parakeets

by Mary M. Menser
Plantation, Florida

I have always felt that birds have a mind of their own. While we may follow a standard practice in our attempts to breed them, they often ignore our efforts and do exactly as they please.

I purchased my Indian ringnecks when they were quite young. I guessed at their sex, being babies. I selected one because it seemed a brighter green than the others and its beak was definitely a brighter red. The second bird was chunkier and duller in plumage and color of beak; also the second bird's eyes were not as defined as the other bird's. The male (at least the one I hoped was a male) did not have any rings about his neck as yet. I was told they should breed in their second year. Three years later, several cage changes later, several nestboxes, and after changing aviary neighbors three or four times, I was ready to give up.

The male now had his rings and was beautiful. The duller bird did turn out to be a female. I had a pair! I finally moved them to an aviary which housed a pair of nandays in one of the two sections. The aviary had originally been built for cockatiels and was L-shaped. Each section is approximately seven feet in length. The wire flooring is about three feet off the ground. Each section is approximately three feet high and wide. The bend forming the L is about three feet high, three feet wide and long, roofed and protected on the north side from wind. It was in the seven foot

section with the L off the end that I placed the ringnecks. In the L sat a nestbox, on the wire floor which while it had been thoroughly cleaned, was not prepared for use. In fact, it had been made for lorikeets, and had a wire bottom. It was approximately 24 inches high and 12 inches square. I was going to take it out but got distracted and forgot.

To my surprise a day or two later, I discovered the male climbing in and out of the box; he had ignored all previous boxes. I decided to leave well enough alone. I threw a few handfuls of shavings into the box, and slid a large cookie sheet under it. I was going to hang it up but realized that I would need help in doing so. No one was handy to help. The next day the male was again in the box. A few days later I began a log.

3/23/82 Surprised to find all the shavings thrown out of the box. Male still climbing in and out of box. Female on perch.

3/24/82 No female in sight all day but at water dish at dusk.

3/25/82 Observed male feeding female through entrance hole. Both flew to end of aviary at sight of me.

3/26/82 No female in sight but again at water dish at dusk.

3/30/82 Male has become very protective and became quite excited when I approached. I am sure there are eggs.

3/31/82 Hen left box for water. I dashed to look. There are five eggs. I have no idea when they were laid.

4/3/82 Hen on and off nest at every disturbance. I almost hate to change the water or bring food. The dumpster in the church yard (behind us) sends her flying each time they bang it. It is useless to ask the church to move the dumpster. I tried and they refused. The cockatiel aviary is right near the fence and they are not laying well.

4/4/82 Checked box when hen left it this morning. There are two babies. Other three eggs warm and seem fertile. She returned as soon as I left. I hate to go out to their aviary too often but due to the ants (seems like we are overrun this year) have to change the food often. I don't dare spray.

4/14/82 Phoned my friend, Linda, and asked if it's normal for the hen to be so skittish, and if ringnecks are good parents as a rule, or should I be prepared to hand feed. She did not know, but checked with a friend who has raised them. She then relayed the information to me. I had been giving the parents everything mentioned except monkey chow. I gave up on that when most of my birds seemed to reject it. I was told

not to expect too much of a first breeding.

Feeding the parents: parakeet and sunflower seed sprinkled with Petamine. Whole wheat bread moistened, corn on the cob (raw), chopped apple, orange, grapes, and two balls of ground meat. (I use ground round to avoid fat and pork which most hamburger contains.) I give all my psittacines this and they love it. Meatballs approximately the size of a small grape.

4/16/82 Checked box. There is a third baby. No time to check other eggs. Hen became too excited and feel it best not to disturb her too much. Just have to trust her to hatch the other two eggs, and feed the babies. Wonder at the length of time between babies. Does this mean perhaps the other two eggs will not hatch?

4/17/82 A fourth baby in the box. Added soaked monkey chow to the parents' food, also some millet spray.

4/24/82 Fifth egg did not hatch. Four babies doing fine. Parents eating all the food put out . . . even the monkey chow. Now consuming a full ear of corn, three to five string beans, dish full of cut up apple, orange and grapes, with a couple of meatballs added, two slices whole wheat bread and a second dish of fruit later in the day. All this plus seed, Petamine, millet spray, vitamins (Avitron), peanuts, and fresh water three times a day.

4/25/82 Really worried over yesterday's storm. The rain soaked everything. Thank goodness the ringnecks' box stayed dry. One of the cockatiel nest boxes didn't and I found a soaked, dead chick in it. Will have to check the roof for a leak. It was such a driving rain it may have come in from the wire sides.

4/26/82 Parents still spook easily. Will fly from box at every noise, or movement (low planes, dumpster, etc.). I am surprised they ever hatched the eggs. Checked chicks. Crops full.

4/28/82 Oldest two are 14 days old. I believe one must have hatched during the night, and the other during the morning, as there were none in the box the day before I found the first two. All have eyes open now (fourth, not completely). Crops full. Parents staying out today.

4/30/82 I cannot believe how fast they are growing. Oldest completely fills both of my hands and is heavy. Parents seem to be doing a good job of feeding. Parents seem to clean up all excess food. Water changed three times a day. Chicks quite noisy now and can be heard outside the aviary.

5/2/82 All babies have pin feathers

opening except youngest who has dark areas showing.

5/13/82 Removed babies from the nestbox. Oldest now are 29 days old and pretty well feathered. Youngest still downy in spots. Really should have taken them out earlier I'm told, to have them really tame, but events prevented my doing so. Found the two youngest with empty crops. Two oldest well fed.

5/14/82 All babies taking food from spoon. Seem to be digesting food alright. Formula using: Velma Hart's #3 plus 1 jar strained carrot baby food and 7-8 cooked monkey chow put through blender. Added 1 tsp. applesauce each feeding. I freeze the formula in jars, taking one out at a time for feeding. Feeding: 8:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, 4:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Will cut to four feedings as soon as I'm sure they are all doing well. I believe that they are old enough.

I am not an "exacting" person. I never measure but gauge. I hate tube feeding and refuse to do it as I have seen other people do so wrongly, and the chicks die. I always use a spoon. I use a bent spoon for the older babies. I like Velma Hart's formula #3 and have used it, with slight variations, on lovebirds, cockatiels and plumheads. For newborns I use the first formula and then jump to the third, sometimes diluting it a bit. I do not like the #2 formula. I may be wrong but feel the birds do better without it. I believe if something works for you... use it!

5/17/82 Babies all eating well from the spoon. All food is digested. They are growing fast. I read somewhere that corn fed babies should continue getting corn. Will add to next formula. Babies shy. Next time I will remove them from the nest box earlier.

5/21/82 Made new formula. Velma Hart #3 plus 8-10 pieces cooked monkey chow (put into blender before adding), froze in jars in freezer. At each feeding adding 1 tsp. creamed corn (baby food) and 1 tsp. applesauce to 1/2 cup formula. Alternating every other day apricots (baby food) in place of applesauce. Adding vitamins once a day. Chicks still shy but beginning to look around the room now.

Comments: I can't quite put my finger on it but there is a difference in the babies. Age perhaps? Two oldest have a distinct lighter green area around the neck, and seem an all over, brighter green like the male parent. The two younger ones are chunkier and the eyes seem not as pronounced as the other two... rather like the adult female. They are very much like the parents

when I first got them. I wonder, do I have two males and two females? Now stripping millet sprays on their own. Becoming quite tame.

Footnote: 7/6/82 All babies eating well on their own, fully feathered and a beautiful shade of green. Second oldest (possible male) is the tamest. He is so sweet I hated to part with him, but all went to a new home today.

VELMA HART FORMULAS Formula #1 (First ten days)

1/2 cup boiling water
1 tablespoon Wheathearts*
Cook three to five minutes
Add 1 egg yolk and 1 rounded teaspoon powdered milk
2 1/4 ounces of strained oatmeal with applesauce and bananas (This is a prepared baby cereal.)
1 teaspoon honey (optional)

Formula #2 (Till about fourth week)

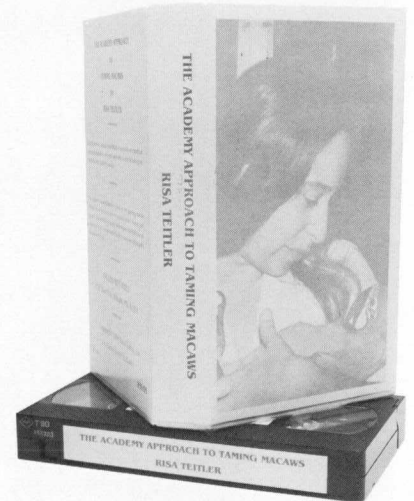
2 cups boiling water
2 teaspoons corn oil (as used for salads or cooking)
A slight dash of salt
1/2 cup Wheathearts*
Cook three to five minutes (Remove from stove and add following:)
1/2 cup powdered milk
4 1/2 ounces of baby cereal as in first formula (Oatmeal, applesauce and bananas)
1 tablespoon honey
1/3 to 1/2 cup fine sunflower meal (available in health food stores)

Formula #3

5 cups water
1 cup quick oatmeal (not instant)
1/2 cup Wheathearts*
1 tablespoon corn oil
1/2 teaspoon salt
Cook and remove from stove when cereal is cooked
Add: one 4 1/2 ounce jar of baby "Garden Vegetables"
Note: For cockatoos and cockatiels increase this amount by 1/3 to 1/2.
1 cup powdered milk
2 cups sunflower meal

*I use wheatgerm instead of Wheathearts

This amount fills approximately five small peanut butter jars. I freeze them. Each night I take out one jar and place in the bottom of the refrigerator to defrost. For each feeding of the day I take out, from the defrosted formula, what I consider ample and heat it. (My way is to spoon the amount into a cup and put the cup into a pan of hot water, or heat over low burner.)



THE ACADEMY APPROACH to TAMING MACAWS by RISA TEITLER VIDEO

78 min., color, VHS or Beta
\$59.95 (Mass. residents add \$3.00 tax)

Make checks payable to:
EAGLE'S NEST VIDEO
P.O. Box 100, Dept. WB, Auburn, MA 01501

NEW CATALOG

Send \$1.00 discount available
your source for...

LAFEBER'S PRODUCTS

- PELLETTED FOODS
- EMERALD I & II
- NUTRISTART, etc.

raise healthier birds...
more nutrition for your money...

AVI-CULTUR—1 BILLION™

concentrated Lactobacillus acidophilus

- combat diarrhea & "pasted-up" vents
- combat the effects of stress from crowding, molting, drugs, etc.
- fight E. coli, Salmonella, etc!
- Just sprinkle on food.

MEDICAL SUPPLIES, ETC.

the bird specialists...



Wm. V. Reichert & Son • Dept W
1523 Potter Rd.
Park Ridge, IL 60068
312-825-BIRD