

Babbling Birds

An Anthology of Poems About Parrots

Just published—the first and only anthology of its kind, a very special book for parrot lovers.

Babbling Birds: An Anthology of Poems about Parrots, From Antiquity to the Present was compiled, with an eight-page introduction, by David L. O’Neal.

The book contains 101 poems by 89 poets, including the poetry of Ovid, Statius, Crinagoras, Tu Fu, Han-shan, Po Chi-I, Zhu Quingyu, John Skelton, Thomas Campbell, Wordsworth, Gresset, Raffi, Rilke, Eliot, Wodehouse, Wallace Stevens, Sacheverell Sitwell, Weldon Kees, John Ashberry, John Kinsella and many others.

Babbling Birds is 158 pages, with 20 color illustrations and



one black and white illustration.

David O’Neal, who lives in San Francisco, is a retired rare book dealer now enjoying a second career as a writer, especially of poetry.

In addition to previous professional writing about rare books, book collecting and bibliography, his recent creative work has been published in various literary magazines and anthologies, such as *Vision Magazine*, *The Lyric*, *Mississippi Crow*, *The Marin Poets Anthology*, *Two Hawks Quarterly* and, of interest to aviculturists, *Bird Keeper* (Great Britain), *Bird Keeper* (Australia) and *The Magazine of the Parrot Society of the UK*.

He has also published a book about his Yellow-collared Macaw, *Streak, The Parrot Who Loves Me*. *Streak* and *Babbling Birds* are available for purchase through his website, www.davidloneal.us, or by contacting him at davidloneal@yahoo.com.

Attention—AVY Awards Applicants

The AFA Awards Committee has received applications with one or more claims in the following categories:

Silver AVY Award, Category 1, Most Progress for the Establishment of an Individual Species or Group of Related Birds

1. Queen of Bavaria (Golden) Conure

First U.S. Breeding Awards

1. Lettered Aracari
2. Black-masked Emerald Toucanet

The above nominations were submitted by the Dec. 31, 2010, deadline to qualify for an award at the upcoming 2011 convention in San Francisco.

If you know of additional breedings that previously qualify or challenge these categories, please contact AFA Awards Chairwoman Linda S. Rubin at LSR@CockatielsPlusParrots.com

New nominations for all categories of AFA AVY Awards for 2012 will be accepted through Dec. 31, 2011.

For more details, please refer



to the AVY Awards Categories & Rules by visiting the AFA website at http://afabirds.org/20061029_AVY.shtml.

Loro Parque Fundación

Color increases durability of parrot feathers

The colors of parrots are important for signaling between individuals, as well as for appropriate camouflage within their natural environments. However, these colors can have additional functions, an interesting one having recently been demonstrated by researchers in the United States. In a controlled series of experiments, Edward Burtt and colleagues have revealed that parrot feathers can be more resistant to bacterial degradation due to their colors (Burtt et al. 2010).

Bacteria of the genus *Bacillus* that degrade feathers are abundant, especially in humid habitats, and they are



ubiquitous among birds. Known as keratinolytic micro-organisms, these bacteria breakdown the keratin of the feathers by enzymatic action. It is already known that presence of the pigment melanin helps to reduce microbial damage, but the researchers hypothesized that the special pigments in parrot feathers also have this function. These pigments are called psittacofulvins, unique to parrots which

manufacture them in their bodies, and they produce the red, orange and yellow colors of parrot feathers.

Under laboratory conditions the researchers exposed parrot tail and wing feathers of different colors to the feather-degrading *Bacillus licheniformis*. They also looked to see if a thicker cortex (the tough, flexible outer layer) of the feather barbs could increase resistance to bacterial attack. Finally they evaluated whether or not higher concentrations of pigment in red and yellow feathers decreased the rate of degradation.

Burtt and his colleagues found that white feathers degrade faster than feathers with any colors. Red and green feathers degrade at much the same rate as blue and black feathers (only with melanin), even though green feathers contain both melanin

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PHOTO BY KIRSTY GODSMAN

and psittacofulvins. Yellow feathers degrade substantially faster than red feathers, but for both colors the bacterial degradation was lower with a higher concentration of psittacofulvins. Furthermore, the researchers report that psittacofulvins, like melanin, thicken the cortex of the feather barbs, which also might make the feathers more resistant to bacterial degradation.

Therefore, don't be surprised if a White Cockatoo looks scruffier than a Scarlet Macaw!

The Blue-throated Macaw— 15 percent of its global population in one tree

In the dry season of Bolivia, a

small group of trees maintains its bright green foliage, in contrast to the parched grassy plain extending into the distance. But that is not all. Look carefully and you will be able to count no fewer than 44 Blue-throated Macaws (*Ara glaucogularis*) resting in the crown of the largest tree.

Never before has such a large group been photographed, which is not surprising, because the Blue-throated Macaw is in the IUCN (World Conservation Union) Red List category of "Critically Endangered," and this group represents about 15 percent of the entire world population. However, they are in a safe haven, the 11,530-acre Barba Azul (Blue Beard) Nature Reserve, which is the only protected

area for this species. This macaw only occurs in the seasonally inundated plains of Beni, northeast Bolivia, and since 1995 the conservation actions of the Bolivian NGO Armonía, in partnership with the Loro Parque Fundación of Spain, have been gradually increasing the population.

With help from the World Land Trust-U.S. and the American Bird Conservancy, the reserve has been created in the last two years, and more than 90 Blue-throated Macaws use it during the non-breeding season. Research on the macaws and other fauna and flora of the reserve has been conducted by students of Glasgow University, and in 2010 student Kirsty Godsmán was in the right place at

the right time to capture this unique image. Much more needs to be done to remove the Blue-throated Macaw from the threatened species list, so if you would like to donate to the project, please contact the LPF at lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org

~Dr. David Waugh, director

Spix's Macaw Breeding

The breeding year was kicked off with an absolute highlight. Our Spix's Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) "Richie" and his partner have produced the world's first two Spix's Macaw offspring in 2011.

This exceptional success surprised us a little as Richie had just returned to Germany in September. Since January 2007 he had been loaned out to the Lymington Foundation to provide offspring there. Unfortunately, the pairings there were unsuccessful and so we decided to bring him back to Germany.

After a one-month quarantine period followed by three weeks alone, he was reunited with his former partner in mid November. Shortly afterward we noticed the first signs of breeding behavior and after a very few weeks the first egg was laid on Dec. 21, 2010. It was followed by further eggs on Dec. 24, Dec. 27 and Dec. 30. Two chicks hatched from the three fertilized eggs on Jan. 18, 2011 and Jan. 21, 2011. The young birds, "Kiki" and "Felix," have come on fine and are currently raised by hand.

As the eggs were removed from the nest relatively early, we have great hopes that the breeding season is not yet over and that more eggs will be forthcoming.

Back in 2008 our female hit the



PHOTO BY PATRICK PLEUL

headlines when she, with her then-partner, hatched the world's only Spix's Macaw offspring of that year. In the space of two years "Frieda" has now fully developed her plumage and has become a Spix's Macaw beauty. When Frieda's two half-sisters can feed off seed, they will also have the opportunity to meet their big sister.

~ Enrico Sydow,
*Association for the Conservation of
Threatened Parrots*

Scientists Find New Parrot Species

A type of West Australian parrot has been found to be a distinct species from its eastern counterpart and needs special protection as one of the world's rarest birds, scientists say.

Only about 110 of the western ground parrots are known to survive in the wild.

An Australian research team used DNA from museum specimens up to 160 years old to reveal that

populations of the parrots in eastern and western Australia were distinct from each other.

The team, led by Australian Wildlife Conservancy's Stephen Murphy, has concluded that the western populations should be recognized as a new species, *Pezoporus flaviventris*.

Dr. Murphy said the western ground parrot had declined rapidly in the last 20 years and there were only about 110 birds surviving in the wild, most of them in one national park.

It was critically endangered and one of the world's rarest birds, he said.

Allan Burbidge of WA's Department of Environment and Conservation said a single wildfire through the national park or an influx of introduced predators, such as cats, could rapidly push the species to extinction.

Director of CSIRO's Australian National Wildlife Collection, Leo Joseph, said that even after 200 years of study, scientists were still recognizing new species of birds in Australia.

The team's findings have been

published this month in the international conservation research journal *Conservation Genetics*.

~ AAP

Weltvogelpark Walsrode

The parrots are always popular with visitors and several species are highly conservation-dependent and therefore parrots will continue to be an important part of the bird collection at the world's largest bird park, the Weltvogelpark Walsrode, for a long time to come. A large part of the breeding efforts are made behind the scenes of the park and in many exhibits often the groups of offspring can be seen by the general public.

Our first Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii*) hatched in December 2008. This young stayed with its parents for good seven months and was more than ordinarily discontent with its isolation from the comforts of its parent home. Accurate almost to the day the pair laid for the second time one year later. Again only a single egg was laid and a single chick reared.

This year the pair is keeping the good tradition up and currently incubates their third clutch. The Australian Black Cockatoos are very rare in aviculture outside Australia and the successful breeding is seldom achieved without hand-rearing. Most hand-reared males in this species display some degree of poor imprinting and do not pair up with the females of their own species. Especially for this reason, the young, parent-reared black cockatoos in Walsrode are most welcome.

The Dammerman's Moustached Parakeets (*Psittacula alexandri*



At top, Red-tailed Black Cockatoos. Above right, a Blue-bellied Parrot. Above left, a pair of Dammerman's Moustached Parakeets.

dammermani) first arrived to Walsrode in 2008. In 2010 the rearing succeeded more than once. However in the first clutch we did determine that the pair only warmed the chicks for a short time every day and in the cold and rainy spring we had this year the chicks were not developing appropriately. As a consequence the two chicks were pulled for hand-rearing and both recovered fine. During the second clutch the weather was much better and the parents reared three chicks without any problems. We cannot say if the limited time spent in the nest with the chicks is a particular adaptation in this subspecies or just an incidence in our current breeding pair.

Moustached Parakeets of other subspecies, kept in Walsrode in the past have not shown this behavior.

The Blue-bellied Parrot (*Triclarina malachitacea*) and the Pileated Parrot (*Pionopsitta pileata*), both mid-sized parrot species, are inhabitants of the seriously threatened Atlantic-rainforest of Brazil. In Weltvogelpark the Blue-bellied Parrot has been bred regularly since the 1980s but in 2009 we achieved our best results so far with seven offspring. In the Pileated Parrot we have had less success but in 2009 we did receive two eggs from a breeder who had experienced how the parents had previously destroyed all of their clutches. Two chicks hatched

and were reared by our nursery team adding this species to our collection for the first time in a decade.

Another new species in 2009 was the New Caledonian Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haematodus deplanchii*) of which we received an unrelated pair from France. We are now awaiting the first breeding results. Also in the closely related Blue-cheeked Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus capistratus*) we managed to establish an unrelated pair for the first time in 2009, this species continued to breed already the same year and has since been very prolific with four clutches of parent-reared chicks in 2010.

As soon as the young has fledged the female laid another clutch of four eggs. To ensure the health of the adult pair we removed the nest box to force the birds to make a break.


One of the breeding pairs of Blue-crowned Lorikeets (*Vini australis*) have repeatedly reared just single egg clutches, between these clutches they make a comfortable break lasting between five and six months, leaving this little Lorikeet to be one of the species with the slowest reproduction rate in our collection.

After a longer break, our Purple-naped Lorries (*Lorius domiella*) started breeding again. The current pair consists of a female from our own breeding in 1994 and a male imported from Indonesia via the Cologne Zoo. A male offspring hatched in February 2010 and stayed with its parents throughout the season even though they started with a second clutch during the summer. The adult male has the unusual habit of “clicking” with its bill when he is excited. It’s interesting to observe how the offspring is trying to imitate this


but is not quite successful. In 2010 we succeeded in breeding the Purple-bellied Lory (*Lorius hypoinochrous*) for the first time in Walsrode. Both parents in this pair spend most of the time during incubation and also during the rearing of the chick inside the nest box. This meant also that the

keepers had to clean the nest box and exchange the wood-shavings every few days.


The Goldie’s Lorikeet (*Psitteuteles goldiei*) has long been maintained as a group in Weltvogelpark and seems to be doing well in this setting, even though not every pair is reproducing.



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An adult Kea

When we placed this group of 12 birds in our 2800 square-meter Nusantara Rainforest exhibit we did expect to see an increase in breeding results. The contrary was the case over a period of six months we did not see a single successful breeding. After this we returned the birds to their accustomed surroundings in the Loriatrium where the group lives in a smaller aviary and started breeding again only a few weeks later.

In a group of four Keas (*Nestor notabilis*), consisting of an older and a younger pair on exhibit in the park, the keepers surprisingly found a clutch of eggs in the early spring. Unfortunately the eggs were partly broken, possibly through the younger and less experienced pair. For this reason the

eggs were pulled and placed in the incubator and the young Keas then hand-reared. With Keas it is essential to consider that the fully downed, chicks are well adapted to a cold climate. During hand-rearing it must be avoided that the young overheat as this often lead to slowed digestion, regurgitation and dehydration.

The Horned Parakeets (*Eunymphicus cornutus*) from New Caledonia reared six chicks in two clutches in 2010. The two chicks, a male and a female, from the first clutch were left with the parents as they reared the second clutch. This did not seem to cause any problems but the older siblings did not assist their parents in rearing the second clutch as we were expecting.

~ Simon Bruslund and Martin Gaede

Watchbird Articles Online

Soon you will be able to access the beauty and education contained in past Watchbird articles. We will have articles from the start in 1974 to April 1981 on our Watchbird website. These articles contain optical character recognition that allow sort and search by keywords and allow translation to other languages. You will be able to download them for a small fee, which supports the website.

If you are an author or photographer for any of the past Watchbird editions up to the present, we want to get your publication release. If you would prefer not to have your contributions available for download, please let us know. In either case, please contact Mary Ellen LePage mail@birds2pet.com

We also want to add the later years' articles after we have finished a search for authors, in an attempt to obtain their signed release. Please help us with this important project that will help preserve the history of aviculture.

— Mary Ellen LePage



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