

Breeding and Handfeeding Bronze-winged Pionus

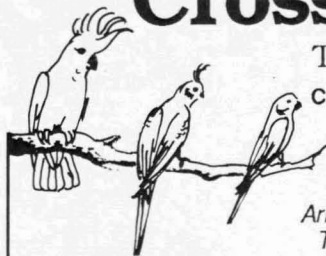
by Stan Carpenter
and John Roberts
Apache Junction, Arizona

Although I have been an active aviculturist since I was 16 years old, I was totally unprepared for my introduction to the pionus group. When we obtained our first bronze-winged pionus in the winter of 1982 I was immediately impressed by their gentleness, their subtle coloration and, of course, by the lack of the loud shrieking that I had experienced with the Amazons. It was what you might call love at first sight. I had to have more, so we arranged to buy three additional specimens which, when combined with our first, gave us two pairs.

As we were living in the city at the time, the birds spent their first several months living in a common parrot cage. In April 1983 we moved out to our present location in the desert and, shortly thereafter, each pair was given permanent housing. Nest boxes were not provided until the fall of 1983.

In January 1984, pair no. 1, consisting of a mature male and what I was informed was an immature female, were observed copulating. They were housed in a 3' suspended cube with a 10" x 12" x 18" nest box. Sometime during the month she began to lay,

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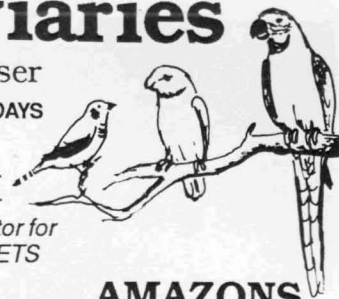
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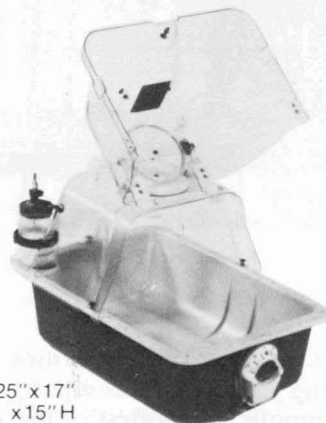
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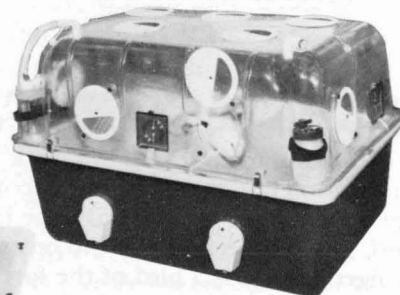
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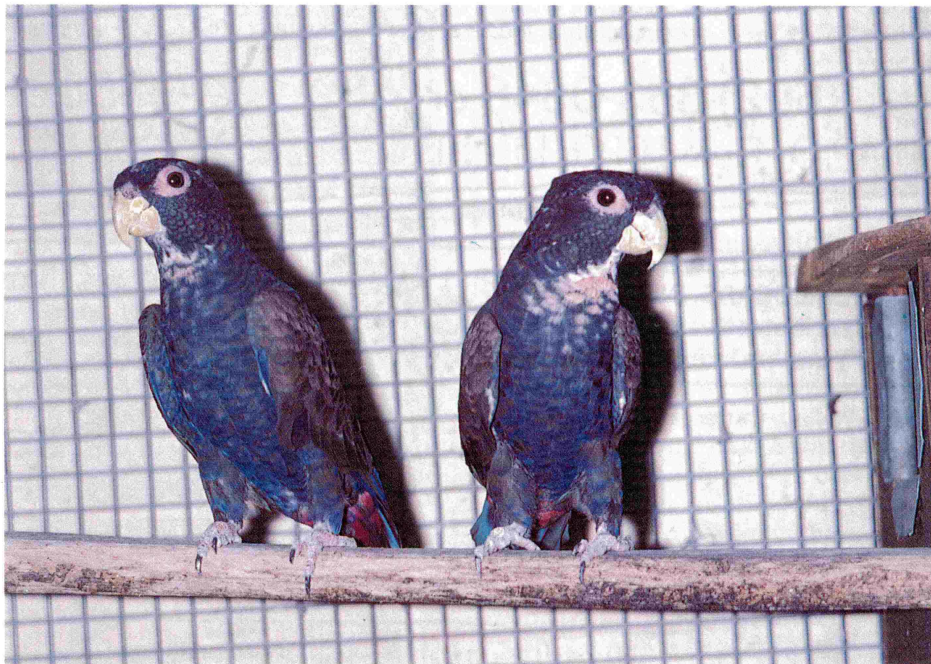
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These handfed bronze-winged pionus youngsters will soon be eating on their own.



Adult bronze-winged pionus.

dropping a total of 18 eggs off the perch over the next six months. We were disheartened by her lack of orientation but, nevertheless, encouraged by the fact that, at least, she had laid. Due to the fact that the bronze-winged pionus is a bird of the forests of tropical and sub-tropical mountains of South America, other aviculturists seemed to feel that our chances of success were slim, at best.

The spring of 1984 was extremely dry. As I recall, we had a shower the first week of January and a smattering of rain one day in April and then

nothing until the monsoons set in during June. May was a particularly hot month, the hottest of the year as it turned out, and May was the month that pair no. 2 decided to lay. This pair, consisting of two mature birds, was housed in a 3' x 3' x 6' long suspended cage with a 12" x 12" x 24" nest box attached to the rear. Although no courtship or copulation was observed, a routine check of the nest box on May 3rd revealed two eggs. We hesitated to disturb the hen by removing the eggs, since the temperature was in the 105 degree range,

so we kept a close eye on the pair and were rewarded by two more eggs on the 6th and 9th.

Since we had been led to believe that four eggs was a normal clutch for the bronze-wings, we removed the eggs for artificial incubation. The eggs were taken over to the home of John Roberts who was running his incubator at the time. The temperature during the incubation period was held at 98.7 degrees with a relative humidity of 53%. Approximately 24 hours before the eggs were due to pip the temperature was dropped a degree coupled with a rise in the humidity.

Candling revealed all four eggs were fertile and the first chick hatched on May 26th, with the other three following on May 28th, 31st and June 3rd. We had successfully hatched the bronze-wings. Now to get them through to the weaning stage.

The first feeding consisted of D5W with lactated Ringer's solution. A few drops were administered with a pipette, until a small bulge showed in the crop area. For the balance of the feedings, during the first 24 hours, a 50/50 mix of D5W and strained apple sauce was used. From the second day through the fifth day a mixture of lactobacillus, carrots, applesauce and water was used, only feeding enough, at two-hour intervals, to place a small bubble in the crop. From the sixth day onward the chicks were fed a formula consisting of sunflower meal, peanut meal, Zu-preem, Gerber's mixed cereal, mynah food, vionate and dicalcium phosphate. Increasing amounts of the formula were added to the applesauce and carrot mixture until equal amounts were reached at about the tenth day. From that point the pionus were fed the basic formula to which was added strained corn, strained chicken and strained veal up to the point of weaning, which was about 4-1/2 months of age.

The parents were fed a basic diet consisting of a commercial seed mix, supplemented with a daily ration of fruits and vegetables. Particular attention was paid to feeding vegetables with a high vitamin A content.

Although we lost one of the chicks due to an unfortunate accident, the other three are very active, healthy birds who have voracious appetites and willingly sample any type of food that is offered to them. It is hoped they will become a basis for our second generation of domestic bred bronze-winged pionus. ●