

# Breeding the Blue Headed Ruby Pionus

(*Pionus menstruus rubrigularis*)

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When I became interested in the pionus parrot group some ten years ago, it was surprising to find how few there were in the U.S. and how little was known of this personable, medium sized parrot.

One evening in the fall months of 1984, a young man with whom I was acquainted called me from Iowa. I had known this lad for several years and since all of the species of pionus were scarce, few members of the Pionus Breeders Association were in close contact regarding bird performances.

His problem, that evening, was that he had to sell the two pairs he was maturing. He had told me he had a pair of blue headed pionus and a pair of white-crowned pionus. Although my flights were full, I told him I would mail a check in the morning, so the deal was made and the birds arrived. I hastily set up two cages in a spare bedroom to keep an eye on



Blue headed ruby pionus.

them for a few weeks. I had been assured, however, that the birds were in excellent shape and they did arrive as slick as a button.

I had seen numerous blue heads and confess they had in no way excited my eyeballs to any extent. As usual, these birds, being new to me and their surroundings, always kept their backs turned toward me. I

intended to sell the birds to the first buyers.

One day, as I came in from the office, my wife asked me if I knew these blue heads had deep red on their throats. I had not seen this, only the rear views which showed the usual blue head and green body and tail.

A lot of research followed — reading, phone calls, and a very close examination of the birds. It was determined that, by chance, I had a pair of *Pionus menstruus rubrigularis*. This subspecies is about one inch shorter in body length and quite a bit broader through the chest than the *Pionus m. menstruus*, the nominate species. Of course, the very deep red necklace and bib were apparent. In one of my phone conversations, I did find that a small group of blue-headed pionus had been imported from Ecuador and were described to me by knowledgeable people as having only a brief smattering of pink feathers in the chest area. At that point I found no one who had seen this deep red coloration.

My wife insisted I keep them. I moved a pair of youngsters I was holding for future breeders indoors, and set up these new birds in an outside flight during November 1984. At this particular time, I was concentrating on bronze wing and dusky production and did not pay too much attention to these rubies.

Upon nestbox inspection one day I did notice the pair of rubies had laid. This was in late May and they produced three eggs. The hatch date, as recorded in my log, is June 26, 1985. Two of the three eggs hatched, the parents fed well and I pulled the youngsters at 21 days for hand-feeding. They were finished out to weaning by Jackie Mayo of Ft. Worth, Texas. We found the two young birds, when surgically sexed, were both hens. They are closebanded and named Hank 1 and Hank 4. The nesting habits of the parents are the same as in the other pionus species.

I have located about six or seven other pairs in the U.S. so far. ●

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