

Successful breeding of Tucuman Amazons in Czechoslovakia

by Milan Vasicek
Lipnik, Czechoslovakia

The Tucuman Amazon (Cabanis, 1885) is a rare parrot in captivity which was imported into Europe and U.S.A. in recent years.

In the *Cage and Aviary* bird magazine (Volume 42, page 379) Rosemary Low stated that ten years ago there was only one such species in Europe in the Jersey Zoo which



Photos by Milan Vasicek

This juvenile Tucuman Amazon was removed from the nest for observation and photo documentation.



Adult pair and the three parent-reared Tucuman Amazons, by a Czechoslovakian aviculturist in 1988, a remarkable breeding.

was later taken care of by R. Noegel, who imported two more birds later.

In 1981, the first pair of Tucuman Amazons was imported to Czechoslovakia. They were in the care of Zdenek Pichlik, Dunajaska Streda Povoda, who exhibited the birds in the bird show Exota in 1983. After a few more pairs were imported to Czechoslovakia, one of the pairs went to the aviary of Stepan Plachy, Skoronice, p. Vlkos u Kyjova.

The Tucuman Amazon has green feathers with black edges, the forehead is red and the upper and under tail coverts are greenish-yellow. The primary coverts are red, the primaries are green with blue points, the secondaries are blue and green, the under wing coverts are olive-green, thigh feathers are orange and the tail is green with yellowish-green tips. The beak is horn colored, the eyes orange red, and the legs pinkish gray.

The female is the same color as the male. The young look like adult birds except the thigh feathers are green and the primaries on the younger bird are not as nicely red as on an older bird. The young birds are not as brightly colored.

Distribution — southeast Bolivia and north Argentina.

Habitat — Alder forests in the Andes in 1800 to 2000m altitude.

The bird is usually found in north Argentina sometimes during the non-breeding season.

According to Orfily, they are plentiful in their habitat and can be seen in huge flocks looking for food in the forests. They live on seeds, nuts, berries, blossoms and young branches.

Mr. Bond found a nest (1943, January 12) in Padilla, Bolivia in which there were four eggs; the measurements of the eggs were 34.5 x 26.7 mm.

Stepan Plachy kept the birds right from the beginning in an outside aviary with a part enclosure measuring 2m x 1m x 2m high and an open flight measuring 4m x 1m x 2m in height.

The birds' first breeding attempt was in 1987. They started to build the nest in a nest box, which was 30cm x 30cm x 50cm high with an opening diameter of 12 cm. As nesting material, sawdust and wood shavings were used. Both birds were visiting the enclosed part of the aviary so it was hard to say which one was going into the nest box.

In March 1988 the birds again

started to build a nest. In May the breeder noticed one of the birds was spending more and more time in the nest box. On May 20th the first egg appeared with measurements of 33.5 x 25.7mm. After that the female laid three more eggs, and started incubating after laying the second egg. During the incubation period the male was feeding the female and looking after her. After 29 days, when the female flew out of the nest, the breeder checked the nest and found that two of the eggs hatched. The next day the third egg hatched, and the fourth egg hatched four days later. The parents looked after the nest very well. There was no need for the breeder to worry. Unfortunately, on the 18th day the youngest nestling died. The breeder did not intervene and the young were raised by their parents until they were able to be on their own.

The young birds were covered by gray down and after 17 days green pin feathers showed on their heads and wings. The young stayed in the nest until August 12th (57 days) at which time the first young left the nest, with the remaining two following five days later.

The young were colored as their parents but their eyes were darker. The thigh feathers were not orange, and the rings around their eyes were smaller and grayish white in color.

Mr. Plachy was feeding the adult birds sunflower seeds, white millet, canary seed, millet spray, sprouted barley and corn. The birds liked fruit and vegetables of any kind, whatever the garden offered. In addition during the nursing period the adult birds were fed soft egg food and sprouted seeds.

The female stayed in the nest for the first 22 days and after that only during the nights. The young did not get chilled because the temperatures at the time were around 30°C with reasonably warm nights.

After the young left the nest the male took care of feeding them with female helping occasionally. They were flying well in 12 days and started to look for food themselves. They fed on young corn, apples, pears and elderberry.

In closing I would like to mention that there is very little information on Tucuman Amazons and their breeding. My research reveals only a few breeding successes — one young was raised at Seffner 1981 (International

Zoo Yearbook 1983).

Furthermore, AZN (Die AZ-Nachrichten, Federal Republic of Germany) (applicable only to European breeding successes), volume five 1987, page 302 reports two young raised by one breeder in 1986 and a year later in AZN, Volume 4, 1988, page 264, published eight young in three different nests were raised by three other breeders.

The success of raising the first nest by Mr. Plachy in Czechoslovakia is assuring us that this is just the beginning and the Tucuman Amazon will always be in our aviaries and hopefully more young will be raised. ●

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The Parrot in Health and Illness: An Owner's Guide

reviewed by Ernesto Enkerlin
College Station, Texas

In aid of the rapidly increasing number of parrot owners, comes a book with a hard to resist title, "The Parrot in Health and Illness: an owner's guide" by Bonnie Munro Doane. The stated purpose of the book is *not* to produce a host of homemade bird doctors but informed consumers of health care for their parrots.

Let's take a quick tour of this work. Due probably to having participated in some aspects during the development of this book, Peter Sakas, D.V.M., is able to write a very good foreword. It is recommended reading as it concisely puts the purpose and usefulness of the book in perspective. It also makes a valid point that past information has mostly been too general for a parrot keeper or very technical, only suited for a veterinarian.

Munro-Doane advocates an annual physical examination. If you only have one bird, this might be warranted to keep in touch with your vet. Otherwise a good check when the bird is bought should suffice. Save the money for cases when you suspect illness, instead of a routine check which will most likely show nothing.

One of the few parts of the book I disliked is "Evaluating the avian vet", the author goes into needless detail and nit picking, which more than helping to choose a vet, show her particular preferences. The rest of chapter 1, especially "Transport of your bird to the vet", are quite good.

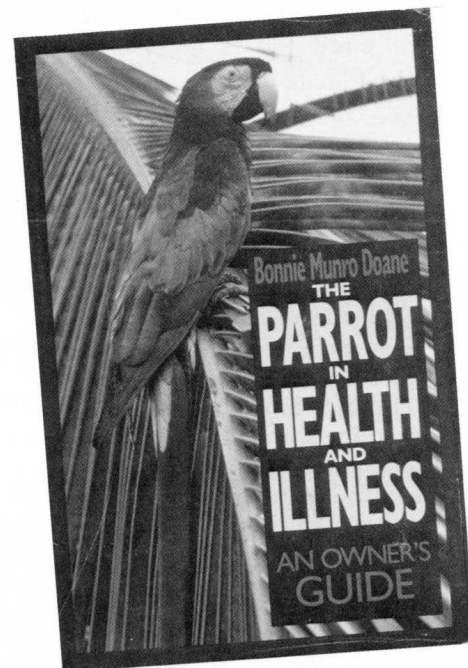
In chapter 2, the well bird, I might add to the wealth of information, that recently fledged birds of several species, notably Amazons with which I am familiar, usually have duller plumage and eyes when compared with juveniles or adults. In addition, the lack of reproductive output should not be considered as a sign of a health problem as numerous things can cause this. Even parrot societies in the wild include a high

proportion of non-breeders. I think applying this criterion would bring unnecessary worries to many parrot owners.

I agree that periodic weight checks are an excellent way to check general health status, but please do it with a scale. Very few people I know have the sensitivity required to check by palpating the breast muscle, except in really obvious cases.

The section on nutrition is tinged with anthropomorphic comments but good.

The part on hygiene is also very good. I have to disagree with a blank endorsement for taking off leg bands. We need to learn to live with leg bands and reduce or eliminate the risks involved because the benefits are many. It is becoming increasingly important to keep records to be able



to aid in conservation efforts and more importantly to reduce the commerce in "hot" or "laundered" birds. I think all captive bred birds should be close banded and kept that way.

Although the days of importation of birds for commerce may soon be over, due to the "bird" bills being considered in the U. S. Congress; the notes on importation and quarantine very adequately paint the current picture which is a sad one.

I was a little surprised in chapter 3 and elsewhere in the book by the recommendation of the "sentinel" bird technique. This seems more appropriate for large collections or breeders, but not pet owners. Except for a few exceptional situations, I find it

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cruel to sacrifice a bird to save another. The section on laboratory work is very good but would be better treated as an appendix. Aside from these comments, chapter 3 is very good.

One of the highlights of the book is chapter 4 which contains excellent information and is enjoyable reading. The tables on poisonous and harmful plants starting on page 100 are very useful.

A good one half of the book is made up of chapter 5 on "Disease problems". I must admit that I expected as boring a reading as when going through a glossary or dictionary, but was very pleasantly surprised. This section is not only informative, but enjoyable to read, It can even provide you with topics to share in your conversations! It contains lots of good advice, especially on prevention. As examples, see page 182 on Mycotoxicosis. See also a brief but excellent description of tumors (neoplasms).

One case of misinformation found twice in this chapter under the Giardiasis and Malaria entries, and again in the glossary, is the definition of "protozoan". They are not "animals". According to the five kingdom system by Whitakker, the standard in use for over 20 years, protozoans are in a kingdom by themselves called "Protista". It includes most one celled organisms with a true nucleus, including algae.

Chapter 6 is good with no frills.

The section on Necropsy in chapter 7 does a very good job as it explains both the benefits of carrying them out and the proper preparation of specimens.

I was impressed by chapter 8 ("When a bird dies"), and must congratulate the author for deciding to include these topics in closing the book. She does a superb job of dealing with emotional issues and the bird-human bond.

In starting to read this book, I had a lukewarm attitude as even when the topic interests me, I expected a weak commercial book to exploit a market niche. As my reading advanced, I realized that the author did a very thorough job and has therefore earned the right to exploit such niche. For those with an interest in parrots, this book will not only become a valuable reference but also provides enjoyable reading and peace of mind by a better understanding of the parrot in health and illness. ●

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