

# First breeding of the Guyana Toucanet



Young Guyana Toucanets at age of four weeks.

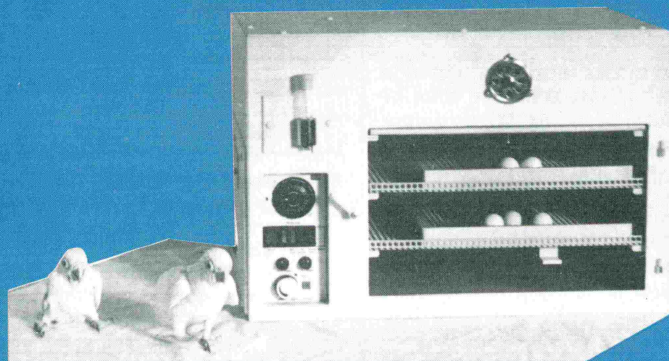
A breeding pair of Guyana Toucanets  
at the author's Emerald Forest Bird Gardens,  
Fallbrook, CA.



by Jerry Jennings  
Fallbrook, California

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The seven species of lowland toucanets of the genus *Selenidera* occupy the mid and upper level canopies of the lowland tropical rainforests of Central and South America. These birds range from central Honduras south to northern Argentina. None are found west of the Andes or above an elevation of 3,000 feet. Five of the seven species are found in areas adjacent to the Amazon River. For example, the river itself separates three species to the north, and two to the south. The remaining two species are found in Central America (Yellow-eared Toucanet) and southeastern Brazil (Spot-billed Toucanet).

Lowland toucanets are very similar to each other. The males of all species are black below and green on top. They differ from each other primarily in beak and eye color. All have yellow ear coverts and a yellow collar, with the exception of the isolated Yellow-eared Toucanet, which lacks the collar. All species are dimorphic. The females differ from males in that five of the seven species have brown on the head and abdomen. The remaining two, the Yellow-eared



Toucanet and Guyana Toucanet, are unique.

The Yellow-eared Toucanet (*Selenidera spectabilis*) exhibits the least dimorphism in that the female is all black in color like the male, with the exception of a chestnut nuchal collar. In the Guyana Toucanet (*Selenidera culik*), the female has a black cap, chestnut nuchal collar and a silver gray breast. This makes it the most attractive of the lowland toucanets, not only among females, but with males as well. In fact, it evokes the colors reminiscent of the Mountain Toucans (*Andigena*).

The Guyana Toucanet is different than other members of the *Selenidera* genus in that it has a much longer beak (three inches) and shorter wings and tail. The beak is basally brick red and tipped in black. The large, bare orbital area is a light blue and the eye is red. The male has a glossy black head and breast, with dark green back, wings and tail—the tail is tipped with chestnut. The male sports bright yellow ear coverts that stick out slightly from each side of the head. It has a quarter inch wide orange-yellow collar on the nape of the neck. The undertail coverts and vent are bright red, and the legs are bluish grey. The female differs in that she has a silver-grey breast, tinged with yellowish green on the lower abdomen. She has a black cap and chestnut nuchal collar. She lacks the yellow collar, but does have yellow ear coverts.

The pair of Guyana Toucanets were acquired in 1987 from an importer in Los Angeles, and were housed together in an 8' x 12' x 6' high aviary for two years. This flight was heavily planted and the birds were not disturbed. In 1988, and again in 1989, the hen laid several eggs. These, however, always disappeared. In the summer of 1990, the birds were moved to their new location in Fallbrook, California where they were placed in a similar sized aviary. The height, however, was increased to eight feet. Shortly thereafter the male died and was replaced with a new bird.

Since toucans prefer to nest in hollow logs rather than boxes, a log nest made from a section of palm tree trunk was placed in the corner of the shelter on a platform high enough that the top of the log was only a few inches below the aviary ceiling. The log chamber was made by using a chainsaw to hollow out the center

from one end to a depth of 18 inches. The end was then capped with a piece of plywood, and a small (2-1/2" dia.) entrance was made in the side. This entrance hole was made by using a door knob saw attached to a hand drill. Thus, the log nest mimics the natural nest these birds would use in the wild.

The pair went in and out of their nest log on many occasions in 1991. Then, in early 1992, they began to spend long periods of time in the nest. In late April, it was apparent they were sitting on eggs. The nest was then investigated using a small ladies compact mirror and flashlight. The method was to insert the mirror into the nest entrance and then shine the light on the mirror, which, in turn, illuminated the nest chamber. There were three eggs, white and oval in shape. These eggs hatched beginning on May 10, 1992. At approximately four weeks of age, the babies were removed, after a nest inspection revealed that the nest was extremely dirty. It contained caked fruit and feces on the bottom. Toucans are usually good housekeepers, but this nest was the dirtiest I've ever encountered and to leave them in the nest would have risked their health and the nest's success.

Upon removal, the babies were already showing enough feathers to determine that they were both males. This was a turn of good fortune, since we had two extra females awaiting mates. The babies were handfed for approximately four more weeks on a "toucan milkshake" consisting of 50% Wayne's Dog Kibble and 50% fruit mix. The fruit mix consisted of papaya, cantaloupe, red grapes, cooked beets and cooked carrots. The dog kibble was soaked and blended into a puree, then an equal amount of fruit mix, by volume, was added. All of this was blended into the milkshake, which was then stored in the refrigerator. The mix was made up fresh once each day. For each feeding, a glass was filled with the amount of food needed to feed all the toucans being handfed. It was then placed in the microwave for twenty seconds, or enough time to bring it up to room temperature. The birds were then fed every two hours from seven in the morning until nine-thirty at night.

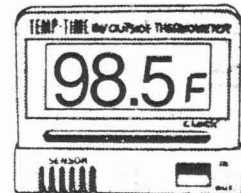
The two males were kept in separate cages after they were weaned. The first male was introduced to an outside flight on August 10, 1992 and

his prospective mate placed with him a week later. At first they avoided each other, sitting at opposite ends of the flight. Whenever the male approached the female, she would fly away. After a week, the female became less reticent and they are now enjoying each other's company. At night, the male sleeps in the palm log while the female remains outside. The second male was introduced to his new flight on August 24th and will meet his mate shortly.

The breeding pair has not recycled since the young males were pulled. They have been observed inspecting the nest, which was cleaned, remodeled and placed back in the flight.

There are only a few pairs of Guyana Toucanets in the United States at the present time. They were never imported before 1987 and then only a few pairs have come in at one time. There are less than 20 known pairs in avicultural hands. The Guyana Toucanet's only relative in captivity, the Spot-billed Toucanet (*Selenidera maculirostris*), has proven itself to be the most prolific Ramphastid in captivity. This lends hope that other breeders will start reproducing the Guyana Toucanet in numbers. ●

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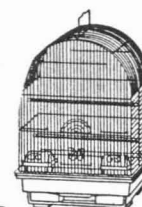
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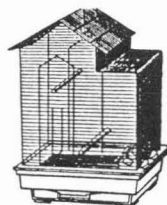
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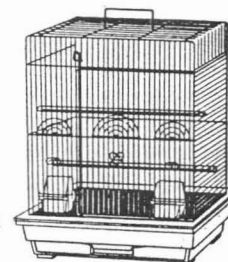
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