

A Ring That is a Jewel!

by Gene Hall
Woodlake, California

Well, you started out with budgies and in time moved up to cockatiels. Where does the avicultural trail lead me now, you ask. You feel ready to move up to the "big birds". Which one you ask. There is a solution to your yearning that has a "ring" to go with it. *Psittacula krameri manillensis*. Now, what the heck is that? It is a beautiful, graceful bird commonly known as an Indian Ring-necked Parakeet that will provide you with joy and a challenge. In some parts of the world it is referred to as a Rose-ringed Parakeet.

It occurs in central Africa, Afghanistan, Burma and India. The African form differs slightly in size and color and is not seen very often. The one that is raised in great numbers comes to us with an Indian background. In size, it is somewhat larger than the cockatiel and has a very long, slender tail. The body is a bright green in color, accented with the upper mandible a deep red and the lower mandible black. The adult male has what could be described as a black moustache starting with the black lower mandible and extending partially around the neck. This is connected around the back of the neck by a ring of rose. The hen, while not a timid sort, allows her mate to be the gaudy

one and thus goes without the ring.

It is quite easy then to determine the sex of specimens when they become adults entering their third year. If you acquire younger specimens, insist that their sex be determined by one of the many methods available. Checking the pelvic area as well as other visual inspections is at best only half right. Their plumage is smooth and even, the tail long and graceful and they set the perch in an upright manner. They are easily available and not expensive. Now really, aren't you just a little interested by now? Okay, let's move on. As you become involved with them, you discover that they also come in other colors that occur in captive breeding. A bright yellow lutino with red eyes, a lovely blue and a snow white albino without the ring on the neck. Sure, these will cost more but they will provide a challenge for you in the future. Assuming you have learned your genetics in the budgies and cockatiels, you are ready to apply the same rules here.

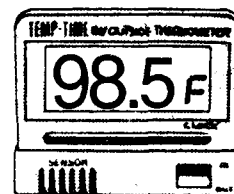
While the males don't acquire the ring-neck coloration until about the 27th month, they often will raise young in the spring of their second year. Ring-necked Parakeets are one

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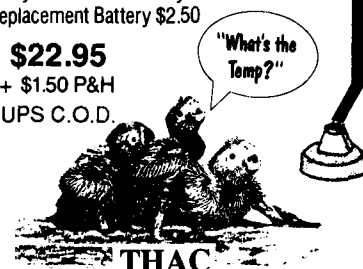
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of the first to go to nest each year. In southern California, they often lay in January. They seem to quit when the weather becomes warm. With an extended cool spring, they will often raise two clutches of three or four young. Success has been achieved by colony breeding; however, it has been

my experience that more youngsters are produced when pairs are housed separately. I am presently using a nest box that is 12" x 12" x 32" high. Six inches of dampened pine shavings are placed in the nest in December. They really don't seem to be fussy about nest boxes as long as they have some

privacy. Incubation usually is 21 days, however, I have had eggs hatch at 26 days of constant incubation. Patience is my friend in this matter. I have successfully had youngsters raised in cages that were 3' x 3' x 4' high. The fertility seemed to be a problem if they were kept in cages on a year round basis. I prefer an aviary that is 4' wide, 8' high and at least 10' long.

A 40% parakeet mix and sunflower is offered on a year round basis. Greens are offered year round along with some form of fruit. Whole yellow feed corn, soy beans and red wheat are cooked overnight in a crock pot. Sliced carrots and fruits and vegetables that are in season are added to the cooked mixture. This with whole wheat bread is offered during the breeding season.

Prior to the breeding season, the female is very liberated and dominates the family scene. As the breeding season approaches, the males overcome their timid manner and commence to make fools of themselves. Posturing and stretching with dilating eyes, they utter cries of lovesick desire in an attempt to seduce their strong willed mates. After an appropriate and prolonged period of suffering the pangs of spring, the male is allowed to woo her. With a successful courtship of preening, feeding and mating, it is off to the nest and eggs are laid. After hatching, fledging occurs in about eight weeks.

If you wish to have them for pets, handfeeding should start at 12 to 14 days at the latest. "Handfeeding" alone does not ensure sweet, imprinted pets as some would lead you to believe. Handfeeding provides you the opportunity to handle, cuddle and imprint the chick to human ways which gives the results hoped for, a bird that thinks that it is a human.

A thought or so concerning behavior of Ring-neckeds, or any other species that you may have. You are not dealing with programmable machines. As with your human friends, birds are individuals and vary in their reaction to your care. Use care and consideration in becoming friends with your birds, the same that you would use with another human being. With love, they will become very affectionate pets and are quite capable of talking well.

Now really, is it not time to add a jewel with a "ring" to your life? ●



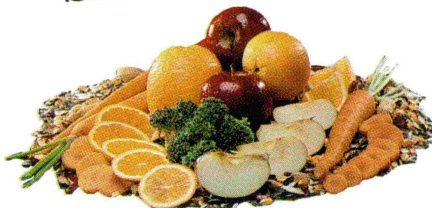
Indian Ring-necked Parakeets, normal green and the beautiful lutino mutation.

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