Photos by Maarten de Ruiter

*The Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater uses an earthen or mud wall or bank to build their tunnel nests. Their natural habitat is the forests of east and central Africa.*

*This immature Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater lacks the cinnamon breast color of the adults. This youngster represents the world's first breeding of this species done by Walsrode Birdpark in northern Germany in 1986.*

(19-1/2 ft x 10 ft x 7-1/4 ft high). They shared this enclosure with a pair of Superb Sunbirds and a group of Kittlitz's Sand Plovers. In the back of the enclosure a 6m x 1m x 1.5m high (12 ft x 3-1/4 ft x 5 ft high) artificial wall was constructed in which were placed several nesting pipes. Two pairs of Little Bee-eaters made use of these nests but after about a week threw their incubated eggs out of the nest. Therefore success was not achieved.

We had much better success with the Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters. A trio of this species was kept with some Wattle-eyes and a White-bellied Pigeon in another aviary (10 ft x 10 ft x 7-1/4 ft high) in the Tropical Hall. This exhibit had a small pool placed in its center and some rubber trees had been planted in it. In one corner a small earthen wall had been constructed and in 1986 the bee-eaters had their first successful breeding. Very little information was gathered from this nesting as observation was very difficult. However, two young were reared. One month after the young had fledged the nest, the adult female started a second clutch. We now made some closer observations and three eggs were laid. Of these, two young hatched after an incubation period of 18 days. One of the young died in the nest but the other left the nest at the age of 31 days. This youngster was a little smaller than the adults and, instead of the cinnamon chest of the adult, had a green colored chest. This breeding of the Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater represented a world's first breeding.

Walsrode obtained a large collection of Carmine Bee-eaters *(Merops nubicus)* after I left the Birdpark to work elsewhere. In 1993, the Carmine Bee-eaters made their first attempts toward reproducing and no fewer than five pairs were successful. This also represented a world first breeding.

As the above notes confirm, when the right care is given, bee-eaters can be kept very well and even breeding is possible.●

# *Species Profiles:*

## White-crested Laughing Thrush

*(Garrulax leucolophus)*

*by Vicki Roth*
*The Toledo Zoo*
*Toledo, Ohio*

This striking laughing thrush is found as a common resident in the forest undergrowth areas throughout southeast Asia. Imported on a somewhat frequent basis, its numbers still remain relatively low in captivity. There are around 50 individuals currently housed in U.S. zoos (private sector population unknown).

Typical of the larger laughing thrushes, it can have an aggressive nature. Although it is sometimes difficult to house in a mixed species aviary, individuals have had success keeping them in larger aviaries with other birds such as the Gold-crested Mynah, Crested Wood Partridge, Bleeding Heart Dove and Red-billed Leiothrix. The key factor seems to be in avoiding species which compete for food or nesting niches. On the positive side, it is an extremely personable species with an explosive and variable call.

A few zoos have had success breeding these birds in captivity. The Minnesota Zoo has produced young with regularity. Bird Curator Jim Pichner has noted that their birds breed throughout the year. Nesting is stimulated with the addition of lots of nest-

Photo by Sharon Cummings

*White-crested Laughing Thrush*

ing material to the enclosure. The birds prefer long, lancelate material such as bamboo leaves. They very rarely use nest baskets, but choose to build five- to six-inch diameter robin-type nests five to six feet from the ground. Generally, three to five eggs are laid, with two to three chicks fledging. Although the parents' diet is omnivorous, they will feed strictly insects to the offspring. There is a tendency for the birds to re-cycle on to the nest quickly, and not to finish off the chicks after fledging. At that time, the chicks are pulled and finished by the staff.

More than one adult pair cannot be kept together, but they can be set up in large (15'L x 10'W x 8'H), well planted aviaries within visual and vocal contact of each other. Minnesota has kept a flock of six birds, which have been raised together since they were juveniles, but only one adult pair breeds.

Although replacements have been readily available from the wild in the past, this may not continue in the future. Efforts should be made to improve captive propagation of this delightful bird. ●

# *From The Editor's Desk*

*For those aviculturists who are mutation fanciers, a very interesting letter was received by the* Watchbird *magazine editors in response to Tom and Karen Nemerovsky's article on their recent achievement towards two different mutations of the Quaker Parakeet (August/ September 1992). John Connan from South Africa has produced a mutation similar to the Nemerovsky's cinnamon Quaker, only his appears to have a darker base coloration. He calls this mutation a cinnamon. Mr. Connan has gone one step further and crossed his mutation with a blue Quaker and the new double mutation is indeed beautiful. The following is an excerpt from his letter that also includes some avicultural techniques in breeding this species.*

*Dale R. Thompson, editor*

. . . I bought some blue and split Quaker Parakeets in 1988. In their second season with me, a chick was hatched with *red* or *amber eyes*. On feathering, the bird turned out to be a light yellow bird with a lime green tint. It was even yellower on the belly and very light on the throat. The flights were *light brown*. This brought me to the conclusion that there was a fair chance that the bird was in fact a cinnamon! And it appeared to be a hen. On this assumption, I mated this youngster to an unrelated blue cock bird. My assumption that it was a hen proved correct. This pair successfully produced a green cock split to blue and also split to — dare I hope — cinnamon!

In the meantime, the original pair (split cock and blue hen) was successful again and produced two red-eyed cinnamon chicks. Cock parent bird was mated to a blue hen and this time produced two red-eyed cinnamon chicks, both hens split to blue. Where the hen from the first pairing had a 66% chance of being split to blue, I now had two definitely split to blue cinnamon hens.

My next step was to take the double split cock bred out of the first cinnamon and mate him to one of the cinnamon split to blue hens. Both had been bred away for one generation,

Photo by John Connan

*Three mutations of the Quaker Parakeet produced by John Connan of South Africa. Cinnamon (left), Blue (center) and Cinnamon blue (right). The Cinnamon blue mutation of the Quaker Parakeet carries the red eye of the Cinnamon mutation.*