

From The Editor's Desk

Photo by Sharon Cummings



White-crested Laughing Thrush

ing material to the enclosure. The birds prefer long, lanceolate 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. ●

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,

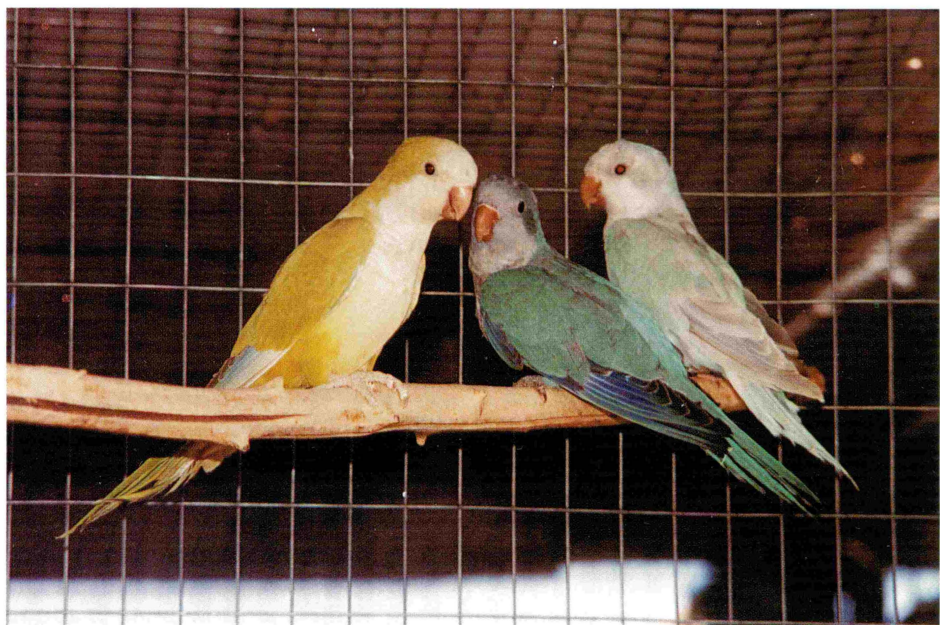


Photo by John Connan

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.

which to me is acceptable genetically speaking.

In the very next nest of five eggs, four chicks hatched with red eyes. Two had a yellowish down and two had the smoky down similar to that of a blue chick. I could scarcely contain myself while waiting for the feathers to break through. Eventually, bingo, two light blue chicks, with brown flights — cinnamonblue.

The birds are quite exquisite, a lovely soft powder blue with light gray underbelly and almost white throat. I have not had them sexed as I do not feel the slight risk necessary. They will show me their sex by their actions before the time I want to mate them for the coming season. I find the majority are prepared to breed at one year of age.

I breed them in a cockatiel type of nest box, giving them a few bits of dried alfalfa stalks to stimulate the breeding hormones. Their normal colony-type of stick nest is unsightly and unsuitable, as it is virtually impossible to do any type of nest inspection. This aspect is very important to me as one *must know* what is happening in the nest!

John M. Connan
Marydale, South Africa ●

Thank you from Matthew Vriends

I would like very much to thank the literally hundreds of bird friends who showered me with get-well wishes and flowers (my hospital room looked like a flower shop in less than two days!) during my six-day stay in Jewish Hospital of Cincinnati after triple bypass heart surgery in February of this year. My heartfelt thanks (from indeed a heart now well repaired!) go to my wife Lucia and daughter Tanya, who were with me all the time, also my brother Cornelius, who came all the way from Holland, and assisted us for over a month! Thanks, brother!

I further like to extend my thanks

and appreciation to my surgeon Dr. Victor Schmelzer, and my cardiologist Dr. Donald L. Wayne, who were (and still are!) brilliant and caring, and who became good friends overnight. I thank and highly endorse the efficiency of all the some 60 or so people from the Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati that may have served me during my hospitalization — they all were extremely competent, caring, and well-trained to carry their function!

I am particularly appreciative to the dozens upon dozens of you who prayed for me and showed so much concern, especially (just to name a few) my publisher Barron's and his editor and my friend, Don Reis, Michele Earle-Bridges, my illustrator, and my good friends and colleagues of L/M Animal Farms. Thanks for the many who visited while I was in the hospital (especially Mr. and Mrs. Rob Kaegi and Dr. Rob Dahlhausen), and to those who made (often many) telephone calls to me, in particular Marge Maquire and husband, of Capital district Cage Bird Club, Albany — and while you may not have found me always overly effervescent, and full of conversation (especially the first few days!), remember that a talk could create a cough, and a cough can be compared to having a baby. Let me explain: the most important item given to me after surgery was a little red, heart-shaped foam pillow. I was told that when I got ready to cough (I had to cough every other hour!), hold it over your chest and squeeze. It was not necessary to tell me twice, the squeezing part I mean. We all have heard women talk about childbirth, and I would challenge a pain tolerance test for the delivery of a baby, and the price of a cough. Of course, during the operation the chest bone was sawed in two, the chest opened with expanding devices, the heart placed in ice, a heart/lung machine attached to do the function of the heart, while the repairs are made to the heart. The heart then is placed back and the chest cavity sewn together again and wired; conse-

quently the slightest movement resulted in very noticeable pain, but when it was time to cough or to sneeze the pain was multiplied a hundredfold!

Thank God, it is all over. I'm doing excellently, am up and about, and full of joie de vivre! So, again, my dear friends, I would like to thank all of you for your kind support and attention! God bless you all!

Matthew M. Vriends
Pleasant Plain, Ohio ●

David . . . We'll Miss You

by Mike DeSart, Oregon

We'll miss your good advice freely given to anyone you thought needed help and your offers to help others in need. We'll miss your contributions to aviculture such as starting the Inglebrook Cage Company and running it for many years. We'll miss your articles and letters in bird magazines and your thank you notes or calls when something was done for you. We'll miss your presence at many of the bird functions in our area, as well as up and down the west coast. We'll miss your concern for the many problem birds you took in and cared for that others had given up on or couldn't financially take care of. We'll miss your calls for help with some information you had misplaced or forgotten such as a phone number or how to get from one place to another in the city, yet you could call a great many of your 200 or so birds by name.

David, the one word that best starts to describe you is congenial, but it takes what follows just to try and finish your description: an aviculturist, a photographer, an entrepreneur, a businessman, a proud man, a salesman, a gentle man, a promoter, a good friend, and most of all . . . a man who loved his birds and cared for them to the best of his ability.

David Harry Golub
Feb. 16, 1943 - Sept. 8, 1993 ●