

# Lineolated Parakeets

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Sometimes we make decisions to buy bird-pairs totally on feeling rather than on practical knowledge of a species. This is how I came to love the Lineolated Parakeets. In June 1990, I spied two small green birds in an Illinois pet shop, sitting side by side, watching me. Their big, dark eyes caught my attention. The Lineolated Parakeets were green in color, with black edging around the neck, back and wing feathers and a bit of blue tint on the peak of the head, and a cream colored beak and light legs. The store owner was asking \$300 for the pair. They were mature birds imported from Belgium.

I bought the birds and rushed home to read everything I could get my hands on about my new Lineolated Parakeets. There was not much information! I found out they belong to the genus *Bolborhynchus*. Their proper name is *Bolborhynchus lineola*. You also hear them referred to as Barred or Catherine Parakeets.

In nature, they are found in parts of Central and South America, nesting in hollow trees at high altitudes and dense forests. Single pairs up to flocks of over 100 birds have been sighted. Males are slightly larger and have more black ridging on their feathers than females. Juveniles are lighter green, the bluish feathers on their heads are prevalent and the black feather ridging is less extensive.

I keep my Lineolated Parakeets in a bird room, light in color, measuring 28 feet by 14 feet. Hanging and floor plants add oxygen to the air and give the birds a natural atmosphere though the birds will chew the plants if given the chance. Our home furnace has a high efficiency Space Guard air filter which cleans the air. The bird room also has two portable air cleaners. Two groups of full-spectrum fluorescent lights are time-switched to turn on and off within 30 minutes of each other. This alternate timing gives the birds a warning that this is the last chance to get a bite of food before the last light goes out.

Lineolated Parakeets, when frightened, fan their tail feathers. This

makes it easy to know if what you are doing makes the birds uncomfortable. As I was setting my new pair up, a lot of tail-fanning was going on. Then whenever I came to check on the birds, I would find them in much the same position that I had first seen them in the shop. I began to think that they were not very active birds. About the same time I got these birds I purchased an inexpensive, closed circuit camera monitor system. This allowed me to watch the birds while I was out of the room. Lineolateds are anything but inactive! They love to hang upside down, chase each other, run along branches and play with their food. In general, they are very busy. Without the monitor, I would have had to wait until the birds settled in before learning how entertaining they can be.

I set up a cage using one quarter inch wire mesh. The cage measures 36" long by 27" wide by 36" deep. I used natural branches as perches and added a rectangular nest box, measuring 13" high by 8" wide by 8-1/4" deep. The entrance hole is 2" in diameter. I keep the nest boxes up all year as the birds love to sleep and take afternoon naps in them.

Living in Wisconsin, it is important that my birds are kept inside. It is also very important to me to allow the birds enough room to fly in their cages. After all, flying is what birds do best. Some breeders feel my cages are too large for birds that measure only 16 centimeters in length. I know I could have more birds if the cages were smaller, but when I see the birds flying from branch to branch, taking a spin around the cage, I know I've made the right choice.

I feed the Lineolateds Roudybush Crumbles, fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. I use a frozen vegetable combination and try to vary the content. I also vary the fruits. No matter what I put in their bowls, they love corn and apples best. Unlike my other birds who become suspicious of new food, these birds seem eager to try new things. Wisconsin millet is a treat I give to the birds sparingly since they tend to put on weight quickly. Twice

weekly, powdered vitamin and mineral supplements are mixed in their food and water. I also provide cuttlebone and mineral blocks for each cage.

When new pairs are set up it takes two to three days for them to accept one another. A lot of chasing around the cage goes on. Another Lineolated Parakeet breeder told me that when he set up his pair, the male was chasing and biting the female. He separated them and set them up later with better luck, after changing cages and rooms. I monitored my new pairs and have seen them chase each other but I have never seen them bite or do harm to one another. This is one of many reasons why I don't like to clip a bird's wings. The Lineolated's are quite fast. Full feathered wings allows the birds to move around the cage freely in case of problems with a mate.

Lineolated Parakeets may become sexually mature as early as four months of age. Within two months of my bird purchase, I found that the hen had laid her first egg. With the monitor, I was lucky enough to watch her closely without her knowledge. I kept a record of when I saw her out of the nest box as well as when she ate. This allowed me to make sure she didn't run into any problems.

While watching the monitor one morning, I saw the female leave the nest box after laying her first egg. She came out of the box, turned and looked inside, pulled her head out, then looked back inside, and pulled her head out. She called to her mate to come and check this out. The male flew over and they both proceeded to take turns poking their head in and out of the box. I often wondered what they were feeling; curiosity, amazement, or possibly pride. Whatever it was, I feel fortunate to have shared in the event.

The female brooded the eggs. The male fed her and would spend long periods of time keeping her company in the nest box. The female laid five eggs which is the average clutch size. The incubation period is around 22 days. The eggs were infertile, which is not uncommon with first clutches. The sad thing was that we lost the male shortly after from unknown causes.

This left me with one lonely female Lineolated Parakeet. Thus began my search for a male. This search took



*The Lineolated Parakeet, from limited areas of central and northern South America, is neither a conure nor a BeBe (Brotogeris) but belongs to the genus *Bolborychus*.*



*The Lineolated Parakeet is also referred to as the Barred Parakeet because of its black scalloped feather edges on its neck, back and wing feathers.*

over a year. It is not easy finding Lineolated breeders. I even had a broker try to find one for me. A year later I decided to try on my own. I called many breeders who had never even heard of the Lineolated Parakeet. I finally found Robbie Harris, a California breeder who had a male. After talking, I found out she had five other young Lineolateds from two unrelated clutches. I hung up and announced to my husband that we were now going to get into breeding Lineolated Parakeets big time! I bought them all. I am still constantly looking for other breeders to gain additional blood lines.

Not long after our original female was joined with her new mate she laid another set of eggs.

This pair is very good about letting one check the nest box. When I am sure the clutch has been laid and the

hen is setting, I don't check the box again until around the time the hatchlings are due.

The female usually leaves the nest box twice a day while she is incubating, once in the morning and once at night. She comes out to expel droppings and get a bite to eat. She is out about an average of five to ten minutes. My camera/monitor allows me to make sure she is fine without disturbing her. I can also check the droppings for the day to see if she has been out since the daily droppings for the female are quite large during nesting time.

Finally the time came for hatching. Out of five eggs two were infertile and three healthy babies hatched. The babies were so small that, on their first day, I mistook a one-day-old chick as a piece of lint. When it moved, I was ecstatic. I quickly left the bird room and phoned everyone I knew letting them know that our Lineolateds were proud parents.

The babies are just adorable when you peek in the nest box. Rather than hiss at you like Cockatiel babies, these little guys just turn their heads to the side and peer up at you. The parents allowed me to clean the nest box which gets quite dirty. Every other day or so, I go in and dump the old shavings and replace them with new. During this time, I place the babies in a bowl of shavings near the side of the cage so the parents can see them. The babies, when near fledging at five weeks, will get out of the bowl and cause me a good chase.

During the evenings, after the first set of lights went out, the male, sitting on his favorite perch, would normally fly back to the nest box for the night. This happened every night except one. One night the male was perched with his back toward the nest box as usual. When the first light went off, he remained on his perch. I watched and it wasn't long before I heard and saw the female poke her head out of the nest box and call to her mate. He ignored her. She came from the nest box to the perch and called again. The male, who normally flew to the nest box at night, chose to climb very slowly to the nest box. When he got to the box he looked into it and saw the three chicks. He then looked at the female who chirped at him and he finally turned and went in. The female jumped in after him. That was the only

time I saw this male not fly to the box after the first light went out. He had, evidently, wanted the night off, but the female had other ideas.

Although I don't clip the wings of the breeding pairs, I do clip the babies' wings at eight to ten weeks when I take them to be surgically sexed. (Though the female's markings are less defined than the male's, there are those individuals who cannot be positively sexed visually. I clip them because I don't want to chance their escaping in the clinic. Even without flying, the babies can lead one on a challenging chase because they flatten their body close to the ground and run extremely fast.

Breeding in the Midwest, it has been difficult to gain new Lineolated Parakeet blood lines but I have been fortunate enough to make contact with a small group of folks who are breeding these wonderful creatures. We are helping each other find new blood lines. I have not sold any Lineolateds as pets as I am trying to work with other breeders to ensure that we have a large diversity in the gene pool before they are sold to the general public. The babies I have had are either still in my collection or have been traded or sold to other breeders in the group.

In Europe there are various mutations of color including blue, yellow, olive green, and pied. Some breeders in the United States are bringing in the mutations so they may eventually be readily available in this country.

My main interest is not in mutations, however, but in making sure that we have a large enough gene pool to keep the future Lineolated Parakeets healthy and happy.

To that end, I have spoken with some of those who breed Lineolateds and we are interested in creating a studbook and/or club so we can track who has what blood lines. If you have Lineolated Parakeets and would like to be a part of this effort or are interested in more information, please contact: Roann Byrd, P.O. Box 933, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 53147, Phone 414-248-4004 or 414-249-0740.

I feel fortunate to be involved in breeding the Lineolated Parakeets. They are truly a joy to watch and to listen to. I have handfed some of my babies and their personalities are just wonderful. They are comical, playful, sweet, and gentle. ●