

Breeding the Rueppel's Parrot

(*Poicephalus rueppellii*)

by Robert Nelson
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Editor's Note: The following article, written by Robert Nelson, was published in the *Avicultural Bulletin*, April '94. This successful reproduction of the Rueppel's Parrot has been submitted to the *Avy Awards Committee* for a U.S. first breeding. Anyone having knowledge of a previous successful breeding of the Rueppel's Parrot, please notify Dale R. Thompson, Chairperson of the *Avy Awards Committee*, through the *AFA Home Office* in Phoenix, Arizona.

My Rueppel's Parrots were acquired in mid-year 1970. As newly imported adult birds, they were lovely, but quite shy. I was very pleased to get them, as the *Poicephalus* group holds a great

deal of fascination for me. I find the Rueppel's Parrot particularly appealing with its lovely combination of grays, blues and yellows.

When the birds arrived, they were quarantined and eventually put into a holding pen in one of my basement birdrooms. It was here that courtship, in the form of the hen being fed by her mate, was observed in January 1971. A box was provided, which they entered almost immediately! Very encouraging, to say the least! However, to my knowledge, no eggs were produced until October 1972. At that time I found only the addled remains of what had been eggs in the nest. Nothing else transpired until July 1973 when I removed the birds to a small

cage 18 x 24 x 48 inches. This cage was quite like the one in which my Senegal Parrots breed. A cockatiel nestbox was provided, and hung at an angle so they wouldn't pounce directly on the contents as they popped inside. This, I felt, was the cause of the addled eggs on the previous occasion. The nest was lined with 1/2" x 1" mesh wire to prevent destruction from within. Coarse sawdust was given for material.

In early October, some of the material was thrown out and I knew they were starting proceedings. Or at least I *hoped* they were! All the material I have read indicates no records of their having reared young in captivity. On October 28, 1973, the hen spent the night in the nest and on October 29, the first egg was observed. A quick peek on November 10 revealed four eggs in the nest. No further inspection was made. I assumed that the incubation period is probably 28 days which would make the first hatch date on

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November 27, 1973. I did not *bear* the first baby until December 2. The parents ate heavily of soaked sunflower and corn. Also a few pine nuts were given in addition to the usual seed mix. I also noted that a considerable amount of calcium, or "mineral block" as we call it here, was consumed during this period.

On December 23, I removed three nice babies and a fertile, unhatched egg from the nest. I felt an unusual amount of happiness that day, to think that quite possibly they were the first of their kind to be captive reared. Assuming a 28 day incubation period, the oldest chick was 27 days old when taken from the nest. As I check back on my records and pictures of baby Senegal Parrots I've raised, I believe this to be fairly accurate.

At this writing, Jan. 29, 1974, the babies are still eating a bit of soft food, but are also consuming Cheerios and a few seeds. They were handfed on Velma Hart's formula as given in the book *Parrots and Related Birds* by Bates and Busenbark.

It is interesting to note that all three of the babies possess the blue rump. However, the one which I believe to be a male has less extensive blue, and it is definitely not as brilliant as on the other two, which I take to be hens. There is a marked difference in general conformation. His yellow is starting to show on the shoulders. On the other two, the yellow is confined to the underwing coverts at this point. The irises of these immature birds are a nice walnut brown instead of the rich red color present in mature specimens. The beaks have been gray all along. I find this interesting, because in the Senegal Parrot, whose mature beak is also gray, the beaks begin light with a dark tip, and gradually darken as the birds mature.

These youngsters are pure delight! They love to be held and fondled and are not in the least apprehensive of strangers.

I dream of the day when they can be raised in sufficient quantity to be saved as pets. The main aim at present, however, is to attempt to establish them in captivity to ensure their availability to aviculturists in future years. With import-export rules and regulations as they are at present (and worsening!), it will be increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to obtain new stock. ●

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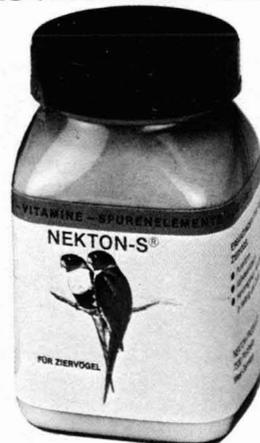
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