

Breeding the Green-cheeked Conure

by Davis A. Koffron, Phoenix, Arizona

Over the years I have been privileged to keep and raise many different types of birds, from finches to gamebirds and a variety of hookbills. While they all have special qualities and interesting behaviors, the Green-cheeked Conure remains one of my favorites. Their bold nature, unbridled curiosity, boundless energy and playful disposition makes them stand out as either an aviary bird or as a pet. Green-cheeks always seem to have important bird things to do.

As an aviary bird they are easy to care for, quite willing to breed and frequently raise more than one clutch per season. As a pet their size, willingness to bond with their keeper, ability to learn tricks along with a quiet voice make them ideal for most people.

Our birds are kept outdoors year round without any supplemental heating or cooling. In Phoenix the annual temperatures range from over 110°F in summer to below freezing on the coldest winter nights. Daily temperatures can vary as much as 40 to 50 degrees. Once acclimatized, the birds are very hardy and show little reaction to these temperature variations. Green-cheeks love to bathe and frequently get drenched when the temperature is too cold for my comfort.

Our birds are kept in suspended cages made from 1/2" by 1" welded wire and are 4 feet long by 2 feet high and 2 feet wide. Two natural perches are provided in each cage, one on each end of the cage, one high and one low to maximize flying distance. Food is provided in a flat pan located in an extended portion on the front of the cage. This stops the birds from sitting over their food dish. Water is supplied in bowls situated in a small cage added to the side of the main cage. This is located approximately two feet from the food dish thereby greatly reducing the amount of food transferred from the food dish to the water bowl.

In the wild, birds need to defend their nest from predators, as well as other birds looking for nesting sites. For these reasons, small, dark nests with entrance holes that the bird can barely squeeze through are preferred. We attempt to provide these conditions in our nest boxes. The boxes are

made out of 3/4" five ply CDX plywood and have an inside measurement of 6" x 8" x 11" deep. (In a cooler environment I would make the box about three to five inches deeper and reduce the eight inch dimension to six inches.) A two inch diameter entrance hole is located near a top outside corner. The inside of the boxes are stained with a dark brown latex stain. A four inch awning extends over the entrance hole stopping direct sunlight from penetrating the box. The awning, stain, size and location of the entrance hole all combine to reduce the amount of light reaching the nesting chamber. I believe this makes the birds feel more secure. A wire ladder is fastened inside the box to assist the birds in entering and exiting though I doubt if this is really necessary. Nesting material consists of two inches of tightly packed pine shavings or chips. Avoid the "curly" cut shavings as they do not pack well, allowing eggs and or chicks to get buried.

The birds are fed once daily in the morning when they get about 1/4 cup of dry seed mix consisting of the usual types of seeds that are fed to small hookbills. I do add some dog kibble and alfalfa pellets to the seed mix. The seed mix is varied during the year depending upon the weather. The amount of fatty seed is increased dur-



Photo by Jack Jordan

A new mutation of the Green-cheeked Conure is a sex-linked Fallow mutation. This is the best opinion of mutation experts. No matter what this dilute mutation is, it is certainly beautiful.



Photo by Nancy Vigran

The author breeds his conures in 2'H x 2' W x 4' L suspended cages with the food being provided in an extended portion on the front of the cage. This keeps the birds from perching over the food dishes. The nest boxes are placed above this extended portion.

Deadline Schedule

Sept / Oct '94

Featuring

SETTING UP AN AVIARY OF COMMONLY KEPT SPECIES

Aug. 1 — editorial copy

Aug. 15 — display ADS

Nov / Dec '94

Oct. 1 — editorial copy

Oct. 15 — display ADS

Jan / Feb '95

Featuring

HANDFEEDING

Dec. 1 — editorial copy

Dec. 15 — display ADS

Mar / Apr '95

Feb. 1 — editorial copy

Feb. 15 — display ADS

May / June '95

April 1 — editorial copy

April 15 — display ADS

July / Aug '95

June 1 — editorial copy

June 15 — display ADS

ing the colder months and reduced during the hot summer. In addition they receive 1/4 cup of a soft (or wet) mix that consists of the following; 1/3 germinated seeds (sunflower, safflower, buckwheat, milo, barley, wheat, oats, corn, popcorn), 1/3 germinated legumes (varies with availability but can include garbanzo, lima, pinto, mung, small white, kidney and great northern beans; maple, black-eyed, green, Austrian peas and lentils) and 1/3 grated vegetables (including carrots, beets, rutabagas, turnips, yams, zucchini, broccoli, cucumbers, radishes, chopped chard, collards, spinach or other greens. This mix varies daily).

The soft mix is prepared in the following manner. The dry seeds and legumes are combined in a ratio of three parts seeds to two parts legumes. This produces approximately equal portions when germinated.

Day 1: Seeds and legumes are soaked for about one hour in one gallon of water with two tablespoons of bleach. They are then rinsed well and soaked for the rest of the day

(approximately 10 to 12 hours) in two gallons of water with two tablespoons of bleach and one teaspoon of calcium propionate. The ingredients are then rinsed and allowed to drain overnight.

Day 2: The soaked mix is put into a large plastic tub and left alone.

Day 3: The germinated mix is rinsed well and left to drain for approximately one half hour. After draining, any supplement is added. I use Vionate vitamins and Tri-calcium phosphate. The vegetables are then grated and mixed in. I have been using this method with only slight variation for about nine years now and have never had the problem of the germinated seeds or legumes spoiling or getting moldy. If you wish to grow longer sprouts, the mix should be rinsed and drained more often. I would also use the bleach and calcium propionate during these rinses. Remember that temperature also plays an important part in how well seeds germinate and how quickly they spoil. Our mix is germinated between 70 to 80 degrees.

In addition to the above, seasonal fruits are given several times a week. Using the above methods we have been very successful in raising many types of pyhurras as well as other hookbills. I must add, however, that I am not a nutritionist and make no claims as to the overall quality of this diet.

Several years ago an unusual looking Green-cheeked Conure was spotted in a friend's aviary. Subsequently the bird, its siblings and parents were placed in my aviary. The bird proved to be a new mutation that we are currently calling a fallow. I must admit that I am not a mutation expert and over the years the experts have differed in their opinions regarding what this mutation should be called. Some have said that because it is sex-linked it is a cinnamon while others have steadfastly said that due to certain color changes it is a fallow. To be safe, it should probably just be called a dilute. I have also been told that a blue mutation of the Green-cheeked Conure has appeared in Europe.

When all is said and done, I think one has to go a long way to find another bird with all the desirable qualities found in the Green-cheeked Conure. I highly recommend this bird for novices and experienced breeders alike. ●

Yes, count me as
a member of the

American Federation of Aviculture

P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, Arizona 85079-6218

Phone (602) 484-0931 Fax (602) 484-0109



THE WATCHBIRD IS THE OFFICIAL BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE AFA, A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

Please accept my application for membership in the American Federation of Aviculture. Send me 6 issues (1 year) of *the a.f.a. WATCHBIRD* magazine, and a membership card which entitles me to all the rights and privileges of AFA membership.

Check membership category desired:

NEW ☐

RENEWAL ☐

Individual \$24/year ☐

Family \$29/year ☐

Supporting \$39/year ☐

Sustaining \$50/year ☐

Commercial \$100/year, includes listing in WATCHBIRD ☐

FOREIGN MEMBERS: Add \$16/year in U.S. Funds. First class rates available on request.

☐ My check is enclosed for \$_____ ☐ My money order is enclosed for \$_____

Name _____

Charge my MC or VISA account: ☐ MC ☐ Visa

Address _____

Account # _____

City _____

Exp. Date _____

State _____ Zip _____

Signature _____

Telephone (_____) _____
AREA

Please allow 60 to 90 days
for delivery of your first issue.

YOUR BIRD DESERVES THE VERY BEST!

Standard size: 24Wx28Lx48H approx.



5 YEAR WARRANTY



- Optional Hand-Carved Posts are available in limited quantity. Each post is truly "ONE OF A KIND"!

- Textured surface for maximum grip!

ENCLOSURE PERCHES

This is one perch you will not have to replace!



FREE CUSTOM SIZING!

12" thru 48" Range: \$16.00 - \$32.00 each

You will not find higher quality, longer lasting products than White Bear.

AVIAN ENTERTAINMENT CENTER

- Perches easily removed & dishwasher safe
- Lexan® tray guards
- Multiple perching diameters

NEW RELEASE! **\$29.95 EACH**



THE VERSA-T!

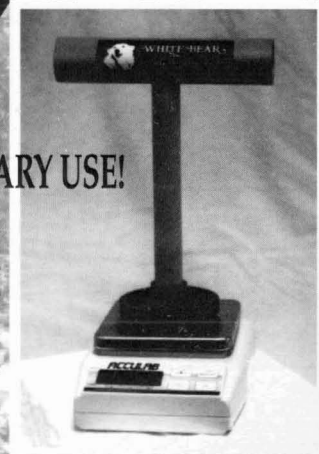
- Shower
- Car
- Countertops
- Windows, etc.

30 LB. holding strength

FOR VETERINARY USE!

USED BY:

NC State
College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Georgia
College of Veterinary Medicine
Indianapolis Zoo



Scale not included

All White Bear Products have been designed using the advice of this country's top avicultural veterinarians, insuring features that best promote the mental and physical strengths that will help make your bird the kind of companion you've always desired!



ORDER TODAY!



Freight Prepaid - Cont. USA

WHITE BEAR PRODUCTS
Division of Gary Dorman & Associates, Inc.
P.O. Box 501155 - Indianapolis, Indiana 46250
(317) 849-9637 Fax (317) 577-2573
Dealers Always Welcome!

Call Today For Free Color Brochure!
(317) 849-9637
Find out why White Bear Products last a LIFETIME!

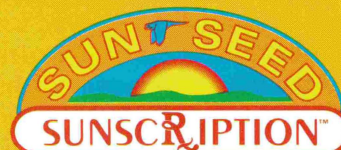
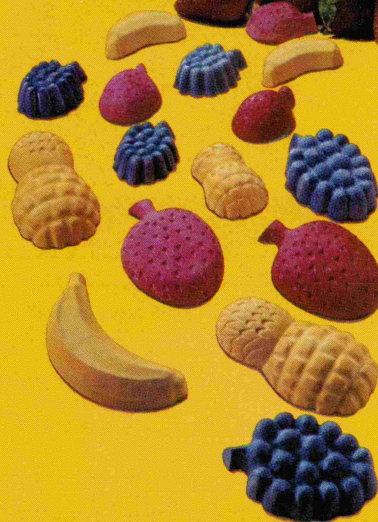
SUNTHING™ NEW!

FRUIT SCENTED & SHAPED SUNSCRIPTION™ MINERAL TREATS

New, SUN SEED "SUNSCRIPTION"™ Mineral Treats are prescribed to provide essential calcium and minerals to supplement your bird's diet. Their unique shape is designed to encourage chewing exercise and help maintain proper beak condition. Your bird will find these colorful, fruit scented Mineral Treats attractive and a bright addition to its environment. The fruit scent helps keep your bird's cage smelling fresh. Choose from a variety of flavors. Two sizes are available for large and small birds.



OFFICIAL
SPONSOR OF THE
AMERICAN FEDERATION
OF AVICULTURE



IT'S SUNTHING SPECIAL™

SUN SEED GUARANTEE
If you're not totally satisfied
with a SUN SEED product,
simply return the unused
portion for replacement,
substitution or a full refund.



SUN SEED CO., INC. • Box 33, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402