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# Breeding the Lesser Necklaced Jay Thrush

at Tracy Aviary

(*Garrulax moniliger*)

by D. Grenville Roles, Curator  
Salt Lake City, Utah

A family of almost entirely Old World insectivores numbering 268 species, Babblers (*Timaliidae*) are sometimes divided into six groups. These are the Jungle, Scimitar, Wren and Tit Babblers, the monotypic Rail Babbler and the largest group, the Song Babblers. The six species represented here all belong to this latter group. The family is named for the loud, liquid and loquacious chatter common to most members of the groups. Some have remarkable manic laughter-like calls and chorus together at intervals throughout the day, apparently advertising ownership of their territory.

The Lesser Necklaced Jay Thrush *Garrulax moniliger* (whose scientific name means necklace carrying Babbler) differs from its cousin the Greater Necklaced Jay Thrush (*Garrulax pectoralis*) in being a little smaller, with white as opposed to streaked ear coverts and with olive-brown, as opposed to blackish, primary coverts.

Handsome, robin-sized birds, our LNJ's become rather shy at the sight of their keeper, skulking in the shrubbery, though they unhesitatingly display themselves before the visiting public.

Acquired as wild-caught adults in 1986 from Bellbird Company in California, our single pair is the only pair registered with ISIS, otherwise known as the International Species Inventory System, as of December 31st, 1992. The birds are accommodated in our pheasantry, sharing an aviary with a pair of Szechuan White-eared Pheasants (*Crossoptilon c. crossoptilon*), in a flight approximately 15 x 8 x 12 feet high with a small open-fronted shelter at the rear.

On occasion, neighboring Silver-eared Mesias (*Leiothrix argenteauris*) have found their way into the aviary

but have never been attacked or even chased. These birds also ignore the mice which regularly show up, quite unlike their cousins, the White-crested Jay Thrushes (*Garrulax leucolophus*) which are dangerously predatory to all forms of life smaller than themselves.

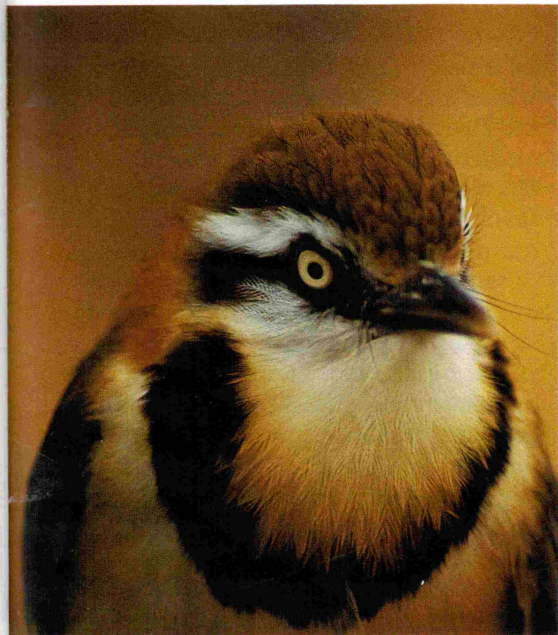
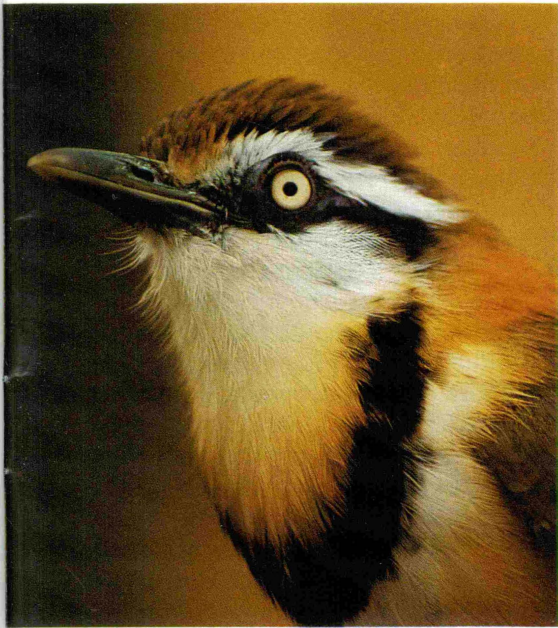
Our birds are fed our standard diet of chopped fruit, hard-boiled egg, soaked dog food, bird-of-prey diet and crickets and mealworms, all dusted with Vionate.

The birds have nested both out in the flight in a completely exposed and obvious box, and also in a box hidden away in an obscured part of the shelter. Typically, I like to provide the birds with an old, used (cleaned and fumigated) robin nest stuffed inside a nest box. As often as not, the birds will shred the nest, sometimes utilizing the material to try and construct their own nest. One year they accepted the whole nest and just surreptitiously added barberry twigs to the rim, which made it very painful to check.

Laying their first clutch of clear, sky-blue eggs in May 1987, with a series of disappearances, dead embryos and dead-in-shell chicks, it was not until 1991 that a chick was first reared, from an incubator hatched egg. Classically altricial, psilopaedic and nidiculous (try these words out on your friends; they mean helpless when hatched, nearly naked and blind and stay in the nest after hatching), the voracious little pink chick grew rapidly and without any problems on a diet of soaked puppy chow, hard-boiled egg, shredded bird-of-prey diet and cricket abdomens, all dusted with Vionate.

One of the characteristics of Babblers is that they have no distinctive juvenile plumage, the feathers merely being softer and, strangely, the flight feathers are described as "less





Lesser Necklaced Jay Thrush at the Tracy Aviary, Salt Lake City.

pointed." Our little "Nick," as he came to be called (I do *not* choose these pet names), became really popular with the education staff, as he loved to socialize. Stretching out his neck to be scratched or tickled under the wing, he clearly came to feel that he was part of the group.

As referred to earlier, our pair are the only birds listed with ISIS. However, ISIS does not list those specimens held in private aviculture. We are anxious to pair our "baby" up, so if you know of other specimens of Lesser Necklaced Jay Thrushes available, please write to me at Tracy Aviary, 589 East 1300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84105. ●

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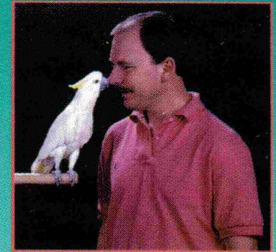
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