

Breeding the Johnstone's Lorikeet

Trichoglossus johnstoniae

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In 1992 I was given two pairs of these lovely lorikeets which come from the Philippines. It has been a number of years since there have been any of these birds in the U.S. The San Diego Zoo was, to the best of my knowledge, the only zoo to ever exhibit these lorikeets. They were bred at the zoo for the first time in the U.S. but eventually died out because of inbreeding. These are the only lory/lorikeet species to be found in the Philippines. Today they are listed as VULNERABLE (Collar, et al, 1994) because their range on several mountains in Mindanao has been degraded through forest destruction. Fortunately there are enough held in captivity in the Philippines, Europe, and South Africa to maintain the species for at least half a century. The only ones in the U.S. are held in my collection at the present time.

These lorikeets were given the name *johnstoniae* in honor of Mrs. Johnstone from England as she was the first person to breed them. Thus the English name became "Mrs. Johnstone's," being later changed to "Mt. Apo Lorikeet" after the name of the mountain where they were found. The evolution of the name then changed back to Johnstone's and today it is called the Mindanao

Lorikeet. I have used the original name which is in keeping with the bird's scientific name.

After receiving the two pair from U.S. quarantine they went through an additional 30 day quarantine period with me before being placed in the breeding facility.

The bird pictured in Forshaw's *Parrots of the World* shows a good likeness of the species. The several exceptions being that the red on the frontal area of the head and throat is much darker than shown. In fact, the sexes can be readily distinguished by the red areas which are noticeably larger in the male and smaller in the female. The female is also smaller in size. The chest, breast and belly is not as yellow as shown in the plate. For comparison Johnstone's Lorikeets look very similar in size and shape to the Iris Lorikeet.

The pairs were housed in suspended cages 4 ft. x 2 ft. x 2 ft. A small "L" shaped nestbox is attached at the end of the cage. There was no visual separation between the cages but after the third nest a visual barrier was placed between the cages as one pair had started to pluck its young. As they were and still are fairly nervous, I felt the visual barrier would help quiet

them down. It has, and there is no more plucking of young in the nest.

The lorikeets are fed my standard nectar diet along with 1/4 slice of apple and a plastic "half moon" cup of cut fruit (papaya, kiwi, pear, grapes, apple) to which a small amount of cooked brown rice, "field" corn and chopped beans vegetables has been added. In addition, vitamins A and E along with Prime and Spirulina are added to the cut fruit cup. When the parents have young in the nest they are fed the same thing except that they get half an apple and usually a second cup of nectar when the young are three weeks old. They do very well on this diet and have been breeding successfully since I have had them.

Their first breeding was in November 1992 with two eggs for each pair. The eggs were infertile as was their second nest in January. Their third nest was in March and this time each pair laid fertile eggs. It has been interesting that the two pairs always nest within two weeks of each other.

Since the first fertile eggs were laid the two pairs have laid a total of 20 fertile eggs and hatched all of them. Fourteen young have been reared, four died in the nest due to a freeze, one died during surgical sexing and one died due to a genetic problem. So far three unrelated young pairs have been set up for breeding and two unrelated young pairs are being shipped to a breeder in Europe. At the present time four young are in the nest and are about ready to fledge. All young are parent reared.

The International Studbook is being maintained in the Philippines with sub-studbooks in Europe, South Africa and the U.S. This year I will be releasing two pairs of unrelated young to another breeder here in the U.S. so as to insure that all the lorikeets of this species are not being held in one location. At the present time, none of the young in the U.S.A. will be released into the "pet" trade. In addition, I have adopted a legal agreement (Memorandum of Agreement) which must be signed before any of my birds are released or sold, for it is only in this way that over the next 20 to 30 years that we will be able to maintain not only this species but other species of lorikeets/lories in captivity.

This is a marvelous species for loriculturists who are interested in working with an endangered species and maintaining it for future generations. After all, that what today it is all about. ➤

Photo by Jan Roger van Oosten



Two adult Johnstone's Lorikeets (orange beaks) and one young.