

The Asiatic Parrot Society

The Asiatic Parrot Society of America (APSA) was launched in 1993 in Redondo Beach, California by Marriette Rogers to fulfill a need for more and better published information on keeping and breeding birds of the *Psittacula* genus. Rogers, herself, had kept *Psittaculids* in Hawaii for 14 years and was frustrated at the dearth of data on the various species.

When she moved to California, she thought, there would be a plethora of information available on all aspects of keeping the birds she loved. Not so. There were more birds and more aviaries, but little information—and that was still hard to come by. She began typing up flyers and data sheets to give to the folks who bought the babies she raised. From that, an idea arose about starting a national society for gathering and disseminating information on *Psittaculids*.

The Asiatic Parrot Society of America was formed and went on to publish the *Quarterly Psittaculid Review (QPR)* which completed its first year of publication in 1995. The *QPR* has an 8 1/2 X 11 format, comb-bound, printed on 24 lb. laser paper, with a color photo cover showing a composite of members' birds, featuring a rotation of species. Clear lucite covers protect the contents in the hope that the *QPR* will find a permanent place in members' libraries.

Each issue of the *QPR* offers a variety of articles on the different species of *Psittacula*—articles on how to care for and breed these parrots. And there are other useful articles, such as differing viewpoints on how to construct the best nest box, and, quite possibly, the most complete list of toxic flora in print appears in an updated version each spring.

In 1995 the APSA membership became international with members in Spain, Holland, Germany, Canada, Korea and Australia.

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Breeding and Captive Management of the Red & Blue Lory

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There has been much interest generated recently, about the Red & Blue Lory, *Eos histrio*, by both aviculturists and conservationists alike, as for the very first time, a commercial shipment of these lorries occurred in 1992, with a significant number of birds destined for Singapore.

Conservationists were gravely concerned about this exploitation by the live-bird trade which may endanger the survival of wild populations of this lory. And even before any great extent of trade occurring, funds had been raised by the International Loriidae Society, sponsoring an East Anglian University expedition to study and assess the population dynamics of this lory in its native habitat. (Low, 1992)

Previously, Red & Blue Lorries occurred extremely rarely in trade, with a personal estimate of about five birds appearing in imports annually, in consignments of Red Lorries *Eos bornea*. This was because the traders at Manado, a town at the Northernmost tip of Sulawesi, had not been active and any birds traded were taken as pets, presumably owned by local natives of Kepulauan Sanghir - Talaud, who occasionally brought these to Manado, as items of trade. No deliberate move was made to obtain these birds in any numbers. However, in 1992, this situation changed and local traders found an incentive to obtain this previously unassuming local pet as a commodity, which represented a significant value in itself. And this was all the motivation that they needed to generate a supply for the demand caused by the export market.

Further information about this lory can be obtained from an article, published in the *TRAFFIC Bulletin* Vol. 13 No. 3 (1993). I found this to be a reasonably fair and, more importantly, unbiased account for trade and assessment of status for this lory. Such articles by con-

servationists ought to be applauded, as more often than not, papers presented by conservationist and projectionist groups are exaggerated, especially when indicating the levels of exploitation and trade.

However, a call for a full review of the species' current CITES listing by the same author, would be more harmful in my opinion, as it basically calls for this species to be placed in Appendix I of CITES and subjecting more restrictive movements as defined under Article III of the Convention. This calls for assessment by the so called Berne-Criteria, in accordance with Resolution Conf. 1.1 of CITES. [The species has been, in fact, placed on Appendix I. Ed.]

Notable examples are of Goffin's Cockatoo *Cacatua goffini* and the Blue-streaked Lory *Eos reticulatus* both endemic to the Kai and Tenimbar Islands, which were more recently placed in Appendix I. Personal observations have revealed that serious aviculturists have abandoned the breeding of these birds, and some even disposed of their stock. The obvious reasons were because of the more restrictive measures caused by this listing and the very virtue of these birds being inexpensive and common, thus it was not worth the trouble to wrestle in abounding legislation and red-tape just to keep or breed it. Listing in Appendix I, in which interpretation being carried out intelligently, contributed to the conservation and preservation of wild populations; but interpreted by over-protectionist authorities to constitute a reason sufficient to them, to put up unjustified and complete barriers to movements of stock already in captivity or bred in captivity, but not given exemptions under Article VII, Paragraph 4 and 5, both of these exemptions requiring separate treatments and approach. In extreme cases, all movements of Appendix I

species is prohibited, in obvious detriment to the continued survival of the species in captivity which constitutes a valuable genetic source; in which excess captive bred young cannot be disposed and unpaired birds are unable to be paired with suitable mates to become active breeders.

In a celebrated case in point, a famous European park and breeding center for many species of rare parrots and other birds, was told by the local CITES Management Authority to split up their breeding pairs of Appendix I species, so as not to create surplus stock, in the view of mounting protests because of the refusal of permission to dispose and export excess captive bred young from their stock to other breeders. (Low, pers. comm.)

This is definitely against the very principle and spirit of CITES and of aviculture. As one of the aims of CITES is to gradually restrict and regulate trade to those species which may be successfully managed and bred in captivity. And very sadly, this continues to be the practice of many bureaucrats with-in authority, much to the frustration of many dedicated and serious aviculturists. Even when the CITES Secretariat was contacted for comment, in hope of bringing about a more enlightened situation, the reply came in which the CITES Secretariat could only advise and sole discretion and final approval belonged to the CITES Management Authority of the particular sovereign state or country.

Back to our Red & Blue Lory. There are three recognized sub-species, of which the nominate *histrion* comes from the main island of Sanghir, *talautensis* from the Talaud group, the largest population occurring on Karakelong Island within this group and *challengeri* belonging to the Nenus Islands.

I believe that *histrion* and *talautensis* may be conspecific, as occasional birds of known origin from Talaud Islands, have some black markings on the wing coverts, similar to those described for the nominate *histrion*. However, birds that come from Sanghir Island all have the typical black markings on the wings. However, these black markings only appear to be black, but on closer observations turn out to be a dark shimmering blue instead. Perhaps it only appears to be black against the vivid red of the general plumage.

The last sub-species, *challengeri* appears to be a very poorly defined form,

that can more readily be recognized by its smaller size and different form. But, the blue on the plumage is too variable to be used reliably as a tool for identification.

For the general description it has a coral red body, and is of a more slender form than that of other *Eos lories*, a very broad band of blue extends across the breast, and a band of the same color across the crown, with a streak, extending from the eye, which meets the blue on the nape and mantle. Scapulars, most the flight feathers and thighs are black. The tail is a duller, reddish-purple color, and is longer and more tapered. It has a white cere, gray periorbital skin and an orange beak. Length of about 31 cm (12 in.) for *histrion* and *talautensis*, 25 cm (10 in.) for *challengeri*.

Previously, the Red & Blue Lory was very rare in aviculture and it still is, as a moderate number of birds were exported before coming to a complete halt. Currently, it is included as a permanently protected species by decree of the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry, Directorate-General of Forest Protection and Nature Conservation. No longer will it be legal to trap this species for com-

mercial export. And continued assessment of suitable reserves on Karakelong Island, located in the Talaud group is being conducted, directed to the conservation and preservation of the Red & Blue Lory.

Literature indicates that it had been long known in aviculture, and as long ago as 1871, it had been exhibited at London Zoo. Occasional mention of the species was also made by several authors at Birdland, Bourton-on-the-Water, U.K., San Diego Zoo, USA, Japan and Denmark.

Recent importations have introduced this handsome lory to Europe, South Africa, the Philippines, with the bulk of the original imported stock, remaining in Singapore. To my personal knowledge, at least three other importers, including myself, have obtained this lory, but I have not known of any other breeding successes in Singapore, other than in my own collection. However, another collection in the Philippines has bred this lory, according to my personal observations.

Of all my imports of this lory, none have been sold to date, as part of my effort to consolidate a viable captive population. From the other importers, it

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seems that it has been used in further commercial trade, but hopefully, recipients of these lorries may make a positive effort to breed them first, before attempting to break them up in commercial sale.

I am extremely fortunate to have breeding pairs of all the three known sub-species, including *histrion*. However, this nominate sub-species, together with *challengeri* constitutes only the minority of the species kept in the breeding collection. The bulk of the breeding group consists of *talautensis*, of which this breeding is derived and observed from.

Pairs were first set up by the use of surgical sexing and males proved to be more plentiful, giving an uneven sex ratio.

However, pairs of all three sub-species were available, and all of these were placed in the standard lorry breeding cages that are used for all the larger lorries, except for smaller members of the genus *Charmosyna* and the delightful Whiskered Lorikeets *Oreopsittacus arfaki*. The dimensions are 160 x 80 x 80 cm high (5.3 ft. x 2.67 ft. x 2.67 ft.) with perches, spaced apart to encourage more flight and exercise. Previous surgical sexing observations revealed ample fat deposits, thus these lorries may appear to be slender and graceful, but most are very prone to becoming fat in captivity if improper housing and management is practiced.

A standard nest box of about 40 cm high (16 in.) and internal base of about 25 x 25 cm (10 in x 10 in) is provided for most pairs, with some of the earlier pairs, enjoying the luxury of having a natural pine wood log, of similar dimensions, but of a much smaller base.

The birds are very vocal, and pairs often perform the typical *Eos* lorry threat and hissing display, with the male, usually, arching its neck, hissing and swinging from side to side. Courtship displays are less pronounced, but not unlike to the threat display. The birds copulate from the side repeating their performance frequently.

Two eggs form the clutch, and they are laid with about two days difference. Incubation lasts for an average of 27 days in the nest, but artificial incubation has given an average of only 26 days. Both parents carry out incubation duties.

The chicks hatch naked, with some grayish down and are fed by both parents, but with the female doing most of

the feeding.

For artificially incubated eggs, newly hatched chicks were placed at 98°F in a commercial parrot brooder, which has to date given excellent results with all species of parrots and other birds. (Animal Intensive Care United AICU, manufactured by Lyon Electric, CA.)

The first few breedings occurred with *talautensis*, followed by *challengeri* and finally *histrion*. The first two clutches were removed from each breeding pair, with the pairs allowed to raise their third and fourth clutches. This species is prolific and can always be depended upon to replace clutches removed for artificial incubation.

Initial chicks were raised along side Purple-naped Lorry chicks *Lorius domicellus* and Eclectus Parrot chicks *Eclectus roratus* sharing the same brooder. They were all fed the same mixture, which consisted of a diluted adult mixture, and grew very well, development was slightly faster than that of both the Purple-naped Lorries and Eclectus Parrots.

They fledged and were weaned at approximately 70 - 80 days of age, and chicks at a premature age of only eight weeks, were already able to nibble at bananas held at them.

The young birds, differed in plumage coloration from the adults, they were generally smaller, with no bright shade of blue, and the bluish-purple feathers on the breast were interfused with the red. The color at this stage can be compared to the shade of that of a Violet-necked Lorry *Eos squamata*, except that it would appear only a bit more on the violet side. Some individuals may also appear grayish on the heads and upper body regions. Others have the blue-violet extending from the crown to the mantle.

Newly imported birds are easily stressed and very susceptible to bacterial infections of the gut. And even established pairs are regularly dosed with Baytril (Bayer-Germany) and this bactericide is potent and effective in stemming all outbreaks of disease in this lorry. However, it is used mainly as a treatment, and only once every three months on established birds, as a preventative.

Red & Blue Lorries must never be crowded, although they are not overly aggressive, but the incidence of disease under such conditions should act as a deterrent to most responsible aviculturists. Even hand-reared young, must not be crowded together, for the same reason.

Hand-reared chicks of this species make excellent pets, and are both trusting and show no fear of man. When set free within the isolated weaning room of the nursery, most of them would make short flights that rarely leave the ground, and if given an opportunity, would climb into sleeves and start nibbling at ears and pulling hair. One of these youngsters, possibly a male, would make copulatory movements at my fingers – talk about precocious behavior!

However, this species is still relatively unestablished in aviculture, but there should be a future increase if all available birds were put up for breeding. Care must be taken to pair the correct sub-species together, but this would pose not a problem to most of the aviculturists holding Red & Blue Lorries, as they are almost certainly to be *talautensis*, being the most prevalent form in trade. But one cannot rule out the possibility of having the rarer and endangered *histrion* or the smaller *challengeri*, thus it would be helpful to check all the birds before pairing them.

To date a large number of *talautensis* have already been bred, together with a handful of the other two sub-species, and all have been fitted with closed rings and permanent identification numbers. Hopefully, they would be able to be made available to other aviculturists soon, as it is a very unique and wonderful lorry, not just because of its rarity, but from its vivid colors and endearing personality.

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