

# the "King" of Amboina

by Marie B. Walker Greensboro, NC

In the spring of 1994 we discovered that the one bonded pair of Amboina King parrots had laid a clutch of three eggs. These were wild caught birds that had been in this flight (6 ft. wide x 9 ft. high x 20 ft. long) for about five years. Their age is unknown and these eggs were the first they had produced while in this flight. All three eggs hatched and we decided to see if the parents would raise them even though the few articles we had read about Amboina Kings advised pulling babies at two weeks of age for hand-feeding.

By the third week, all three chicks were dead. We removed the dead chicks, cleaned the box and hoped for better results next year. Within three weeks we noticed that the female was not outside the nest box very often so we checked the box and found two more fertile eggs. When they hatched, we decided to let the parents try once more, rationalizing that the first failure was due to inexperience.

We were afraid to disturb the birds too often so checked the box only several times a week. One day shy of the two week period, we found both chicks dead. Their crops were not full but did have some food in them. One side of the largest chick looked as though someone had taken a razor and shaved it while the smaller chick

had only a bruise on its neck.

In the spring of 1995, the female went to nest and again laid three fertile eggs. By the time the first chick was about 10 days old, we found two of them dead. The largest one had some food in its crop but one of its feet had been chewed off and the second chick had no feet at all. The third egg (which had not hatched) contained a perfectly formed embryo with both feet intact. We came to the conclusion that the parents had abandoned caring for the eggs and chicks and were responsible for their deaths.

In June, 1995 two more eggs were discovered in the nest and by June 30th both had hatched. During the first week we pulled the chicks every other evening to check them. Each time, they seemed lively and their crops were full. During the second week, we checked them each day. As the two week deadline approached, we noticed that the largest chick's crop was not as full each time and by the 13th day it seemed to be less lively. On July, 14 as we were leaving home to attend the Carolinas/Virginia Pheasant and Waterfowl Society meeting in Richmond, Virginia, we decided to check the chicks again. The larger chick had an empty crop and seemed weaker. The smaller chick had a little food in its crop.

While I had both of the chicks in my hand, I decided not to put them back in the nest. Instead, I tucked them under my shirt to keep them warm and ran to the house. After a quick trip to the store to get strained baby food fruit and vegetables, I mixed some baby feeding formula and fed the chicks. We packed the full chicks, formula, feeding tube, and heating pad into the car and headed for Richmond. The chicks were fed only when their crops were empty so we had to stop for a feeding only once while on the road. Their crops seemed to empty every four or five hours, and they adapted easily to handfeeding. They were so easy to care for that I carried them to work with me for several weeks to give them their mid-day feeding.

By the time the chicks were three weeks old, red and blue color was starting to show in the tail area and the green wing feathers were emerging. The largest chick, which was now the smaller of the two, had a leg splayed and the foot was pointed out to the side. To correct this, we put a thick rubber band loosely on its legs to pull the leg back under its body. We kept this on for a week to 10 days. To try to straighten out the foot, we placed the chick in a bowl with straight sides that measured 2 1/2 in. deep x 6 in. in diameter. The foot is still not perfect but we managed to straighten it enough so the bird has no problem perching or eating.

At this writing, the babies are almost five months old and are housed outside in a 20 ft. flight. We feel that they are a male and a female even though we have not had them sexed. We hope this is true because we have an extra female who lost her mate a year ago. She lays well and sits tightly. We also acquired a male this spring but he is very timid and when we tried to put the two together it just did not work out. Maybe a handraised female would be the perfect mate for this timid male. The bird that we feel is a male is very aggressive towards its nest mate and might be a good match for our single female.

One thing is for sure—we will never attempt to have parent raised Amboina King Parrots again because the young chicks are so easy to handfeed. It is a pleasure to watch them grow. They are intelligent, affectionate and, in time, are able to talk very well.

They are truly "Kings." ➤

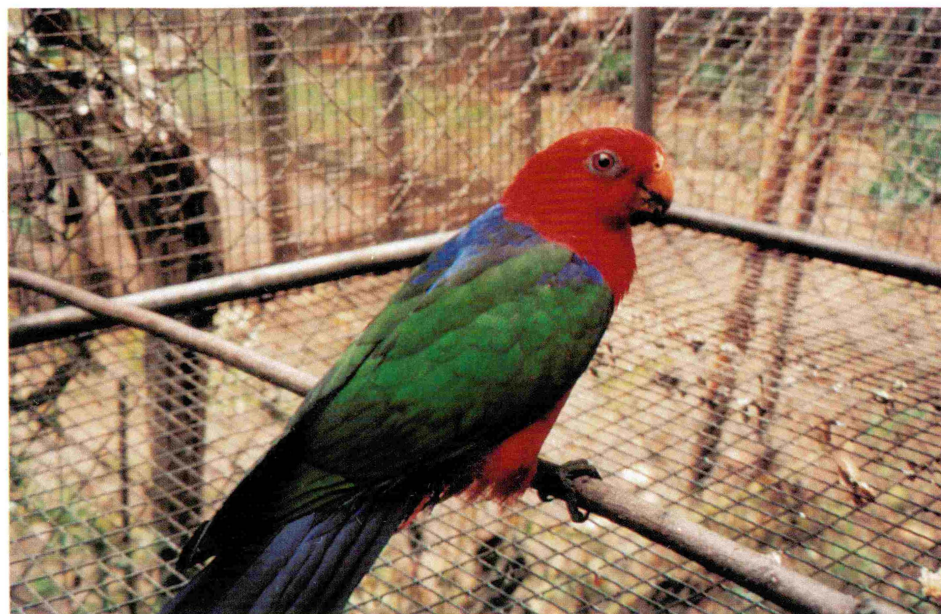


Photo by Marie B. Walker

Three and a half months old Amboina King Parrot.