

# Captive Breeding in Indonesia

by Judy Berg, Bali, Indonesia

**T**he rains came and the flooding followed with a vengeance. Just trying to reach home took blind faith. Blind because the sky opens up and big tepid drops come with the intensity of a waterfall. Faith because I was still hoping the small coral road across the rice paddy to my house remained

intact. I could not tell where one side of the road was as it was now the edge of a new waterfall as it dropped into the next paddy. Just a few days earlier I had gone over the edge of the road with my car. Within a matter of minutes 10 of my quarantine station workers were off in a truck to solve my trans-

port problems with smiles on their faces and happy hearts at the chance to take a break from endless vegetable/fruit chopping and cage cleaning. With the rains came even more power outages than normal.

This scenario could be considered one of the normal days in the tropics. The difference for us was that we had baby birds in the nest box. I had a container load of brooders, incubators, inverters, 12 volts systems, etc. coming down from the States but it wasn't here yet. I wanted to pull the babies and if I had had my equipment I would have pulled eggs to incubate. But there were no incubators and no dependable power supply.

The babies were two Umbrella Cockatoo chicks. So nothing new, you say. But for here, these were the first captive bred cockatoos ever to hatch in Indonesia. Three weeks after the hatch we pulled two nice babies from the nest box. Four government officials from the Department of Wildlife watched. They had come to record the banding of the chicks. The Department of Wildlife gathered around as we

Photos by Judy Berg



Bali Bird Park under construction.



The village women on the day the Governor welcomed the baby Umbrella Cockatoos at the Bird Park.



The Governor of Bali with the baby Umbrella Cockatoos. These babies were closed-banded with AFA bands. Note the blue band on the baby to the left. These were the first captive bred Umbrella Cockatoos in Indonesia.

slipped closed AFA bands on the chicks legs. The men showed happiness and hope on their faces and pride in their voices. I watched and listened to them talk of the future and whether or not we would try to breed this or that species of bird that the Wildlife Department was concerned about regarding survival in the wild. I began to see the two little chicks in a new light.

For American breeders, perhaps the hatching of a couple of Umbrella chicks seems insignificant. But for the country of Indonesia this was a very small but important step towards education, conservation and preservation of their native wildlife. Two weeks later, the Governor of Bali greeted the chicks and again asked us to work on captive breeding programs for some of the native Bali birds that he is concerned about.

Perhaps I should start at the beginning and introduce ourselves. We are the Bali Bird Park. We are located on the island of Bali in the country of Indonesia. At this time there are 300 workers building the Bird Park with the intention of opening during September 1995. The Park will be very small but very beautiful. We have nowhere near the 500 or more cages offered by some bird parks, but we do have the lush tropical setting and a variety of exotic tropical birds you will never see outside of Indonesia. Though the Park is small, the breeding unit is not. With the approval of the President of Indonesia and the cooperation of both the government's Department of Wildlife and its Department of Forestry, we have set about to establish a captive breeding program for rare and endangered Indonesian birds. The Birds coming to the Park are not birds we take out of the wild but rather a combination of old pets that we bought, birds kept illegally that were confiscated by the government and given to us, and birds coming from various zoos.

Our quarantine station is about an hour away from the Park and was built first. The initial birds brought in were not rare ones but old pets. We had a staff to train and a lot to learn ourselves in what health problems we would confront. When we received these birds their previous diet had been corn on the cob and water. Typically, they had been chained to a perch all their captive lives. Neither

their physical nor mental health was very good.

In the quarantine station they are put into large cages with only two birds per cage. The Umbrella Cockatoos that produced the chicks came into the station from the typical background. They were put into a cage that was 5 by 12 ft. and the hen soon after started dropping eggs. We put up a nest box and didn't really give it another thought. Those of you who breed cockatoos know that breeding cockatoos and "Murphy's Law" go together. Anything that *can* go wrong *will* go wrong.

Much to my surprise, not only did the pair incubate properly, but they hatched out two chicks and fed them until I pulled them at three weeks. This all took place among 15 workers feeding three times a day and often crawling inside the cage to scrub it down. Once the chicks hatched, we also checked them daily. As it became evident that the parent birds were taking their duties seriously, I became more and more concerned with diets. Did they have enough fat in their diet? Did they have enough protein? We depend totally on locally produced food for our birds. This means they have no seed in their diet and no parrot pellets. I know that you parrot breeders who read this will understand my concern.

Fortunately, I remembered some information in those old parrot books that many of you new comers have never come across as they are very antiquated. Some of these old books speak of giving mealworms to breeding hookbills. It was worth a try. If the mealworms were accepted, they would provide the needed fat and protein that I was concerned with. And, yes, the worms were accepted. The parent birds were given as many mealworms as they would eat. They would always eat these before they ate their normal diet. Having experienced this in Bali makes me wonder if our cockatoo breeding programs in the States might produce more dependable parents and parent raised chicks if we added live food to their diets during the breeding season.

Every day we face new challenges, more problems and many, many heart-breaking situations. The baby Wreathed Hornbills we just brought in from the other side of the island are so stunted from malnutrition that they are all but featherless. Amongst my tears I

continually remind myself that the family that had them was doing the best it could. They fed the birds what they fed themselves and their family. All they had was rice and some bananas. The babies had fallen out of their nest hole in the trees. The family found them and took them home. The older chick was chained. As he had some wing feathers the children were using him as a kite. They would tie a string on him and force him to fly. They did not realize that this was cruel. They loved these babies.

Whether it be these hornbills or the thousands of other birds that are being trapped every year, I must continually remind myself that the real problem is "hunger and ignorance". Hunger because the people trapping the birds in the wild are just trying to support themselves and feed their families. Ignorance because they don't know any better.

The baby hornbills are doing fine now. Every day is a battle of wills as we try (with little cooperation) to convince them that they need a better diet. Those big bills snap shut and a noise issues forth that sounds very much like a human saying "no" with her mouth shut. We are gaining in the battle of diets but only by tricking them. Early in the morning we can throw them hard-boiled eggs and other items they don't consider edible. These they catch and swallow before they realize what they are eating. Many dirty looks and much grumbling and complaining follow but they are coming around. If you come to Bali and visit us you will see them. You can recognize them by the highly suspicious look in their eyes.

Visit Bali. It is one of the 13,000 islands belonging to Indonesia. Indonesia is located south of Singapore and north of Australia. Next to Brazil, Indonesia has the most extensive native bird life in the world comprising 17% of the world's birds. The Indonesian airline, Garuda, has inexpensive flights and/or hotel packages from the west coast of the U.S. Also, Continental Airlines flies into Bali. Hotel accommodations are inexpensive and range from "home stays" for a few dollars a night to the large resorts like Hyatt and Four Seasons. The beaches are extensive, the food is cheap, the people are sweet and friendly and the shopping for art, crafts and clothing are unsurpassed.

And the Bali Bird Park is beautiful. ➤