

parrot



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– Some Simple Basics

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Blue-Throated Macaw

Psittacine Husbandry

Photo: Chris Birmingham, 2012.



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Articles & Photos Wanted.



This is *your* magazine, and we appreciate any input you may have to its contents. If you have any articles, photos, comments, suggestions or feedback, please email Yvette Harris yvette_harris@icloud.com

deadline for contributions for next issue:

20 JUNE 2018

*There is no Volume 5 Issue 11 version of this magazine.



Cover Photo:
Kakapo

*Sirocco amongst the
renga renga lillies.
Maud Island.
Photo: Chris Birmingham, 2012.*

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Editor's Squawk

Welcome to the 2018 Convention edition of Parrot Magazine! We are gearing up for this fantastic event towards the end of April, and we're so excited about our lineup of superb guest speakers!
If you haven't registered yet, you'd better get cracking as it's going to be phenomenal.

Last year I wrote an article about a drama we had with our pet budgie Greenie who was trodden on by our 3 year old and had quite a significant head injury. I'm pleased to report that he's doing well, and we've also welcomed a new addition to the flock. Young Topsy needed a new home after the owners found out they had quite severe allergies!

See you soon! – *Yvette Harris, Editor, Parrot Magazine.*



Our new bird Topsy (front) with Snowy & Greenie (no points for guessing which is which!)

Ask The Committee!!!

If you have a burning parrot question, our experienced parrot breeder committee are on hand to help out! They have a passion for birds and are willing to answer any questions you may have.

If you would like to ask a question, please email Mark Davies at acornaviaries@gmail.com

The Macaw species native to Costa Rica are threatened with extinction due to habitat loss and poaching for the illegal pet trade. Today numbers are fewer than 400 individuals for the Great Green Macaw, and less than 4000 for the Scarlet Macaw.

We raised over \$10,000 for this cause at our 2015 conference, but they still need our support. Donated funds will go towards rehabilitation & release aviaries, nurseries, hospital and wildlife rehabilitation facility, and Lapa Bus education unit for local schools.

Help Endangered Scarlet and Great Green Macaws

Hatched To Fly Free is a conservation project located near the Corcovado National Park, Osa Peninsular, Costa Rica. Founded by New Zealander Chris Castles in 2014. The project focuses on rescue, rehabilitation and release of endangered macaws and parrots back into the wild.



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Guest Speaker Profiles

Katrin Scholtyssek ACTP, GERMANY

"For as long as I can remember I have lived with birds. My family always kept Budgies as pets and they welcomed wild birds in their backyards. I got my first pet budgie whilst attending primary school, and he lived with me for an extraordinary 16 years!

Biology has always interested me, so I took part in an advanced course in school, which led me to study it further afterwards.

In 2004 I bought an African Grey Parrot; he was an incredible creature with his unique personality and high level of intelligence. From there my fascination with parrots grew and I was soon hooked on this incredible group of birds!

I studied Biology at the University of Potsdam in Germany, where my focus was zoological subjects. Within 2 months of completing my diploma I was offered my dream job with the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots e.V (ACTP). This was 2012; I started working as a keeper at the breeding facility, where I got to know all of the personalities of the individual birds. I also began recording behavioural, health and nutritional data suitable to be published further down the track.

ACTP's main focus is to establish safety net populations of threatened parrots. A large population of offspring is required for this and with the data collection of breeding behaviour we can optimise the breeding conditions for every species.

ACTP has given me the experiences that I never dreamed of! I have the privilege to manage projects such as protection



programmes for Caribbean Amazons, Amazona Guildingii and Amazona Versicolour, which not only include work in their natural habitat, but also the breeding of these incredible birds in Germany. I have been able to expand my knowledge of health management, behavioural studies, artificial incubation and hand raising of an incredible range of species, such as Hyacinth and Lear's macaws, Caribbean Amazons, Black Cockatoos and also the Spix's macaws, a species which is considered extinct in the wild. It is incredibly satisfying to be able to put my knowledge and effort into a project, which is nothing less, than saving a species.

ACTP e.V. - ASSOCIATION FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THREATENED PARROTS e.V. is a registered non-profit organisation based in Germany, dedicated to the protection conservation and development of endangered parrot populations and their habitats.

SPEAKER SPONSORED BY AVIARY LIFE MAGAZINE

Andrew Digby NZ

Kakapo Recovery

Dr Andrew Digby is the Science Advisor for Kākāpō and Takahē with the New Zealand Department of Conservation. He is responsible for providing scientific advice to direct conservation efforts for both of these endangered species. This involves reviewing research, organising field trials and data collection, analysing data, and collaborating with the many external international experts who assist with the recovery programmes. Andrew has a PhD in Conservation Biology from Victoria University of Wellington, focussing on kiwi behaviour and conservation. He had an earlier career as a research astronomer, with a PhD in Astrophysics from the University of Edinburgh, and a postdoctoral fellowship with NASA in New York conducting exoplanet research.



The kākāpō: conservation science in action:

The kākāpō (*Strigops habroptilus*) is the world's heaviest and only flightless parrot. Four decades of conservation effort has seen the species bounce back from the brink of extinction, with the population tripling from a low of 51 birds in 1995 to 152 today. However, kākāpō are still critically endangered, and face threats from inbreeding, disease and low fertility.

Dr Andrew Digby from the Department of Conservation Kākāpō Recovery Programme will highlight the ground-breaking conservation and management behind the recovery of the species, including advances in genetics, artificial insemination, nutrition and technology. He will describe the challenges for the future of kakapo, and the innovative and collaborative methods used to find solutions to them.



Guest Speaker Profiles

Eric Antheunisse USA

- *Breeding Parrots at Cedar Hill Birds, Not just a hobby*
- *Breeding Conures their Care and Management*

For over 30 years Cedar Hill Birds has done business by these words: family, ethics, conservation, quality and success. By the age of nine, Eric Antheunisse had a poultry and water fowl collection most fanciers would be envious of. As his passion grew Eric immersed himself in the trade and breeding of parrots. He traveled the western United States with his parents visiting other breeders, quarantine stations and the like learning everything he could.

In 1997 Eric met his wife, Alycia who quickly learned the ropes of the avicultural world. In 1999, Alycia and Eric had the first of two children, Ashle. In 2001, their son, Brenden was born. Both children have been brought up with the great appreciation for our feathered friends and are handy helpers around the ranch. Our children help in every aspect of care, feeding and cleaning, socializing, shipping and customer service. It is important to us that they understand the



responsibility we have taken upon ourselves to raise these creatures. They surprise us day in and day out with their comprehension and knowledge of our business, passions and goals.

Now, with a family, and a successful exotic bird business, Eric has not deviated from his childhood enthusiasm. Not only does he travel the world speaking of his experience in aviculture, but Eric also specializes in CITES export, commercial breeding, retailing, and continues to consult for breeders around the world.

It is with his years of experience, compassion and drive that continue to make Cedar Hill Birds a successful and reputable breeder of exotics worldwide.



SPEAKER SPONSORED BY PARROTS INTERNATIONAL NZ

Alycia Antheunisse USA

Alycia Antheunisse has always had animals in her life. She was born into a ranching family and lived on a 500 acre sheep and cattle ranch until she was 22 years old. Working with her grandfather every day taught her the respect of animals, common sense, and a deeply rooted work ethic that keeps her grounded in what is now one of the largest and most respected exotic bird businesses in the world. In 1996 Alycia reconnected with her now husband, Eric Antheunisse, founder of Cedar Hill Birds. Together they have built a business that circles the globe and incorporates all facets of aviculture.

Today, Alycia is instrumental in all aspects of handrearing: from nestbox to perch, public and resale. She also runs the office and keeps all records in accordance to protocol and client stipulations. Although she tends to be more involved with the public, education, etc, Alycia does enjoy the breeding aspect of aviculture as well. Together she and Eric work daily to provide their flock with the proper diet, environment, and enrichment that leads to consistent and strong production in what would be considered a commercial



setting. Streamlining their operation has proven beneficial for all species, conures to macaws, lories to cockatoos.

It wasn't until her children entered high school that Alycia began to see a dire need to expose young adults and even adults to the wonderful world of Aviculture. Alycia has worked extensively with her son and daughters FFA chapter (Future Farmers of America) to introduce the members to care, hand rearing, handling and breeding of exotic birds. She hopes to be able to offer an apprentice program to qualified students that wish to learn more and in turn continue educating and inspiring more people to participate in the hobby and industry.

Alycia is excited to be joining us during April as we are in welcoming both Eric and Alycia to New Zealand



Guest Speaker Profiles

Dr Scott Echols usa

DVM, Dipl ABVP (Avian Practice) -Utah (USA)

- *Avian Metabolic Bone Disease and Why It's so Important*
- *Navigating the Dietary Supplement Industry*

Dr Scott Echols grew up in Texas and received his BS from Texas A&M University and DVM from Texas A&M College of Veterinarian Medicine. Upon completion of veterinarian school, Dr Echols moved to California to work with Dr Brian Speer and completed his residency in avian medicine and surgery. Drs Speer and Echols worked on many avian projects including developing flock health programmes, new surgery techniques and diagnosing and treating kidney disorders in birds. Both doctors continue to collaborate on multiple avian subjects and co-teach at conferences worldwide.



After spending 5 years in California, Dr Echols moved to Austin, Texas to become the Director of Avian Medical and Surgical Services at Westgate Pet and Bird Hospital for the next 9 years. At this point, Dr Echols continued to develop new techniques in avian medicine and surgery and began a prolific writing and speaking career.

In 2009 Dr Echols formed Avian Mobile Surgical Services with Dr Brian Speer and AvianStudios.com. Now Dr Echols provides avian surgical consultation services throughout the United States and acts as a visiting professor at multiple veterinary schools. AvianStudios.com was created to provide educational material designed to improve the captive lives of captive birds. Such releases as Captive Foraging and the Expert Companion Bird Care Series DVD's have sold and been viewed worldwide and have received high praise.

Additionally, Dr Echols is the co-creator of the Lafeber Critical Care Series videos which were designed to help veterinarians handle emergency situations with birds and other exotic animals.

Dr Echols is a past president of the Association of Avian Veterinarians, he is a reviewer for the Journal of Avian Medicine and Surgery, and recipient of both the TJ Lafeber Avian Practitioner of the Year Award and Texas Non-Traditional Species Practitioner of the Year Award and founder of the 'Reproductive Problems in Ducks' and 'Nutrition for Pets' forums on Facebook.

A relatively recent project that Dr Echols has been part of is the Grey Parrot Anatomy Project, which has created new collaborations and numerous new findings that are sure to apply to all birds and much more.

Again some of our committee members have been fortunate to meet and hear the work that Dr Echols brings to our hobby. Using up to date technological advancements to discover new findings that we have never been able to observe in the past.

SPEAKER SPONSORED BY PARROT SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND

Cromwell Purchase AL WABRA WILDLIFE PRESERVATION, QATAR

Cromwell Purchase studied for many years gaining degrees in a varied field, but ultimately went on to focus more on animals. He went on to gain a Masters in Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort concentrating on Avian Diseases, Medicine and Vaccine Technology and a PhD at the University of Pretoria in Zoology, specialising in Avian Nutritional Physiology.

He has been involved in aviculture since 1987 (aged 10) and has more than 25 years of self-taught avian incubation and hand-rearing experience and has amassed a large private breeding collection of a mixture of parrots, with a favourite focus on Lories and Lorikeets. In addition he has over 10 years of hands on reptile/arachnid captive breeding/husbandry and large mammal husbandry and training experience.

Since December 2010, Cromwell has been the Blue Macaw Captive Coordinator at Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation and was soon promoted to Head of Birds. He also took over the research and conservation departments due to his background and education. In 2013 Cromwell was promoted to director at Al Wabra and is currently the International Studbook Keeper, Genealogist and Management consultant for the Spix's macaw recovery program.

The Al Wabra farm is a 2.5km² oasis of green areas, palm trees and many rare wild animals from all over the world. Powered by Sheikh Saoud Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Al Thani's passion for nature, an international team of expert vets, biologists and keepers are



dedicated to the care and conservation of the rare and mostly endangered animals that can be found on the farm.

Founded as a hobby farm by his Father, Sheikh Saoud is now transforming the Al Wabra farm into a "state of the art" breeding and research center for endangered wildlife.

The Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation is not a zoo and many areas are closed and not for visitors. This makes the Preservation an unique place with a high success rate in breeding difficult and sensitive animals. This includes excellent veterinary care, laboratories, food-kitchens, orphan-nurseries, the best in natural and imported foods, air conditioning, artificial rains and involvement in international breeding programs.

In the future Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation aims to continue with setting the standards in its field. More effort will be invested in educating especially young people in wildlife and nature. Thereby help to increase the public's awareness in environmental issues. A special education and visitors area is planned for just this purpose.

Guest Speaker Profiles

Gavin White NZ

- *Management and Breeding the Goldies Lorikeet in NZ*

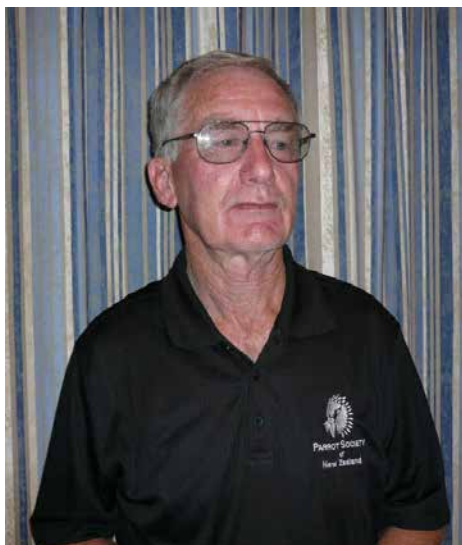
Gavin White is a well respected aviculturist within New Zealand and is regarded as an authority here for the breeding of the "brush tongued" parrots. Gavin along with his very understanding wife Linda, have an extensive collection of Lories and Lorikeets with many successful breeding successes including the delicate and beautiful Goldies Lorikeet.

Gavins presentation will focus on his management and breeding of this delightful species, identifying the highs and lows of working with these birds.

Read Gavins biography below.

I live in Kerikeri, Bay of Islands in the winterless north of New Zealand. Now retired after commercial beekeeping for 45 years producing speciality honey products for locals and export markets. Now currently a Queen Bee breeder again for local and export also. With the current demand I still produce two thousand queen bees a year, pocket money allows me to attend a parrot convention in Australia each year.

My first introduction to bird keeping was with Bantams and Pigeons when I was about eight years old. In the early sixties I had Budgerigars and Lovebirds but lost interest when cars and girls came along. My interest was rekindled 20 years ago when my wife and I were in Australia visiting our children and seeing the Aussie birds in their natural habitat.



I purchased a real cross section of species when I started again, to see what I liked the best. I decided that the Lori and Lorikeets and medium sized Australian parrots are the species that I prefer. My collection now is about 60% Lori and Lorikeets and of late the rare and difficult to breed species is what I have been concentrating on. I have been having reasonable success with a Goldies Lorikeet breeding program over the last 15 years.

I do have grave concerns on the numbers of species that we have lost in New Zealand over recent times and unfortunately there are a number that will follow the same demise if nothing is done.

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Guest Speaker Profiles

Rachel Riley NZ/AUSTRALIA

- *Kaarakin: Rehabilitating Orphaned Black Cockatoos to Release Point*
- *Parrot Behaviour: Assessing and Correcting Common Problem Behaviours in Captive Parrots.*

Rachel Riley is a professional avian behaviour and training consultant, and owns and operates Parrot Life Behaviour and Training. Running since 2013, Parrot Life Behaviour and Training offers in-home and online consultations for companion parrot owners (often on a referral basis from avian vets) and a range of workshops and training courses for parrots and their owners. Parrot Life® is based in Perth, Australia, but is expanding into New Zealand in 2018.

Rachel has had many years working with parrots and birds of all shapes and sizes, in the conservation field as well as focusing on her passion of behaviour and training in more recent years. Parrot Life® also has



a strong conservation focus, with one of the main contracts being the avian management at Kaarakin Black Cockatoo Conservation Centre, where Rachel and the Parrot Life® team work intensively on onsite husbandry, diet, volunteer training, cockatoo rehabilitation and movements, release assessments and training of non-release birds for display and education. Rachel holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Zoology from Massey University, New Zealand.

For more information please visit www.parrotlife.com.au/about.



SPEAKER SPONSORED BY VETAFARM

Dr Stacey Gelis AUSTRALIA

- *Delving into post mortem, What am I looking for? Real Time*
- *Dietary Requirements of Lorikeets vs Lories, Why Should it be different?*

Stacey has been an avian veterinarian for over 25 years, working in both private practice and zoological facilities. During this time he has developed a broad expertise not only with psittacine birds, but also finches, softbills, galliforms, waterfowl and ratites. He has been involved in the import and export of birds, as well as working with endangered parrots including the orange-bellied parrot. Stacey has published much of his work in scientific and avicultural journals as well as contributing chapters to several avian veterinary texts. He has also lectured at veterinary conferences and avicultural conventions. His particular areas of interest include nutrition and diseases of loriinae,



gastrointestinal diseases of birds and diseases of finches and softbills.

Stacey has also been an aviculturist for over 30 years, having kept and bred a variety of psittacines, finches, softbills and poultry. His particular avicultural interests include lories and lorikeets, Psittacula and Australian parrots.

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Hand-Rearing

Some Simple Basics

by Tony Silva

The breeding season is well underway. For some it started early; for others it was late. This is evident by the number of messages that I received each week discussing issues that are being faced by individuals hand-rearing young parrots. This quest for information is the subject of this article.

Hand-rearing is a rewarding, challenging, time consuming and frustrating affair. No one can ever claim that they never face issues in hand-rearing, but it is possible to significantly diminish the problems if some very basic provisos are followed. On the other hand, if the breeder attempts to cut corners, the flow of problems will be incessant. They breeder can then expect a continuous chain of events that will severely affect the health of the chicks being reared.

■ **So how can a hand-rearer achieve greater success and reduce the presence of problems?** The answer consists of two words: **hygiene** and providing a proper **diet**.

Hygiene encompasses keeping the chicks on a clean substrate, keeping the brooder immaculately clean, thoroughly washing the feeding instruments and then disinfecting them and continuously applying a disinfection policy—wiping surfaces down continuously, reducing dust, washing hands and then disinfecting them and reducing the contact the young have with outsiders.

Proper diet means understanding the importance of the appropriate water: solids ratio and the dietary needs of the young, feeding the young according to a strict schedule, feeding the formula at the proper

temperature and insuring that the formula is made fresh each time. I must state that I do not recommend attempting to mix various ingredients to produce a formula in order to economize. When I get messages regarding this subject, my ire escalates and my response is short and to the point: *If you cannot purchase one of the countless formulas available on the market worldwide, why did you venture into breeding?* The commercial formulations are not optimum, but they produce results far better than someone wanting to rear young on mashed banana and oatmeal cereal, which are woefully deficient in minerals and calcium.

■ **Let me discuss some of the points mentioned above in greater detail.**

Newly hatched chicks have an undeveloped immune system. This makes them especially vulnerable to infection. This is why strict hygiene is important. This is also why chicks that are incubator hatched should be kept separate from those removed from the nest, which have often been fed by the parents and have a different bacterial platform. Ideally incubator hatched and parent started chicks should be kept in separate rooms, but if this is not possible use separate incubators and always feed the parent started chicks last.

With incubator hatched chicks, I start them on tissue but quickly transfer them to shavings, which are absorbent and prevents them from sitting on their feces. In over 40 years of hand-rearing I have only ever experienced a handful of chicks that have swallowed the shavings. I have such a low incidence of this because I keep the chicks satiated; they are never—and note that the word never is stressed—allowed to empty during the day. When breeders tell

me that they must allow the chicks to empty before the next feeding to avoid crop stasis, I always state that the problem is one related to management and not digestion. In the wild and in the nest the chicks are kept fed at all times. I follow this dictum. Visitors to my home, who have entered the nursery invariably make a comment as to how quiet it is. This is because the chicks are kept fed; they do not have to frantically vocalize or move to capture my attention to let me know that they are hungry. This is also why beak deformities are so few in the young I produce; macaws will pump insatiably, even the edge of the tub they are held in, when hungry and this is one of the causes of a deviated upper mandible.



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When chicks are allowed to empty between feedings, they must often be kept singly, or they will grasp and pump each other, this in an attempt to obtain a feed. In the process they often damage the tender bill. Raising the chicks alone is unnatural and often produces behavioral issues that become evident much later in life. By rearing chicks together they display a natural behavior and can learn from opening their eyes that contact is pleasurable—they seek warmth from each other, often play preen or mouth each other's feet. I have observed these same behaviors in nests in which I have placed a video camera.

To maintain the level of hygiene, we change the bedding three times daily; the soiled shavings are used as ground cover for the trees in the yard. The chicks are transferred to clean tubs and the used tubs are washed in soapy water first and then in a disinfectant solution. This means of cleaning must be understood, as most disinfectant lose their properties in the presence of organic matter. By neutralizing the organics, the disinfectant can play its role. We use this same principal of cleaning for all

instruments used for feeding, the nursery walls and floor, feeding surfaces and brooders. This task is performed daily.

The disinfected tubs are allowed to dry in the sun, which provides ever additional disinfection.

Because all commercial formulas contain some fat, the tools used for feeding chicks will need to be washed with soap and water to eliminate the greasy residue. Syringes are soaked in soapy water. They are scrubbed with a baby bottle brush. Alternately hot soapy water can be drawn into the syringe, which is then vigorously agitated. All feeding tools are rinsed well with copious amounts of water and then they are allowed to air dry.

Feeding syringes are assigned to specific brooders. They are kept in plastic cups that bear a number that corresponds to a brooder. This deters cross contamination. The formula, once made, is poured into the respective plastic cup and from there the chicks are fed.

Chicks tend to be kept in the same group as they move from brooder to brooder and then into tubs. Daily the brooders they are housed in are cleaned thoroughly and then wiped with a disinfectant.

Visitors are not normally allowed to enter the hand-rearing rooms, but if they are they must wear a smock, sandals that we provide and they are not allowed to touch or handle the chicks. This is important because diseases such as polyomavirus and psittacine beak and feather disease can easily be transported and transmitted to the chicks through contact.

Commercial formulas are the best product for feeding chicks. They are not excellent, but they are good. I state this because all formulations are based on poultry science and do not take into account the different needs of the different parrot species. What the breeder can do is to incorporate other ingredients to make these formulas much more suitable. These include pureed vegetables for Eclectus Parrots, fat in the form of nut butters for macaws, conures, amazons and African Greys Psittacus erithacus and fruits and vegetables for



lories. We always have on hand steamed carrot, broccoli and sweet potatoes that is liquefied and poured into ice cube trays. This facilitates their use when needed. Fruit is always cut fresh. I prefer tropical fruits over temperate fruits, which are less nutritious. The tropical fruits we use are papaya, guava and mango. Papaya is the staple but the others are also employed if in season. For fat, we employ natural peanut butter that does not contain hydrogenated fat or sugar. We boost the fat in the formula for all species, but especially for those requiring fat. This means that 250 ml of formula contains a teaspoon of peanut butter for the non fat requiring species and a tablespoon for species requiring fat. I started this decades ago after having examined the crop contents of many wild chicks, which are invariably fed by their parents the foods with the highest fat content. The fat satiates hunger and deters the desperate agitation seen in hungry chicks.

■ Areas of important and not related to hygiene and diet are brooder and formula temperature.

Newly hatched chicks cannot thermoregulate. They must therefore be kept warm. We start at 32-33 degrees Celsius and slowly drop this as the chicks feather. Unless they are kept sufficiently warmed, the chicks will become listless or hyperactive as they move incessantly to try and warm themselves, injuring the toes and wing tips in the process. Chicks that are cold also display a slow digestion.

Formula temperature is also important, as cool food will be rejected; hot food on the other hand may cause severe burning to the tender crop walls. We feed formula at 40 degrees Celsius. We heat the water in the microwave with the peanut butter or pureed vegetables (fruit are added afterwards) and vigorously stir this before adding the powdered formula. This is then stirred again until the ingredients are thoroughly mixed and all hot spots have been eliminated. This also gives the microwave heated water the opportunity to reach its temperature (which invariably increases after microwaving) and thus prevent burned crops.

If you have issues with a chick not digesting, please do not utilise tonics (which are not intended for birds and often contain high amounts of iron and occasionally arsenic and lead). You can use tea, cumin water (produced by boiling a spoonful of cumin seeds in 500 ml of water) or what I refer to as papaya cream, which is made by adding the seeds and some of the flesh of a ripe papaya to a blender, liquidizing this with some Pedialyte (an oral electrolyte solution) and then passing this through a fine colander to remove any large seed particles. This is warmed and fed to the chicks. The unused portion should be refrigerated, where it will set like jelly. Once warmed it reverts to a liquid. This works far better in starting crop motility than any other product I have used. Once digestion has resumed, you can slowly start incorporating formula into the papaya cream.

■ Crop Stasis

When crop stasis occurs, it is important to consider the cause: bacteria, fungus or the ingestion of the substrate on which the chick are maintained. These are management issues that must be addressed along with stimulating the crop back into movement.

If you adhere to strict hygiene and feed a good diet, hand-rearing will be a pleasing experience that will teach you much about neonatal development.

Finally, if you enjoy aviculture, please Do NOT support the World Parrot Trust. They are a menace to bird keeping and aviculture. I ask you to spread the word to others who may be unaware of this. This is why the STOP the World Parrot Trust logo appears on my page. Harrison's Bird Foods and formula have spoken up negatively against hand-reared. Do not use their products. There are also far better formulations available that in my opinion yield superior results. We as a community need to support organizations and manufacturers that support aviculture. It is time to stand up and defend our hobby. Without our money these business and organizations would not exist. ■



A new hope for the Blue-throated Macaw

By Irene Lorenzo.

Source: <http://www.birdlife.org/americas/news/new-hope-blue-throated-macaw>

An estimated 50-250 Blue-throated Macaws are left in the world

The discovery of a new roosting site for Blue-throated Macaw *Ara glaucogularis* coupled with an innovative and successful programme geared towards promoting the use of artificial feathers in ceremonial headdresses, gives renewed hope for the survival of this charismatic parrot.

The Blue-throated Macaw is one of South America's rarest parrots, with a population estimated at around 250 individuals. In the last decade, Asociación Armonía (BirdLife Partner in Bolivia) has been tackling the main threats affecting it: habitat loss, the lack of breeding sites and ending illegal poaching. But their approach to ending the latter has been especially unique and very successful: to give locals an alternative to using real macaw feathers for their headdresses.

During their traditional celebrations, the inhabitants of the Moxeño plains in Bolivia's Beni department perform with colourful headdresses as they move to the rhythm of bongos and flutes. The dancers, so-called macheteros, dedicate their movements and attire to the colours of nature. Unfortunately, those headdresses are made of macaw tail feathers from four different species, including the Blue-throated Macaw.

This is where Armonía's Alternative Feather Programme comes in; it consists of an educational campaign promoting the use of artificial feathers made of organic materials among the macheteros through workshops held in local schools. Those workshops could only be made possible thanks to the financial support of National Geographic's Conservation Trust and the Loro Parque Foundation.

Since the Moxeños consider themselves to be the guardians of nature and all of its creatures, they were quick to understand the importance of using substitutes.

"Each headdress is made of an average of 30 central tail feathers; that means that one headdress of artificial feathers saves at least 15 macaws," explained Gustavo Sánchez Avila, Armonía's Conservation Programme coordinator for the Blue-throated Macaw in Trinidad.

The programme, which started in 2010 with the support of Loro Parque Foundation, not only protects this critically endangered Macaw, but also empowers local craftsmen and women to preserve their natural heritage and their culture.

Furthermore, after seeing the mesmerising dances, many tourists buy the alternative headdresses as souvenirs, providing locals with much needed additional income.

Since 2010, the Moxeño people and Armonía have saved over 6000 individuals of four macaw species and engaged thousands of local people

in the conservation of Bolivian nature. Most big Moxeño towns already host alternative feather training workshops, but rural areas still use real feathers. If you wish to help, you can support Armonía so that they can organise additional training workshops this year and save even more macaws.

The new roosting site

While conserving the already established populations of the Blue-throated Macaw is essential to their survival, further research remains vital to make sure none of its habitat is left unprotected.

However, entering the Bolivian northern Department of Beni during the rainy season is a huge adventure. As seasonal rainfall merges with melt water from the Andes, the grasslands become extensively flooded, making it impossible for cars to travel around the area for three to five months every year.

The situation forces locals to revert to their old ways, using horses to get across a savannah that is speckled with pools of water, knee-deep mud

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and head-high grasses. As a result, conservation research becomes complicated and expensive.

But this was not going to stop our team of conservationists at Asociación Armonía, supported by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Loro Parque Foundation, when they set off last summer to search for more roosting grounds of the macaw in this remote region.



Blue-throated Macaw at Cincinnati Zoo, U.S.A



Traditional headdress made of artificial feathers © Wendy Willis

The truth is that the team had had many rough failed trips in the region to verify sites where owners swore they had seen the parrot, only to find they got the wrong bird. So, when they got a call from a local ranch owner who claimed to have seen the Blue-throated Macaw in his fields, the team reacted with some disbelief.

They had seen this happen a few times already: while many ranch owners proudly believe that they have seen the Blue-throated Macaw, to the untrained eye it is often confused with a more generalist species, the Blue-and-yellow Macaw *Ara ararauna*.

Surprisingly, when they arrived on site, it turned out that at least 15 Blue-throated Macaws had made a small forest island their home. This new roosting site was confirmed only forty kilometres north of the Barba Azul Nature Reserve: the largest concentration of macaws in the world live here, with yearly counts of over 100 individuals.

At one of Beni's most important events of the year, the Chope Piasta, the macheteros are getting ready to start their traditional dance. Today, headdresses with alternative feathers outnumber natural ones nearly five to one. In the meantime, conservationists rejoice about the new discovery of a roosting site. Developments worth dancing about.

More info.: <http://www.birdlife.org/americas/news/new-hope-blue-throated-macaw>

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Psittacine Husbandry

by Dawn Stewart

First published in Parrot Magazine February 1996

Facts About Grit:

Psittacines should not be given gravel or grit, as when eaten it is retained in the stomach and gizzard. This has been proved scientifically and if too much is eaten, can cause impaction of crop or gizzard. Often grit can be fed for years with no bad consequences. Birds often don't touch it anyway, and it is not beneficial or necessary.

Birds requiring grit are, domestic fowls, ostriches, peacocks, turkeys, pheasants, partridges, quail, pigeons and doves. These all consume the whole seed, intact with the hulls. The grit acts as a grinder on these whole seeds and is needed because the digestive enzymes will not break down the hulls on the seed.

Psittacines of course hull the seeds before they are eaten, so that their own digestive enzymes act on the ingested seeds. This then makes the need for grit unnecessary. There are also no beneficial effects for our parrots although some people believe in grit fed in the form of Piminix which is produced for pigeons. We have found this mix to be excellent for all of our parrots, so can highly recommend it to those who don't already use it.

Cuttlefish – Calcium & Phosphorus:

It is often stated cuttlefish is necessary for calcium in the diet of psittacines. While I have no scientific facts, we know what happens

in our aviaries. Larger parrots simply crunch up the cuttlefish within a few minutes, dumping it on the floor for us to clean up. This is about as good a way to get rid of you dollars as lotto.

On the other hand for the smaller parrots it is beneficial, as it helps in trimming the beak. Those birds in our aviaries who never have cuttlefish have never suffered any consequence such as calcium deficiency. They have brought up beautiful young and there has never been any egg binding or paralysis.

Calcium is provided in the form of wholemeal bread and milk, Complan



and Bone-Gro or the human equivalent. This is fed in the softfood and the volume increased in the breeding season. Therefore, calcium from cuttlefish is not necessary.

Tree branches are a way of providing those parrots which don't eat cuttlefish, with a means of helping keep their beaks in trim. They also provide goodness by way of live food, leaves, flowers and bark which the birds love to strip off. Exercise and the relief of boredom are other beneficial effects of branches in the aviary.

In conclusion, cuttlefish is good but not essential and you shouldn't worry if birds won't eat it, as long as calcium and branches are provided. I personally doubt whether cuttlefish would provide enough calcium for a pair of psittacines bringing up young anyway. So another form of calcium needs to be provided also to optimise breeding results.

Calcium powders usually include phosphorus which helps prevent paralysis and stressing. Sunflower seeds also contain phosphorus which we feel is necessary for all psittacines. Stress can be directly linked with paralysis in Barrabands but all parrots, especially young when sold, can become badly stressed. This is sometimes the cause of or contributes to the cause of deaths. Therefore calcium and phosphorus should always be fed in some form to all parrots as part of their normal diet.

Seed:

There have been many articles recently questioning the nutritive value of seed in the psittacines diet. These go as far as saying sunflower should not be fed, and parrots will suffer and die early with a seed diet. Scientists say parrots cannot produce young from seed only. This theory has been proved wrong as parrots have raised young on seed only diets. This has perplexed scientists as there is far more goodness within the young than is put into the parents as dry seed.

Have you ever sat and thought why or how this can happen? Why we go to such lengths to get home-grown seed or some which

is untreated? The home-grown seed will germinate and is better for the birds, heat treated seed will not usually, to any large degree, germinate and therefore is considered dead seed.

This then is the key. Psittacines husk their seed, without the husk, seed will absorb digestive liquid juices far more quickly. Our theory is that as the husked seed enters the crop, where it stays some length of time, it has optimum conditions for germinating. In other words, it is now damp, warm and dark, in these conditions it is feasible that canary seed, etc will start very quickly into the germinating process.

Germinating seed as you all know, has a very much richer content of nutrients than does dry seed. Therefore chicks are not fed dry seed, but a rich germinating half-digested form of seed. This can and will allow enough nutrients for the chick to grow normally. If this is so, then seed we feed our parrots is not just dry seed with little in the way of nutrients, as some would have us think. It is as far as we're concerned, a good nutritious natural diet, which can only be beneficial to your birds. Especially if a variety of other foods are offered as well.

How much sunflower should we feed? As far as our aviaries go, we feed sunflower all year, and just as much as our birds want. If a pair wouldn't eat anything else then we limit it, but they would still be given a handful per pair, every day. Some aviculturalists in Canterbury, have cut out sunflower in winter as well as other extras. Queensland aviculturalists say birds don't need it because



of their naturally poorer diet in winter. This could be so to a certain extent, but I don't really agree. True, there may not be the summer goodies around, but in nature winter berries, insects and grubs are eaten. Also you often see psittacines eating the roots of plants, which obviously contain something needed in the diet. Parrots are intelligent.

Then there's the fact where in a much colder climate, birds need their body fats to see them through the snow and frosts we have. If parrots aren't reasonably fed in winter, then by spring they may be in poor condition for the coming breeding season. It worries me to see others taking literally everything as gospel, without taking different climates into account. If this is not done, books then become misleading and the birds suffer or die.

Worms and the Microscope:

If you have a microscope a lot can be learned about worm eggs, shape, form, different sizes, etc. Most of all it will let you know when psittacines are infested with worms, so treatment can follow. We don't own a microscope, as the time to check each parrot would not be practical. Also using a microscope is nowhere near 100% foolproof.

In fact, young worms and eggs don't produce eggs, so there are intervals when checking faeces with a microscope, no eggs will be present. This may suggest to the aviculturalist that as faeces are clear of eggs, no worming is required. If young worms are present, this is not the case. If not wormed this bird will then have a bad worm infestation by the next time it's checked. Unless the owner sees signs of the parrot's health deteriorating and acts to correct this mistake. This fact always needs to be kept in mind for the sake of the parrot's well-being.

There are many differing methods and worming materials, most work effectively if handled correctly. Our method is to worm when and if we think it necessary. That is double worming before the breeding season and after the breeding season. Then often

in between, as young birds are especially susceptible in their first year.

We use Nilverm at 2cc per 600mls or a milk bottle of water, a little glucose or honey may be added if you think birds aren't drinking the mixture. Panacur is now unavailable, so Fenben is used and according to vets is virtually the same. A safe drench for your birds even if they are slightly over-dosed. This is administered to the beak by eye-dropper or crop-needle, Fenben is available in handy small bottles.

Using two types should prevent birds becoming resistant to one drench. This method has been successful for us and we continue with it. Of course our climate is far better than Auckland and worms aren't as prevalent.

Nests:

Should nests for some parrots be hung at a 45° angle?

We have tried this, some years ago, as it was often recommended for Princess in Australian books.

Please don't do it.

The result is suicide jumps by chicks. This angle allows even young chicks to be able to walk or climb to the entrance hole, and either be pushed out or fall out.

If you're lucky, they may bounce, and if found in reasonable time, can survive the ordeal.

As far as we're concerned nest boxes should be hung vertically.

If you think a darker nest or more privacy for the hen entering the nest is needed, then a spout could be fitted around the entrance hole. This is just a method of trying to copy nature, as when a branch has broken near the trunk of the tree. It could very well give hens a more secure feeling when entering the nest.

This is worth a try if hens are reluctant to use the nest provided. Spouts can be natural, or just a square built of nest box wood. They have been very successful for some aviculturalists.

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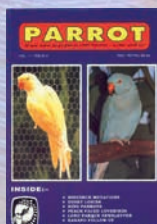
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