

AWIPARROTS

worldwide



White-fronted
Amazons
by Christof
Götz

Thiely de Moor's Eclectus Parrots
Blackwing and blackface Budgerigar mutations

Loro Parque Fundación breeding tip



Interesting nestbox for *Neophemas*
Avian vet advice ► Antibiotics...?

Colin O' Hara: Proven nestbox for Scarlet-chested Parrots



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AWI PARROTS worldwide

Editorial

*It only takes one minute to support a zoo.
Most institutions have a special
"support us" link on their websites.
Any help is welcome,
even a minimal donation.*



**Dear parrot breeders and friends! I would like to dedicate today's editorial to zoos.
It is no news that currently they need the help of all of us all like never before.
Due to the global pandemic and the compulsory closure,
many of them are in financial trouble.**

I have had a close personal relationship with zoos since my childhood, like almost every animal lover, actually. My great-uncle Čestmír Pekař was the director of the Hluboká Zoo (South Bohemia). His stories lasting for hours cannot be forgotten. I felt like being in a live animal movie when with him. And especially in recent months, I have recalled his words uttered in the 1980s very well. He ascribed great importance to zoos within the context of the global protection of animal species and managed his zoo daily with great dedication so that the animals thrived as best as possible.

Like then, today's purpose of zoos is also to preserve the genetic diversity and populations of species outside their natural habitats. Public education is necessary, even if visitors go to the zoo e.g. just for a walk with their children, they gradually – some even subconsciously – absorb the information communicated on the information boards for each species. The importance of fauna protection is presented, and we

should all take part, as we share a common planet together. And who else can demonstrate to the general public in such a wide range the importance of nature conservation than zoos? Expertise goes hand in hand with providing pleasant life moments for visitors here. People have the opportunity to observe animals from the immediate vicinity, which cannot be mediated by any media or social network.

More than a year ago, most institutions were closed for many months. Some zoos are, though under strict rules, open in these days. However, this does not change the fact that most of them need help. If you have any zoo in your area, please visit its website and, if you have the opportunity, contribute something, albeit a minimal amount. Even such a small donation can help in difficult moments.

Thank you!


Alena Winner
publisher



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**MONTHLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE
FOR PARROT BREEDERS AND FRIENDS**

APRIL 2021

Contact

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E-mail: info@awiparrots.com

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Editorial team

Alena Winner

publisher & editor in chief

Rosemary Low

honorary member & professional consultant

MVDr. Helena Vaidlová

avian medicine

Ing. Martin Rašek

general parrot breeding & mutations

Mgr. Hana Ash & Christopher Ash

translations & language corrections



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By Christoph van Belle

BACKGROUND story

To be the author of the background story of the new digital magazine AWIPARROTS is something close to my heart. For me, and I believe for many of you, the release of the monthly magazine was a surprise and of course a pleasant one! I have enjoyed a long-standing friendship with the publisher Alena Winner. It was about fifteen years ago when she contacted me and visited me in Zottegem, Belgium to pick up some parrots. Since then, we have been in contact, whether in terms of journalism, breeding or purely friendship.

Many breeders in the world know that Alena has been the publisher of the Czech magazine PAPOUSCI since 2001, and you may know her from many breeding congresses and meetings. In my opinion, she has greatly contributed to the development of parrot breeding in the Czech Republic, where local breeders have been building more and more modern aviaries and intensifying their breeding. Nevertheless, why did she opt for an international magazine? Who actually is this journalist, the owner of the publishing house and the mother of three children? She dislikes talking about herself, feeling better in the role of a questioner or photographer. Even on that account I'm pleased she agreed to being asked a few questions.



**Where did your love for parrots come from?
Do you remember that moment
and how old were you then?**

As it happens with parrot keepers in most cases, I also was the one to have inherited a connection to breeding. My father Vladimír Doležal, MSc. guided me towards nature and the breeding of various animals from an early age. As a child, I grew up in a flat that was spacious but not large enough for an aviary room. There was no more suitable space for placing several cages with canaries than in my bedroom, which of course, being a little girl, I really welcomed.

I also had two small aviaries with Gouldian finches there. Unfortunately, the adult birds kept throwing the chicks out of the nest and I kept saving them. That was the moment when my breath was on hold, giving rise to my closer relationship with the birds. So at the beginning it was not a parrot, but canaries and Gouldian finches. However, later the bird



**Alena Winner and Christoph van Belle
on the occasion of the
IX. International Parrot Convention
in Tenerife, 2018.**

occupants of the room broadened to include a tame grey parrot. Some years later we moved outside the town, so we could start building spacious aviaries on the plot of land at the house. My father and I gradually started acquiring all kinds of parrot species and it couldn't be stopped.

So you started breeding parrots quite early!

Yes, indeed. When I was fourteen, we built aviaries - there were about thirty of them, plus fifteen smaller ones for small-sized species. We gradually put together pairs of Amazon parrots, *Poicephalus* species and *Psittacula* species. Later, seven more pairs of lutino galah cockatoos, Alexandrine parakeets and rarer mutations Plum-headed Parakeets were added. At that time, I also had a White Cockatoo and a Blue-and-yellow Macaw at home, which I later paired so that the parrots could raise their young ones. Furthermore, I engaged myself in breeding green iguanas and ball pythons. I have never owned a large parrot farm, but the plan was to have as many parrots as I could manage. And truly, I have never cared about how rare the species is. My priority has always been to create the best possible living conditions for the parrots and to maintain their quality for further breeding - to have rather fewer species, in more pairs, and study their demands in detail.

Where did journalism appear in your life?

Actually, the decision for this profession was made at the age of six. I loved those old typewriters, and every moment when my parents weren't looking, I ran up to them, and without knowing all the letters, I typed on the keys. My father was the editor-in-chief of a local

newspaper and my mother ran a bookshop. Straight away in 1990 after the peaceful revolution, they founded a book publishing house and I spent - and wanted to spend - almost all my free time with them. I was already pretty obsessed with books by then. Subsequently over time, everything got connected with parrots as well. The first parrot article was dedicated to Loro Parque. Written in 1997, it described my impressions from our first visit to this beautiful park. It was published in instalments. Until then, very few people in the Czech Republic had known the largest parrot park in the world, and it could be said that this serialization kicked off future waves of organized trips, as most of those who raised parrots wanted to see the magnificent park.

That would have also been interesting for me. I know you have worked closely with Loro Parque Fundación. You are now even the ambassador of the foundation. Does this mean that the history of your contact dates back to 1997?

Not exactly. We visited Loro Parque as part of a typical family holiday then. At that moment, it would have never occurred to me how the cooperation with Loro Parque would develop one day on the professional side. But somehow, we had a bee in our bonnet about it, so in the spring of 1999 we contacted the park management, inquiring whether I could do a study internship there. This was followed by the first meeting with the Loro Parque founder and president, Mr. Wolfgang Kiessling. It was a very moving beginning of cooperation, which has carried on to this day. The Loro Parque Fundación is perfectly and responsibly lead by the president Mr. Christoph Kiessling. The foundation is unique and coherent, belonging among the top institutions in the broad global context of nature conservation. With a clear conscience, I can say that this is an exemplary business associated with many good deeds.

But how did the establishment of the Czech magazine first published in September 2001 come about?

At that time, I had had the experience of writing articles in various Czech magazines, and some breeders kept pointing out that they would like

a specialist magazine dedicated to parrot breeding. Getting back for a moment to my internship in Tenerife, the important person I met there was Mrs. Inge Feier, whom many of you know. Until then, I probably hadn't met anyone more dynamic. Inge was and is like a living fire that will stir up the atmosphere in all circumstances. It was actually her who asked me: *"And why don't you publish your own magazine about parrots in the Czech Republic?"* I couldn't answer that. I said quietly at the time that it would be a big commitment, and that being nineteen I did not feel like such a project yet. In addition to writing, I was then intensively engaged in the practical breeding of parrots and completed a one-year temporary job at a veterinary clinic in České Budějovice in southern Bohemia. I gained a lot of interesting experience taking care of parrots, amphibians and other animals there as well. The urge to publish my own magazine continued to grow...

Please continue, it sounds really exciting!
In fact, I also wonder if you directed your studies towards parrots...

To be honest, the older I got, the clearer it occurred to me that I probably wouldn't establish myself in just one field. The inner exuberance is sometimes quite hard to tame – and frankly, I didn't even plan to. The interests in journalism, parrots, anthropology, tourism and veterinary issues literally kept clashing inside me. After completing my high school studies at a business academy with a focus on tourism, I applied to study anthropology. I was very interested in it and originally meant to connect it with my parrot interests. It was the year 2001 and again a battle of feelings took place inside me, whether to study further or publish a magazine. One day I received a letter confirming my admission to the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, in full-time study. Nevertheless, it was clear to me that I had to choose. Either several years of full-time study in Prague or daily building up of the PARROTS magazine, which involved a great deal of effort. As you may have already guessed, the magazine was the winner. However, I still managed a full-time post-secondary study of English and German, and earned a Bachelor's degree from university, where it was possible to elaborate a Bachelor's thesis entitled "The Role of European Organizations in Global Nature Conservation". My consultant at the time was Dr. David Waugh of Loro Parque Fundación.

At that time, I had another bigger interest – animal-assisted therapy. For several years I attended camps,



PAPOUSCI – the Czech parrot magazine will celebrate its 20th years anniversary in September 2021.

where we tried to develop children suffering from autism. I also tried to apply animal-assisted therapy in anti-drug and anti-alcohol medical institutions and other institutions. However, it was most successful with autistic children. Zootherapy involves the study of animals, ethology and human psychology. Everything is interconnected and fascinating. But the truth is that my professional life was constantly largely made up of writing, writing and again writing about parrots, sometimes interspersed with photography.

Have you visited the habitats of parrots?

In 2003, I began to visit the natural habitats of birds more intensively and spent several months a year in South Africa, which I completely fell in love with. In the meantime, I managed to participate in congresses and visit other habitats as well, for example in Australia.

The years spent travelling greatly changed my view of brightly coloured beauties and my relationship with them. This won't be an entirely popular piece of information, but I was much more satisfied with photographing wildlife in natural areas, researching their biology, etc. I also visited breeders on different continents, and journalism suddenly became a little more prevalent over the practical breeding of parrots. I began to see increasing importance of information sharing, which can help both in breeding and in the comprehensive protection of endangered species.

It can sometimes be a challenge, though.

I know that breeders sometimes keep secrets ...

Yes, that's true. And I understand and respect them. If, for example, it took them thirty years to come to a certain functional breeding management, it is of course understandable that they do not want to confide. On the other hand, there are breeders who

will share their knowledge open-heartedly to help their colleagues and also to improve the overall breeding of parrots in human care.

But finally let's go to AWIPARROTS.

How did this project come about?

We had feedback from breeders shortly after the release of the Czech magazine, who subscribed to the bimonthly magazine and translated it using a translator. I did not address the publication of an English magazine more seriously until 2008. But I had to postpone it because my first son George was born in the same year. Over the next few years, I thought about the form of a possible new periodical in my free time, and I never gave up the plan that one day it would be implemented. It wasn't possible before now, as I'm primarily a mother of three children.

I carry out other activities only when I am convinced that I will be able to devote myself to them 100% without the children suffering. That moment did not occur until March this year.

And how did it go, did you just sit down at a computer and write an English magazine?

As I have already mentioned, we had a lot of responses from breeders of good repute before, but also regular wishes to publish the PARROTS magazine in English. In the summer of 2020, I worked on an article on the breeding of White-fronted Amazons with the German breeder Christof Götz. Subsequently came the well-known query why we still don't make the magazine in English, which was asked in the first week of September in such a lovely picturesque restaurant by the motorway close to Brodek near Prostějov, where there is an extensive breeding facility of Jan Nedělník, MSc., who unfortunately is no longer with us. And truly, Christof was persistent in that "pressure". Evidently, he was in the right place at the right time, as the idea had been maturing in me for years.

This was supported by the motivation of several other breeders. Above this at the same time, Jakub Janosch, the very lovely person, breeder, and distributor of the Psittacus feeding in Czechia, suddenly one day me: "What are you waiting for?" Without mentioning the publishing plan, the same question came a few days later from Israel of the very well-known Idalew. So, on one autumn day, I just said... okay, why not. Let's do it. Then came the long autumn and winter evenings, when the overall concept and the design of the pages were formed, the appropriate font was chosen, and it was also necessary to create



Alena Winner with the young Kea (*Nestor notabilis*).

Photo by Eliska Horkova, 2019

a team. I redesigned the pages several times so that the texts read well even in the electronic form. There were hundreds of details that needed to be finalised. And we still have many ahead of us, especially when it comes to software that will be developed in terms of its concept according to the experience we gain.

I mention the evenings because, with 100 percent care for three children and the current distance learning, my magazine working hours sometimes start at eight in the evening :-). I can't deny that we have embarked on a very demanding project, which on the other hand is now overall very uplifting, and I believe that we will not disappoint the reader with the concept.



Does it mean that the parrot magazines constitute your main job at the moment?

My main job is publishing and production of books. The truth is that the parrot activities, including the magazines, are funded from our more commercial book titles, such as cookbooks and book print production. The creation of books is fascinating for me, and I see a more profound sense in literature that can help others, or be part of moving things further. In July 2018, I set up a new company called FYNBOS PUBLISHING, where all the parrot publication activities will be organized – i.e. magazines, calendars and books.

So do you still have time for family?

Yes of course. They are and always will be in the first place, and only then come all the other activities. The only one I don't have time for is practical breeding of parrots. I had to postpone it, as in order to do it one hundred percent, I would need to clone myself. Our family still owns forty pairs of parrots, which are now cared for by my brother, and I took on the breeding consultant role. My husband and kids, we give each other a big support in all the activities we have.

This is the most important.

Can breeders send you articles?

I will be very glad. Information sharing is extremely important. We will be very happy to present practical experience that will help others through AWIPARROTS. And in a certain sense, it will also be about the promotion of breeding and its defence against some groups that tend to ban the breeding of parrots in human care. This is, of course, meaningless and unreasonable in the context of parrot life on the planet.

I think it's the perfect idea to connect breeders from all over the world...

Undeniably, I am aware it won't be easy to find the right "parrot point" that will suit everyone. Climatic conditions are unlike in different countries, however, for parrot breeders with the right enthusiasm it will certainly be interesting to read what breeding management is used on the other side of the planet. Actually, the mentioned "point" is not easy to find even in the local magazine. The readers include both novice breeders as well as experienced ones. Much has already been written and each has a slightly different way. However, if the reader finds albeit one sentence that can be instrumental in advancing his/her breeding or solving a problem, one of our goals has been met.

Aren't you worried that there won't be enough contributions from breeders?

I don't think there will only be few, but given my experience in parrot journalism I know that sometimes solely one problem arises in this respect. Breeders are afraid to write and communicate information on their personal breeding for fear of getting a scolding with negative criticism. It is not only a question of the Czech Republic, but also worldwide various self-proclaimed "anonymous" often criticise on social networks. Nevertheless, they can't control our lives and decisions, and you need to realize that.

And what if a breeder does not have the natural endowment to write?

We don't have a problem to visit the breeder and create an article based on personally communicated information. Subsequently, the article is written either directly in his/her name or as an interview.

At present, when visiting is quite impossible, we can send questions via messenger or WhatsApp.

How do you factually proceed with publishing an article?

English is not my first language, so all the texts are translated by the professional translator Hana Ash and proofread by her counterpart Christopher Ash – a native

speaker. Subsequently, I consult the text with the world-famous breeder and professional Rosemary Low, who will share her expert opinion. Only then is the article graphically processed and sent to the breeder in a PDF format for inspection. It never happens that we would publish a text that has not been checked and approved by the author. I pride myself on that a lot. I am very particular about that, and about trust as well. Breeders can be sure that everything we agree on will always stand 100%. Sometimes, for security reasons, they do not want to give the exact address where the aviaries are located. We respect their request and the information remains for our internal purposes only.

I also like the editorial team, are you going to expand it over time?

An honorary member of the AWIPARROTS editorial team is Rosemary Low, who provides professional and stylistic consultations. It is a big honour for our editorial team. Rosemary Low is the author of more than 30 books, published between 1969 and 2016. She has written more books on parrots than any other author, alive or dead! Rosemary is a person who has done really a lot for the world of parrots. Other members of the team are the renowned and highly experienced veterinarian Helena Vaidlová, VMD, and a specialist in mutation genetics Martin Rašek, MSc. The vision of the magazine is to interconnect parrot breeders from all over the world. Especially at these times, when traveling is not possible, we can meet at least on the magazine's pages.

And aren't you afraid of negative reviews?

This will certainly occur. I can cope with the opinions of others and I respect them. Communication is the basis of all good relationships. I welcome all opinions, as it is in my interest to create an international magazine the breeders will be satisfied with, and that will be according to their ideas as well. Inappropriate anonymous or possibly harmful posts on social networks will not receive any response from us, as we don't consider them important. However, a factual, constructive opinion that makes sense will always be very important to us and we will appreciate it.

Do you always agree with what breeders mention in their articles?

That's a very good question. Of course, it happens that we do an interview or the breeder provides us with an article, and based on the information in it we know that the breeder makes a mistake, does not feed well, etc.

Subsequently it is such an internal struggle, whether to publish the text or not. However, after some time I decided that we would publish the experience, whatever it might be, as our magazine is not for complete beginners and does not aim to be a mentor. Articles should be a statement of the method of particular breeding management, ready for discussion. If the breeder makes a mistake and describes it in the article, the more experienced breeders may point out this matter, either by giving feedback directly to the breeder or by writing their own article. It's good if things get discussed. However, the debate must always be constructive, not offensive.

Will AWIPARROTS be for both breeders as well as pet keepers?

The objective is to focus on parrots - they are the main and only specialization. Therefore, all parrot lovers will find something for themselves in AWIPARROTS. The sections deal with practical breeding, suitable aviaries, nutrition and feeding, and furthermore, the magazine won't be short of veterinary issues, mutations, pets, and information on successful conservation projects.

Will the magazine be available as an annual subscription?

Yes. It will be a standard annual subscription, within which the subscribers will also have access to online articles. It concerns a very low symbolic amount that will help the editorial staff to develop the magazine. The first two issues, 1-2021 (March) and 2-2021 (April) are free to download for everyone. As soon as we have more issues available, the subscription will always be from the next issue and the older issues can be purchased individually. All income from the magazine will be returned to the magazine and, if all goes well, to conservation projects in the future as well. In this respect, I would like to thank the breeders who ordered a subscription a few days after the release of the first issue.

Thank you for a comprehensive interview that actually revealed a lot. I am looking forward to all other issues of the international magazine, and I will also try to contribute by unfolding my breeding experience. Greetings from Belgium! 🇧🇪



Christoph van Belle
Parrot breeder, Belgium
E-mail: christoph.vanbelle@icloud.com
WhatsApp: (+32) 478 58 59 69

By Christof Götz

Personal experience with the breeding of the **White-fronted Amazon** *Amazona albifrons albifrons*



The species is sexually dimorphic. Male on the left, female on the right. The male's alula and primary coverts are red while the female's are green. The males also have a greater amount of white on the forehead, a larger "spectacled" area and a larger beak.

The White-fronted Amazon was a relatively frequently imported Amazon species. It has never been as high in demand and value as other Amazon parrots. Nowadays, these birds are no longer common in our country – Germany. I would not consider them as really rare. Still, they are bred regularly, but not much attention has been given to the breeding of pure subspecies, which has led to most of the individuals in Europe probably being hybrids between the subspecies *A. a. albifrons* and *A. a. nana*.

Besides the slightly duller plumage, the subspecies *nana* is very small, almost like the Senegal parrot (*Poicephalus senegalus*) with *albifrons*, being a large bird almost the size of the Cuban Amazon (*Amazona leucocephala*). Most birds in Europe are somewhere in-between. Females are usually a bit smaller than males, which can make it even more difficult to assign the birds clearly to *nana* or *albifrons*. When I bought an adult pair of White-fronted Amazons some years ago due to the previous owner's noise problems with his neighbours, I started quickly to read, study, and exchange information intensively about this beautiful species.

The birds were obviously large ones, so I was sure to have a couple of *Amazona a. albifrons*. I managed to trace back my birds by certificates of origin, ring numbers, and many phone calls. Later I found out that the birds' origin was Mexico, being the main area of *A. albifrons albifrons* in the wild. When speaking to other breeders, it quickly became clear how few pure birds there really were. This is why I developed the goal to contribute to the conservation of this neglected and underrated species by developing a breeding stock of pure *albifrons albifrons*.

I visited other breeders and initiated many contacts for the species all over Europe. It is essential to see as many birds as possible and of course, to speak with the breeders and learn from each other. My second pair of *A. albifrons* was given to me by the Amazon specialist Mr. Jan Nedelnik, who unfortunately died the following year. I could also see the traceability data of the parents of my pair at Jan's facilities.

At the moment, I have two breeding pairs in aviaries. Moreover, I keep one large aviary for a flock of young Amazons, in which birds bred at my place are socialized with other young birds to build up more pairs to develop the breeding stock further. A subadult group is the next logical step in the life cycle after leaving the parents. It is more important than quickly selling the young birds. Of course, it is a beautiful thing for the breeder to watch the agile flock. In addition, a third, completely unrelated bloodline is currently growing up.

SUBSPECIES

1. *Amazona albifrons albifrons*



2. *Amazona albifrons nana*



There is a clear difference between subspecies in the image. On the left is an *Amazona albifrons nana* and on the right an *Amazona a. albifrons*. Pure subspecies *nana* is almost non-existent in Europe. However, there are many hybrids between the two subspecies.

3. *Amazona albifrons saltuensis*

The third subspecies *Amazona a. saltuensis* is very rare. It is a dream to have it in the aviaries.



***Amazona albifrons albifrons* photographed at the beginning of April 2021 (Germany). According to their behaviour, the coming breeding season is obvious.**

I do not have *A. a. nana*. It is probably even more difficult to find pure *nana* birds in Europe than is the case with *a. albifrons*. In the USA, *nana* seems to be frequently available. The picture in the article shows both subspecies – *albifrons* and *nana*. In comparison, it shows the really big difference in pure birds.

One of my breeding pairs (female six and male nine years old) was taken over from the previous owner as an adult harmonized pair. The other couple (now three years old) was paired up at my site and was in good harmony from the very beginning. It is always the easiest and most promising method to bring two young birds together.

You have to wait some years for breeding activities. On the other hand, observing the juvenile birds and

seeing them mature is a nice thing, too. I did it with the second pair, and the first breeding took place as early as at two years of age. *Amazona albifrons* differ a lot from larger Amazon species in this aspect.

Generally speaking, *albifrons* are relatively peaceful birds compared to *A. o. oratrix*, for example. One of my pairs is completely peaceful even over the entire breeding and raising period, the male acts as a guardian around the nesting box, but he will never be aggressive. In the second pair, both female and male show aggressive behaviour.

They are incredibly excited when someone approaches the aviary. It is only possible to enter if the male is outside and the female sits in the box.

**A breeding facility
for *Amazona a. albifrons*.**

I am always in favour of naturally bred birds raised by their parents. If a hand-raised chick is quickly socialized with other birds of its species, I do not see a problem to form a pair for future breeding with it. Luckily enough, my birds raise their chicks very reliably. In my personal view, hand-raising should only be an ultimate step to save a chick that would otherwise die.

Breeding facility

At this moment, I have two birdhouses with altogether ten aviaries – each of them with an inside and outside flight. I am currently enlarging the setup by several aviaries. The shelter houses are built on concrete bases and with massively isolated wooden walls. The roof is made from 15 cm thick sandwich elements, which led to optimized insulation in wintertime. The walls inside are tiled with natural stone tiles, and some aviaries have natural wooden panels that are intensively used

**Christof Götz at the
breeding facility in Germany**



for gnawing, especially in wintertime with a lack of fresh twigs. The panels can easily be exchanged when damaged too strongly. The birds have all-year-long access to the outside aviaries. As opposed to all my other parrots, the heat-loving Amazons often prefer to stay inside in winter on certain days.

Inside flights are 2.5–3m long and 1.2–2m wide. The outside aviaries are 3–5m long. The flights for the Amazons are 3 x 1.5m inside and 3.5 x 1.5m outside. The young bird flock aviary is 3 x 2m inside and 5 x 2m outside. All inside flights are connected with doors to the outside flight so the birds can fly quite long distances when opened. The birdhouses are equipped with Arcadia bird lamps (UV). Good quality of light is important, especially in wintertime when birds are less frequently exposed to natural sunlight conditions.

The aviary floor is made using natural stone pieces so is the base of the outside flights. This is very nice in appearance, but it is not efficient for easy cleaning. I would choose differently next time for reasons of efficient aviary management.

It is extremely important for breeding that birds feel comfortable in their aviary. One year, I moved a pair of

my *albifrons* into a very large flight after the end of the breeding season. They were very nervous in the new place and did not breed in this aviary in the following year. When they were moved back to their old flight, they immediately started breeding. I cannot say if it was the aviary or neighbouring birds, but I have learnt from it.

Nesting boxes

The Amazons have vertical nesting boxes from spruce wood measuring 50 x 30 x 30cm. The entrance holes were initially 9cm in diameter. In the meantime and after several years, they are now much larger due to intensive gnawing. I fill the bottom of the box with medium-coarse wood chips and also put small pieces of willow twigs into the box. The acceptance of one particular box is more important than the size or shape of a box. Once accepted, boxes should be preserved as long as possible, if necessary, by renovating them.

Very colourful surroundings of the aviaries.



The way of feeding

The non-breeding period in the course of the year

My Amazons are fed with a seed mix basis (*Aviseed Neotropical Parrot Complex*), and from time to time, seeds are mixed with pellets (*Aviseed Breeder Pellet*). Fresh food makes up more than fifty percent of the food offered daily. Every day, approximately six different types of fresh fruit and vegetables are offered with apples, carrots and red peppers daily.

Three more types are offered every day, e.g. kiwis, pomegranates, fresh figs, cactus fruit, bananas, fennel, radish, broccoli, zucchini, etc. I grow fresh berries in my garden for the birds (and of course for my family, too): blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, currants, gooseberries, rowans, elderberries, sea buckthorn, hawthorn, firethorn are all birds' favourites. Semi-ripe corn and rowan berries are kept available all year in a deep-frozen state. Sprouted pulses are only sometimes offered to the birds outside the breeding season.

Whenever available in the garden, dandelion is fed. I feed blossoms, leaves, and roots of the plant, which are all readily accepted. Half-ripened hazelnuts and rosehips (*the so-called apple roses with round and thick fruits, not the small oval ones*) are more ingredients directly out of my garden. Fresh twigs of willow and hazelnut offer enrichment in the aviary and contribute trace elements and tannins to the Amazon's diet. Twice a week, the mineral supplement KORVIMIN is given; herb yeast is a natural source of essential amino acids, and I add it to the food, e.g. in periods of increased moulting activity.



A bowl for Amazon parrots contains fresh berries, fruits, vegetables, sprouted grains, and legumes.

Periods before and during breeding and times of raising chicks

A freshly sprouted mix of various pulses and protein-containing seeds is offered (mungbean, lentil, chickpea, quinoa, azuki bean, green pea from mid-February etc.). I mix the sprouting seeds either with single ingredients bought in the supermarket or take the sprouting mix of *Aviseed*.

It is soaked for 24 hours in lots of water with regular washing every six hours. For another 24 hours, this mix is kept slightly wet with regular washings until sprouts show up from the kernels. The sprouted kernels are mixed with egg food, some calcium powder, raisins, and dried *Gammarus* (a small crustacean) to enrich the mix and add more protein.

Females and chicks are given daily doses of calcium in drinking water to prevent rickets. The Amazons tend to waste their food during breeding and raising time. The food bowl is hectically screened, with lots of stuff thrown onto the floor. Therefore, it is important to supply them with fresh food several times per day. Fresh food is especially consumed in large quantities in this phase of the year.



A mixture for Amazon parrots served during the nesting and rearing period.



Breeding story

Pair number 1 had their first clutch when the female was five years old, and the male was two years old. Three chicks were raised successfully. The male was placed with this older female as a very young bird of several months only. This pair has raised four chicks every following year in natural breeding. Only one year was without breeding activity in this pair when they were re-homed into a different aviary. The second pair had their first clutch of four eggs at the age of two years, which were not fertile in the first year.

The White-fronted Amazons typically start the breeding season at the end of February. Their loud voices can now be heard more frequently and longer-lasting than during the rest of the year. The pairs now sit together even more closely, and you can watch the male feeding the female more and more often. The courting male is initially scared away by the female until finally, copulation can be seen and eggs can be expected for the immediate future. Some days before the eggs are laid, the lower belly of the female is clearly enlarged. Four eggs are laid at intervals of 1–3 days. Both females remain the full 25 days on their eggs and are mainly fed by the males in the box. Only very rarely can the females be seen in the aviary during breeding.

The development of the hatched chicks takes place at breathtaking speed. The chicks hatch at intervals of 1–2 days and have to be ringed as early as around the tenth day of their life (8mm rings). From day 25, the females can be watched more frequently in the aviary sitting together with the males with birds preening and feeding each other extensively. From day 35, the female has almost left the nesting box and only enters it to feed the chicks. The young birds leave the box at days 47–49 after hatching, and they already fly well after



1 or 2 days, landing safely on the branches, and quickly learning how to switch between outside and inside flights. Both parents care a lot about the young birds and you can see how they teach important things to their children. Such rapid development is astonishing and *Amazona albifrons* clearly differs from the larger Amazon species.

The young birds beg for food with sounds reminding me of a bicycle horn. This begging is practiced even after they have learnt to eat on their own.

What is also important

Every single young bird bred is a success. But it is even more important to realize the breeding in an environment that is as close to the natural conditions and needs of the birds as possible. I think it is very important to feed the birds a well-balanced and rich diet and to offer them a natural and green environment. Access to real daylight using outside aviaries is always a key factor to the health and happiness of the birds. The bird hobby enables the breeder to be close to nature and I can, on the other hand, use my second hobby, gardening, for the well-being of the birds by having continuous access to fresh, natural food and twigs. Aviaries and gardens belong together. The birds will give us back what we have given to them.

My observations in the natural habitats

Over several trips to South America and the Caribbean, I was fortunate to observe several Amazon species such as *liliacina*, *barbadensis*, *farinosa*, *aestiva* and *mercenaria*. I have not yet been able to watch *Amazona a. albifrons*. I keep in contact with ornithologists and



breeders in Central America and exchange information with them. This is particularly valuable for data about the subspecies geographical distribution and more helpful than the numerous parrot books on the market, in which one author would copy another author along with his stated geographical references. In many cases, incorrect data have been copied and handed on from book to book with no verification ever taking place.


So far, *Amazona a. albifrons* has not been given the status of an endangered species. It is not a species with high financial value and international wildlife smuggling is not interested in the species. However, many young White-fronted Amazons are poached from their nest to be sold to the local population as pets, with the birds ending up in very poor living conditions. In the long run, this poaching can lead to a worrying scenario for the species, together with Central America's problems in the uncontrolled destruction of natural habitats due to a lack of interest in environmental protection.

Keeping in touch with the other breeders

I am a member of the German Breeder's Association GAV (Gesellschaft für artenhaltende Vogelzucht), which focuses on breeding birds in their natural phenotype instead of the popular breeding of mutations. However, more importantly nowadays there are many international contacts with breeders all over the globe, which have become possible by social media and networking. A fruitful exchange is practiced by dedicated breeders, mainly on Facebook. This is why I built up the German-language Facebook breeder group "Südamerikanische Papageien" (South American parrots), in which 1500 breeders have been linked in

the meantime and exchange on all breeding-related topics. It is an alternative to the many Facebook groups for tame pet parrots, which are, of course, a different world.

Goals and future plans

My goal is to preserve birds of pure subspecies for our aviaries so the *A. albifrons albifrons* birds in their natural phenotype can develop into a sustainably large breeding stock in several bloodlines. I hope to be able to find more breeders joining this goal. Personally, it is a great pleasure for me that my seven-year-old son has entered the hobby. 

German aviculturist **Christof Götz** has been successfully breeding White-fronted Amazons (*Amazona a. albifrons*) for four years. Besides the Amazons, Christof focuses on various neotropical parrot species such as the popular White-bellied Parrot – (*Pionites leucogaster xanthomerus*) but also less common species like the Red-shouldered Macaw (*Diopsittaca nobilis cumanensis*), Cactus Conures (*Eupsittula cactorum*), and Weddell's conures (*weddellii*).

The second part of his hobby relates to the large African Poicephalus species, notably Red-fronted Parrots (*Poicephalus g. gulielmi*) and Grey-headed Parrots (*Poicephalus fuscicollis suahelicus*).

As a father of three children, this successful parrot breeder attends conferences and seminars for further education. From time to time, he visits bird fairs to meet and exchange information with other breeders.



Christof Götz
**Parrot breeder – species of South America
Germany**, E-mail: christof.goetz@yahoo.de

 Christof Goetz

 Südamerikanische Papageien FB Gruppe



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MY PARROT THROWS food on the floor

LORO PARQUE FUNDACIÓN BREEDING TIP



By Rafael Zamora Padrón

A very frequent consultation is about parrots throwing seeds and fruit on the floor. The reality is that it is normal in this group of birds. Their tendency is to select food and dump much or part of what is consumed on the surrounding soil. It is nothing strange, it is their behaviour.

In nature, they are the gardeners of the jungles. They consume part of the pulp of a fruit, and the rest falls so that other animals can take advantage of the rest and that the seeds achieve their dispersion. In a certain way, they guarantee that in the future, in that area, there will be more plants that provide them with food.

However, it should not be usual for them to throw away all their food, or to empty the feeders by turning them over.


In parrots born in captivity for more than three generations, it is normal for them to consume most of the fruits and seeds offered. Although the rinds and some pieces of pulp are scattered with their usual movements of the head, most of what is offered will be ingested. Wild-sourced parrots tend to often select food, looking for the most satisfying seeds. Generally, the ones with the highest content of fat. Any unknown seeds or those that are not so appetizing because of their colour, shape or taste, are thrown out of the feeder in the act of digging.



Red-crowned Parrot
(*Amazona viridigenalis*)

This behaviour is avoided if the food containers are placed in such a way that they cannot be moved or dropped on the floor. A drawer system where the parrot accesses through a space slightly larger than its head is sufficient.

In the same way, place the water away from the feeders in order to avoid other typical behaviours of grey parrots and cockatoos which are capable of transporting the seeds to the water to moisten them and eat them later. This can lead to undesirable contamination in the water if it is not renewed frequently. Another way to ensure that for parrots to feed properly is to regulate the daily amounts. At Loro Parque Fundación, we offer a fruit and vegetable salad to most species first thing in the day and in the afternoon, a mixture of seeds that they are going to consume at that time. This system allows nutrition to be balanced, there is greater hygiene as there are no remains in the feeders or on the floor, and the parrots get used to consuming the food in a homogeneous way.

Something that should never be done is to pick up the food from the floor and put it back in the feeder since this will only cause problems in the short term. 



Rafael Zamora Padrón
scientific director of the Loro Parque Fundación
E-mail: loros@loroparque-fundacion.org
Tel. (+34) 922 373 841



Part 1

By Thiely and Ed de Moor

Eclectus parrots

BREEDERS' NOTES

Let me begin by introducing myself. My name is Thiely de Moor and I breed parrots together with my husband, Ed. We grew up interested in the subject because of our parents and grandparents. Ed has been a lover of birds ever since he was seven years old, when he started with a pair of parakeets, followed by budgies. I myself, too, was raised with birds: from canaries to peacocks. Both my father and my grandfather were bird lovers, and I have always been especially fond of parrots.

We bought our first parrots in 1979, and in 1981 we bred our first African Grey chick. We now have African Greys and Macaws. Our speciality is the **New Guinea Eclectus**. We raise beautiful offspring every year. In addition, we try to put together new unrelated breeding pairs of chicks bred in our own aviaries in order to work on the future of our breeding couples. We have **12 pairs of Eclectus parrots now**. Our children, Marcel and Mariëlle, have been brought up with birds all around them. As a breeder it is also important to keep the future in mind. Together we have decided that either our children will continue our hobby or the birds will be handed over to a good breeder within our association, should circumstances "force" us to do so.

I was a member of the board of the Dutch parrot association Pakara for over 10 years, taking care of the question and discussion panel. I also publish a weekly breeder's diary and I am a freelance contributor to various bird magazines; I have published one book, *Parrots from A to Z*. I specialize in breeding and rearing chicks, and stay in touch with other breeders and vets.

BREEDING the *Eclectus roratus polychloros* (Papuan) and the *Eclectus roratus vosmaeri* (Moluccan).

When you obtain a new parrot, it should always be kept in quarantine. First of all, a parrot should be tested and sexed after purchase. After this we place a bird in quarantine for 6 to 8 weeks. The quarantine-room is separated from the breeding area, to avoid the spreading of diseases. All birds you obtain should be tested for the following: PBFD (beak and feather disease), Polyoma and Chlamydia, and their excrement should be tested for bacteria. Since 2010 we have also been testing for PDD Proventricular Dilatation Disease. If the bird has not been chipped or ringed yet this should also be done. After the quarantine period the birds should be placed in a sufficiently large aviary so that they can get used to each other in a non-stressful manner.

Each bird should have enough space to be able to relax and to be able to socialize with the other birds. This can take up to several months. It is always better to place young birds together instead of older birds. However, the older bird can and often will accept a new bird as their partner, after the death of his/her previous partner. This, however, takes time and observation and depends on the age of breeding.



The species is sexually dimorphic. Female on the left, male on the right.



A breeding facility at Thiely de Moor in the Netherlands.

*These days we also test the birds for PDD. There is a laboratory in the Netherlands which can do this. We had all our birds tested in February 2010. We have a clean group of breeding birds. I was the chairman of the PDD Research Fond and organized a one-day conference twice a year to collect money. We stopped in 2020 because of Corona with PDD RF. It is now normal for breeders to test PBFD and PDD in the Netherlands.

As the Eclectus parrots are not monogamous, we tried flock-breeding with them, but because of a lack of space this ended in fights. So we kept them as pairs again until 2011. In 2011 we again started a new colony, this time with only a young bird born in our own breeding centre, and it seems to be working. We have 4 males and 3 females born between 2009-2011. We put them in together in February 2011.

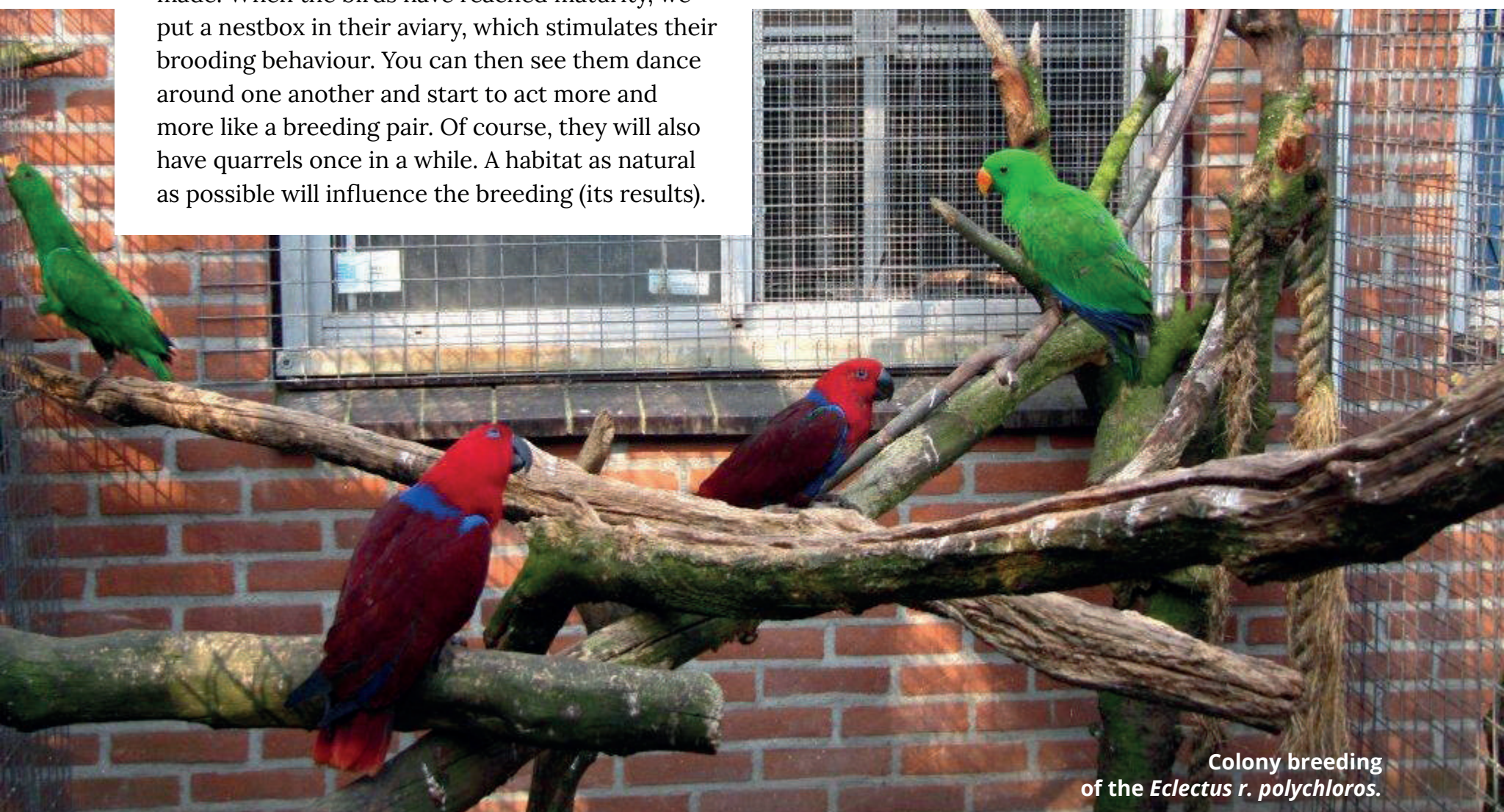
Parrots that have bonded will soon start to eat, sit, sleep, play together as well as preen each other's feathers. During the day quite a lot of playing takes place, during which they determine the ranking order. This is the basis of a lifelong partnership for the future. When they reach the stage in which they start to preen and feed each other, a major step into the right direction has been made. When the birds have reached maturity, we put a nestbox in their aviary, which stimulates their brooding behaviour. You can then see them dance around one another and start to act more and more like a breeding pair. Of course, they will also have quarrels once in a while. A habitat as natural as possible will influence the breeding (its results).

Therefore, be patient when you would like your pair to breed! Pair/mating behaviour with Eclectus parrots differs, again, from all other parrot species. For example: one moment they preen together, the next they fight (even when it is a good breeding pair). A couple can sit apart on either end of a perch and still be a good couple.

AVIARIES

Our Eclectus are housed in an indoor aviary: 3m length x 1m wide x 2m high. We keep them in pairs, as I mentioned before, but 3 couples of *E. roratus vosmaeri* were first put in a colony in an indoor aviary of the same size. Nowadays they are also kept as couples. Only young birds go into the colony.

We use sand on the aviary floor since this is easy to clean and we can check the excrement regularly. The amount of light in the breeding area is regulated; we extend the hours of light until 10 hours a day, as in their natural habitat they have 12 hours of daylight and 12 hours of darkness. In our aviaries we have drinking bowls, feeding dishes, perches (flexible and solid ones), and toys such as swings, chains and ropes. In our night-houses we keep their eating and drinking dishes, perches which are placed higher than the ones outside,



Colony breeding
of the *Eclectus r. polychloros*.



Young *Eclectus r. polychloros* growing up together. It is very important for their future life.

a nestbox and heating. The size of the nestbox is 60 cm high, 30 cm in diameter (2x1 ft) and it has a hole of 10 cm (4"). Below this hole there is a ladder attached.

The nestbox is made of PVC pipe. (Two boxes, one of which is hung vertically and one horizontally). Temperature in the aviary is kept between 15 and 20 °C. Humidity is kept at between 50% and 60%. Because the nestbox is made of PVC pipe, it is very slippery on the inside; so that is why we have attached a flight of stairs on the inside of the box. This way the birds can easily enter or leave the nestbox without having or causing accidents. Often boxes of natural wood are advised, but because of their immense weight we do not use them. PVC pipe on the contrary is light and easy to clean. The parrot in the wild also makes its nest as smooth as possible to keep the enemy, a snake, at a distance. Keep in mind that boxes made of PVC are not suitable for use in outdoor aviaries because they take on the temperature of their surroundings. During summer they become too hot and in winter they become too cold.

A good breeding result goes hand in hand with the correct size of the nestboxes in, of course, a suitable aviary. The measurements of the box itself, and also that of the hole through which they enter are important for the nestbox. A (New Guinea) *Eclectus* that enters the nestbox too often can disturb the breeding process. Because of this, we have made a blockage (branch) in front of the entrance into the nestbox. The male sits in front of this blockage and (allo-)feeds the hen through the hole. The reason we do this is that the male will damage or destroy the eggs when he gets inside the nestbox too often. To make sure that all goes well when the birds are breeding, we regularly check the nestboxes. On the floor of the nestboxes we always put a 10 cm (4") thick



Dutch Birdfood with the fruit and vegetables.



***Eclectus* parrots like rose hips.**

layer of wood curls and beech chippings. The wood shavings have a demisting function. (Some parrot species add fruit or willow branches to this, others use feathers.) Birds that use their feathers as nest-dressing get more wood shavings and branches to make sure that they no longer use their feathers but wood chippings instead. The wood chippings are easy to clean and have a great absorptive power.

OUR WAY OF THE FEEDING

A parrot's life changes through the year. One period to rest and to relax, one to breed, and one to moult. The breeding period lasts for 9 months. Before the breeding period starts, we feed our parrots extra to get them in good breeding condition. We feed our *Eclectus* parrots a lot of soft food (50%) and next to this 50% seeds and pellets (Dutch Birdfood). In their natural habitat they mainly feed on seeds, nuts, fruits, insects and (parts of) flowers. Food of a parrot in "captivity" consists of seed and/or pellet to which a lot of things can be added.



Dutch Birdfood with a mix of fruit and vegetable mix.



Seeds and nuts are only sometimes added to pellets.

Do not give them too much seed and have the birds finish all the seeds. In doing so the parrot learns to eat smaller seeds, and does not eat too rich (in fats) or one-sided food.

Seeds. A good seed-mixture consists of coarse seeds of a good quality and with a maximum of 25% sunflower seeds. We use a seed mixture that contains low-fat seeds. Besides this we use a premium feed which is a bit more comprehensive and contains more fat.

Pellets. There are various kinds and brands of pellet available. Dutch Birdfood is one of them. This pellet has been established in cooperation with well-known breeders and nutritionists. So we developed a reliable scientific bird feed as a starting point, with a successful pellet consisting of fresh ingredients. Pellets are simple and economical to use. A great advantage of Dutch Birdfood pellets is, we think, that the birds eat them straight away and because of the shape they can eat

it with their feet. Since the time we started to feed our birds pellets they have seemed to appreciate their seeds a lot more. We think it is important to offer the birds pellets next to their seeds. A bird's excrement is for us a "birds' signature", because from the excrement we can see if everything works properly. A parrot with PDD, for instance, will have undigested seeds in its excrement. The disease will remain unnoticed in a parrot that only eats pellets. We will therefore never buy a parrot that only eats pellets, or we will transform these birds' eating habits while being in quarantine into a combination of pellets and seeds. For us this is an indication of whether or not we have a possible healthy parrot.

Besides seeds and/or pellets. There should always be fresh drinking water for your parrots. Parrots normally drink very little, only 2% - 6% of their body weight.

Fruits and vegetables. Various kinds of fruits need to be given as an addition but only in small amounts! For example: strawberry, pineapple, apricot, apple, banana, pear, blackberry, raspberry, date, fig, mango, mandarin, orange (though this is often too acidic for Eclectus parrots and can cause diarrhoea), melon, peach, plum, grape, papaya, cherry and kiwi. Also currants, ripe elderberry or berries of the mountain-ash tree (pay attention though and read the warning below) are appreciated. Red fruits contain a lot of vitamin A. But please note – many of the pips in fruits and berries contain amino acid. **Too much is lethal!**

Green vegetables are also rich in vitamins. Red vegetables contain a lot of vitamin A. Examples of vegetables/herbs are: parsley and celery, kale, red or green peppers, bell peppers, spinach, carrot, broccoli, egg-plant (aubergine), fresh peas and podded peas, corn, Chinese cabbage, endive, beets, turnips, tomato, fennel, beans, blanched celery. Blanched vegetables such as blanched celery have little nutritional value.

Egg mixture. In the old days we gave our parrots an egg mixture once a week. Anything soft can be added to the mashed egg, for instance fruit or sprouted seeds. Egg mixtures contain a huge amount of vitamins: a breeding bird gets the most important nutrients to raise her off-spring from the egg mixture. During the breeding period we feed the birds extra egg-mixture.

Egg-mixture is also fed to sick birds because it has so many valuable nutrients. Egg-mixture is important but too much will lead to liver and kidney problems! Keep the bowls very clean and never keep the mixture for more than a day as it moulds very quickly.

2007 From the day we feed pellets, we give less egg mixture. The high energy pellets from Dutch Birdfood are perfect and replace the egg mixture.

Sprouted seeds. Seeds are soaked in water that is refreshed every two hours (for about 2 days) and rinsed every two hours. This causes the seeds to get richer in nutrition and therefore are very healthy for the birds.

Nuts. Unsalted nuts can be given but not too many! Get your nuts preferably in a health food store! Examples of nuts are: walnuts, beech nuts, Brazil nuts, cedar nuts, macadamias, pecan nuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pine kernels. Do not give your birds peanuts as these often contain mould. A small cat or dog biscuit or cheese is also appreciated. You can also feed your parrot a small piece of cooked chicken, chicken leg or a chicken bone, unsalted and unseasoned. All the above items contain animal protein which is important for a healthy diet.

Palm nuts. Palm nuts can be found in the natural habitat of many parrot species and are a natural source of food. The palm nut ensures that vitamins and minerals are offered and taken in by the birds in the correct amounts. The orange-coloured flesh is rich in pro-vitamin A, fibres, oil, colloid, protein, pectin, sugar and mineral salts. Palm nuts contain oil, which can cause fatness when given excessively. In the wild birds lose this excess weight when flying but in our homes they usually don't! Our experience is that Eclectus parrots eat palm nuts well. Since 2015 we have been feeding them dry palm powder

Vitamin A. Research has shown that parrots in the wild have a much higher intake of vitamin A than parrots in our homes as pets or breeding birds.

Calcium. Calcium has many functions in our bodies. Amongst others it takes care of bone building in the skeleton and it has a function in the working of the muscles. When there is not enough calcium in the feed, the bird can compensate for this by withdrawing calcium from its skeleton.

Nowadays we feed our birds pellets and therefore no longer need to add extra vitamins next to the fruits and vegetables we give. The danger of overdosing vitamins is history because of this. The fact that pellets are a completely balanced feed has been our main reason to start feeding this.

MATING

For parrots to be able to start mating mutual tolerance should be optimal. As soon as the parrots form a close pair, hormones start acting up and copulation takes place. The act of copulating easily takes ten to fifteen minutes. The female surrenders herself to the male, which will climb onto her back or copulate with her side-ways. Often the pairs copulate more than once a day. Eclectus parrots copulate throughout the year. A copulating pair can only produce eggs when they are well adjusted to each other.

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The young *Eclectus r. polychloros* couple.

Fertilization can only happen when they are in a brooding mood at the same time. When in a breeding mood the bird's cloaca is expanded, which shows as a thickening in the cloaca. Eclectus parrots lay two or three eggs per nest, but generally 2 chicks' delete possessive hatch. 3 nests a year are possible. The size of the egg is 4.1 x 3.8 mm (one inch diameter) and it weighs around 18 grams (0.6 oz). If all goes well the eggs hatch after 28 days. The chicks are born pink and bald. They grow quickly and in about 3 weeks they have their first feathers. Around 4 weeks of age we can see if it is a male or a hen.

They begin to climb at the age of 9 weeks and around 11 weeks they take their first look outside. If all goes well the chicks leave the nest around 12 weeks. They are still fed by their parents for several weeks (about 4) after having flown out. The parents still offer them lots of food though they are starting to eat for themselves as well.

Unfortunately, we sometimes have Eclectus parents that do not know what to do when a chick hatches and shows behaviour that we call cannibalism. They peck the hatchlings and sometimes eat them completely. In some cases this is caused because they have not been raised by their own parents but also because it is all new to them. Sometimes these birds abandon the nest. What also happens is that

the hatchlings are fed poorly, by inexperienced parents – this is for us a reason to take away the chick and raise it by hand-feeding and by putting it in an incubator. Another way of raising the poorly fed hatchlings is by giving them adoptive parents. But we have to know where we can put the chicks before things go wrong. When this is not possible, we have to take them out of their nestboxes. Occasionally, we do this just after they have hatched and at other times somewhere between the first and the fifth day (sometimes weeks). When they open their eyes (between 21 and 25 days), they are given a foot-ring (12 mm/0.5") Sometimes it goes wrong, and they abandon the nest. Then we take the hatchlings in and raise them.

After the hatchlings are taken from their nest, they are put in an incubator for the first day (temperature 37.2 °C, humidity 45%). Mind you, we only take the hatchlings from the nest when poorly fed or when parents abandon their offspring. Mostly I hand-feed the chicks until 13 /14 weeks of age. To determine the amount of food (for them) I weigh them on empty stomachs. The first feed contains only warm water. Then, I wait until the excrement is good. The first day the babies are fed nine times with a weaning formula. This is so that they can get used to hand-feeding. The second day they get fed 10% of their body weight 8 times. After a week it is brought down to 5 times a day. In the first week I pay close attention to their weight.

Are there consequences for the parent-bird when taking the hatchlings away? I do not think so. The parents usually breed/copulate again within a few days. The hand-raised parrots will go for domestication, and the nature bred ones go to aviaries to become part of a new breeding couple.

HAND-RAISING

We will normally remove the chicks from the nest at approximately 5 weeks of age. Nowadays we have a new law and we cannot take out hatchlings from 5- 6 weeks. Only when things go wrong! But we have to wait until they fledge. This is around 9 weeks. But for you this information is maybe important. So this is how we did it within 6 weeks: To determine the amount of food, I weigh them on empty stomachs. On the first day I will feed the babies three times with a weaning formula so they can get used to it. On the second day they get fed



Two eggs in the nestbox of the *E. r. polychloros*



Newly hatched chicks.



3-week old chick.



6-week old chick.



7-week old chicks.



8-9-week old chicks.



10% of their body weight 4 times. Very close attention is paid to their weight during the first week. Generally, we start by weighing 3 times a week and reduce it to once a week. If we take them after 9 weeks, we feed them 2 times a day with the weaning pellets and we feed them vegetables and fruits. At about 13 weeks



of age, they start eating for themselves. They are fed Dutch bird food weaning pellets.

When the hatchlings are taken from the nestbox, we keep a record of their feeding habits so that we know precisely how much they eat. This helps us to keep a close eye on their health. From week 1 up to week 13, we write everything down.

The hatchlings are fed the following: sprouted seeds, fruits and vegetables ("heated" to around 39 °C in warm water), palm nuts (warm and soft), egg mixture, pellets (moisturized and soaked in warm water of 39 °C) and millet. When they can eat all of this independently, they get their food dry instead of softened and moisturized.

We have the following reasons to feed pellets: they are healthy and tasty – they consist of four different flavours. 90% of all birds take a liking to this pellet and therefore it is easy to feed. There is no need for additives, therefore it is SAFE! It is also easy to digest and can be given dry or soaked (in water).

All hatchlings are given a full physical examination by a veterinarian. They are tested on parrot diseases (PBFD, PDD, Polyoma). They then receive a passport and certificate of good health.

Socializing is very important for the birds – it is also called imprinting. Parrots that grow up together develop better socially. The new owners of the birds are given a lot of information, for instance on the housing of the new bird: cage, toys, food dishes, etc. What does the bird eat? What are diseases and dangers for the bird? What will their behaviour be like? And also addresses of veterinarians (just in case ...).

April 2021 update: All our pairs of the *Eclectus roratus polychloros* have laid eggs and have hatchlings. Now we have the fourth generation. We also have eggs from our couples of the *Eclectus roratus vosmaeri*. In the last years the old couples *vosmaeri* produced many hatchlings. Now we only have young birds to start over again. The young birds in the colony *Eclectus roratus polychloros* and *Eclectus roratus vosmaeri* show better behaviour and seem to be more active and interested in each other. We shall see what the future will bring us.

The second part of the article will be published in the next issue of AWIPARROTS 3-2021. I will write about the Eclectus parrots in the wild including introducing the subspecies. 📄

Thiely and Ed de Moor

Parrot breeders – Netherlands

E-mail: papegaai@akala.nl • www.akala.nl

📍 Thiely de Moor



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W W W . Z O O - T R H O N . C Z

Proven nestbox for the Scarlet-chested Parrot

By Colin O'Hara

Splendids are in no way fussy about the size and shape of a nestbox they will accept. Over the years I have seen many different shapes and sizes used. Back in 1999 I gave a great deal of thought to the designing of a nestbox especially for grass parakeets, with the hope of eliminating nesting problems and therefore maximizing the chances of that successful clutch. I still use this nestbox today without any modification. I will explain the thinking behind its design.



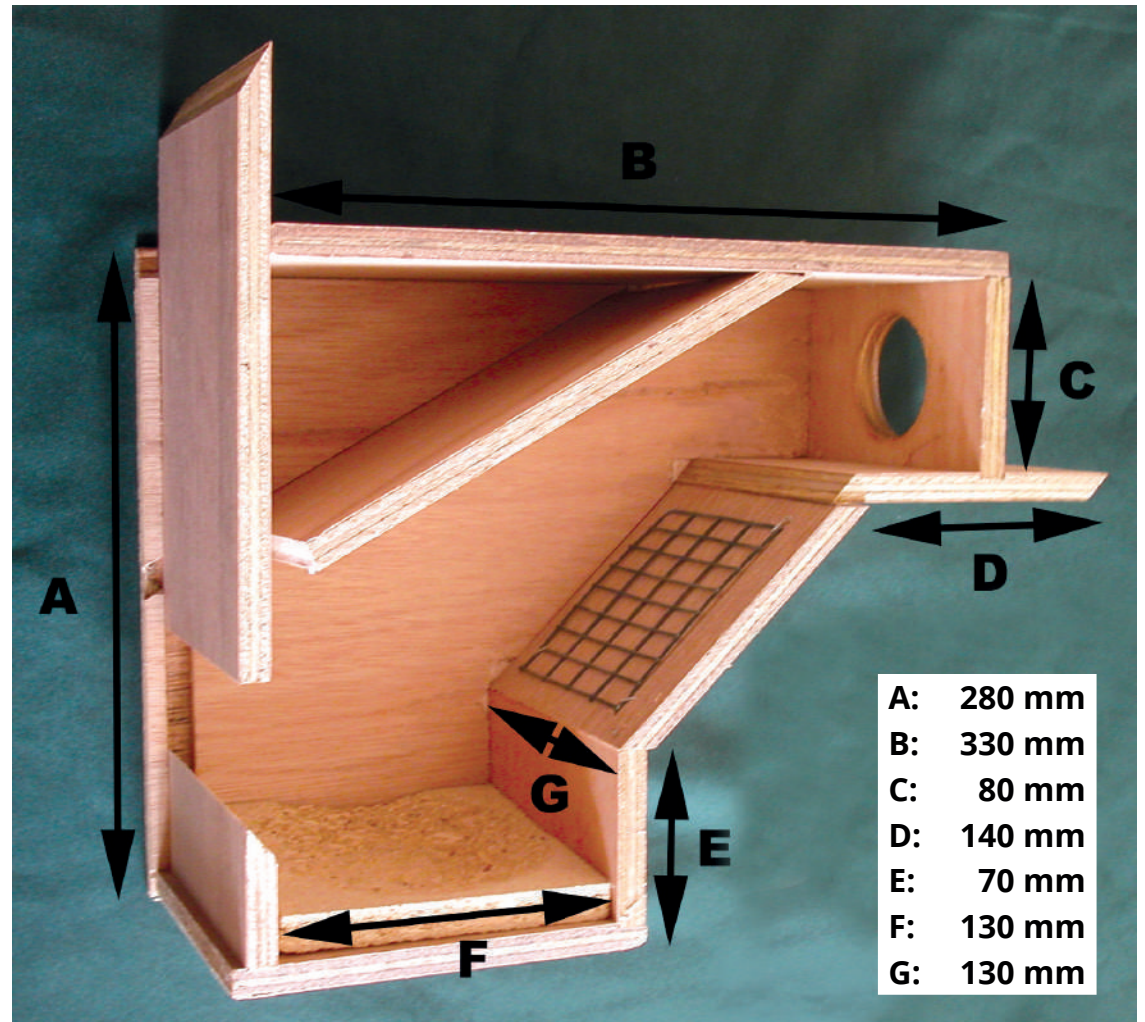
For many years I had used the standard 15cm x 15cm square x 25cm deep nestbox. Watching the young birds develop many times, I observed that about one week before they leave the nest, they would climb up the ladder and beg to be fed by the parents through the entrance hole. But the smaller chicks either could not climb the ladder or got pushed out the way, occasionally even being pushed out of the nest altogether, with the result that often the smaller chicks died.

The design of my box was to overcome this problem. In the new design the entrance platform, which extends both inside and outside, gives sufficient room for the whole family to be fed, and is accessible via a sloping surface that is equipped with a ladder, down to the concave nesting area, 14cm². The sloping false roof gives the occupants a sense of security.

The design of this nestbox allows even the smallest chick to climb up to the entrance hole to be fed.

For years with the old-style box, I used to fill the bottom of the nest with a mixture of peat and sawdust to about 40mm deep, thinking that a hen splendid likes to dig in preparation before laying her eggs, but this brought about its own problems. If the hen starts to lay before she had stopped digging, the eggs would be lost or broken, also if before the first-round chicks had left the nest, the hen started to prepare for a second-round and started to dig, by doing so covered the first-round chicks with all the nest fill, on occasions burying them completely.

With my box design if the hen starts to dig before the chicks leave the nest, they are able to climb up the slope to the inside platform and out of the way. It was also very difficult to change the nesting material



in the old-style nest, if it became dirty between rounds. In this design nestbox, the nesting area has a loose concave (much the same as a budgie nest) making it very easy to change the concave and fill. I only provide 15mm of fill. Initially, I used course saw dust, but there is now available a very fine wood chip, it is sterile and contains no dust. It is actually the floor covering produced for reptile keepers for their vivariums; it is readily available in the larger pet stores or can be ordered online.

Back in the early days humidity in the nest was written about many times, that is why damp peat or even a turf of grass was placed upside down in the bottom of the nest, with the nestboxes fitted in the outside flights. Since changing to inside nestboxes and a dry nest I have never experienced any dead in shell, with chick mortality also decreasing. Another consideration is the material the nestbox is made of. I use 15mm plywood. This is fine when the nestbox is fitted inside the bird room but does not have high enough insulation properties if fitted outside. Natural

wood has a higher thermal property than plywood, so if the nesting box is fitted externally, wood of at least 20mm thick should be considered.

When building nestboxes, not just for splendids but all members of the parrot family; it is best to have access at nesting level. If inspection is by lifting off the top of the nestbox the hens feel trapped, in the panic to get out, the hens often scatter the eggs or chicks. If the inspection door is at nest level the hen is able to escape using the normal exit, she does not upset her nest, therefore is much calmer, and re-enters the nest much quicker after the inspection. Splendid hens will quite happily just move off the eggs and allow inspection without actually leaving the nest.

Nest inspection is a vital part of the breeding season. I consider it a must to know what is happening inside the nestbox. I inspect every nest, every day, right from the day I fit them. By doing this the hens get used to my close presence before egg laying commences. When designing any bird room or aviary setup, take into account the importance of nest inspection.

At the end of the breeding season as I remove the nestboxes, I thoroughly scrape them clean and then submerge each box into a very hot water solution containing anti-mite and anti-viral treatment. I scrub them clean, then allow draining and drying completely before I store for the next season. I am not in favour of just blocking up the entrance hole to the nestbox and leaving it in place. I think it is distressing for the hens as they sit trying to gain access. I remove the nestboxes in order to clean them properly, and by leaving them in place it is somewhere extra for the mites to hide. It is far better to remove the nestboxes and fit a blank plate in the nestbox opening. 🐦



Colin O'Hara
Parrot breeder, author, traveller, photographer
Great Britain
 E-mail: colin@splendids.co.uk
 🌐 www.facebook.com/colin.ohara.1272

I want to get some **antibiotics** for my parrot **PLEASE**



By MVDr. Veronika Trhoňová, Ph.D.



I often meet parrot owners in our veterinary clinic who come to buy drugs to stock up on. Some owners claim that they need to use antibiotics or antiparasitics as a preventative measure for their parrots and what excellent experience they have with applying these preventively.



Others arrive when the parrot is ill, but they don't want to transport it to the veterinary clinic and want me to give them medicines which then would be given to the birds by themselves. If such a situation occurs, I try to explain to the owners that without proper clinical examination of the patient and the possibility to determine a diagnosis, we can't sell them the medicine.

A veterinary clinic is not a drug store. It is a place where a veterinarian helps to find out the cause of a patient's illness by using available methods and then treats that cause. When you come to the pharmacy and wish to buy antibiotics, these drugs won't be sold to you without a prescription issued by a general practitioner.

Why shouldn't we administer drugs as a part of prevention?

The drugs are given according to the recommendation of a veterinarian after the diagnosis determination. There is no miracle cure that can be given preventively. We can ensure the prevention of disease spreading in breeding facilities by quarantining newly purchased individuals and testing them for viral infections.

Another recommendation is to perform a preventive examination of faeces to exclude the presence of parasites, depending on the species of parrot and type of breeding facility. Last but not least, proper nutrition and suitable breeding conditions are very important.

Optimal drug dosage

The drug is usually administered in a specific dose, which is calculated for a particular individual based on its weight. When I asked one owner who wanted to buy antibiotics for preventive use how he administered this specific antibiotic, he replied that he would dissolve the antibiotics in water and give 4 drops to the parrot if the bird was ill. When I asked how long he had been administering these antibiotics, he said that the parrot usually got better after 2 days of treatment. Everything in this case is wrong. The optimal dose of antibiotics and the right length of the treatment were not followed.

If antibiotics are given in low doses together with a short time of administration, resistance will develop and if the parrot needs antibiotics when it is really sick, these drugs will not work.



Roundworms are parasites that live in the intestine.

Why is it important to make a correct diagnosis?

There are many causes of parrots' diseases. We can divide them into infectious and non-infectious causes. Infectious diseases are further divided into viral, bacterial, fungal, and parasitic infections. Non-infectious causes include poor parrot nutrition, behavioural disorders, and other causes.

Viral infections

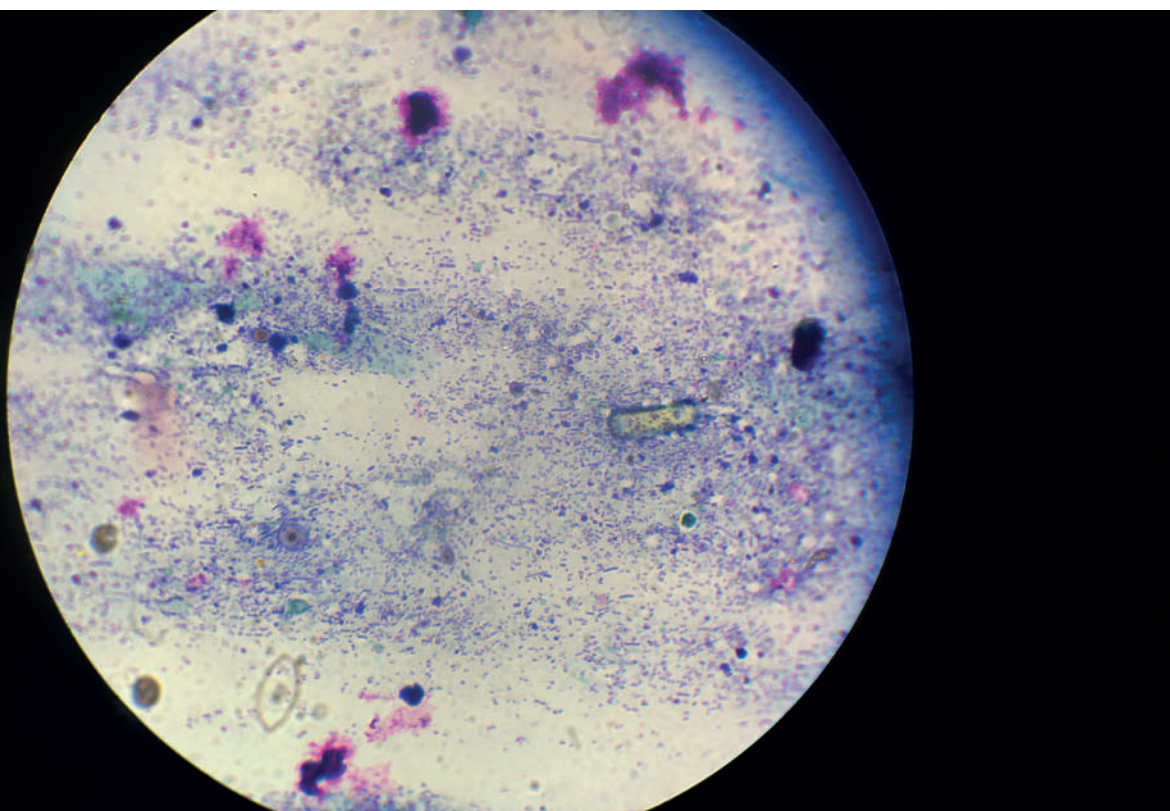
The most common viral infection in parrots is the Psittacine beak and feather disease (PBFD) caused by circovirus, neuropathic gastric dilatation caused by bornavirus, and a disease caused by polyomavirus.

Viral diseases are usually incurable. If the owner uses antibiotics to treat a viral infection, he can partially help the parrot, but the main problem will not be solved.

If a viral infection is not diagnosed in time and correctly, there is a risk of an uncontrollable spread and loss of birds in the breeding facility. The most important step in the case of viral infections is prevention by testing newly purchased individuals.

Bacterial infections

Bacterial infections are among the diseases that are treated with antibiotics. However, the correct type of drug must be chosen, the appropriate dose determined, and the antibiotic has to be given for



Cytological examination of faeces will provide information on the intestinal microflora and the presence of megabacteria or yeasts.

a certain time (minimum of 5 to 7 days depending on the antibiotic type). There are different opinions on the administration of antibiotics into the water.

I personally do not recommend this type of administration because especially parrots who have reduced feed intake will drink less and receive the drug in an insufficient dose, which can be fatal for them.

Parasitic infections

If parasitic infection occurs, it is necessary to apply antihelminthic drugs - antiparasitics. In this case, improper use of antibiotics will not solve the problem. As far as antiparasitics are concerned, unfortunately, there is no universal deworming agent, and different antiparasitics are used for different types of parasites. Deworming products are only available from veterinarians.

Some products for dogs and cats can be purchased in pharmacies. I do not recommend buying deworming products at parrot markets. They should not even be sold there. I recommend an examination of faeces and based on that examination we can find out a specific type of parasite. In some parrots, especially pets, the parasitic infection is minimal, and preventive deworming is not necessary.

Fungal infections

Other diseases where antibiotics do not solve the main problem include fungal infections, aspergillosis, and megabacteriosis. The occurrence of aspergillosis depends on the individual's immune system, proper hygiene of the breeding facility and quality of the feed.

Prolonged and improper storage of grains can lead to mould growth.

Megabacteriosis occurs mainly in smaller parrot species. Parrots are usually thin, but at the same time they take in excessive amounts of food. Cytological examination of fresh faeces under the microscope then reveals the presence of megabacteria.

Other diseases

Other diseases where the application of antibiotics does not solve the primary problem include egg retention, ingestion of foreign bodies, or fatty liver disease. In these cases, it is necessary to perform an X-ray examination to identify the problem and determine the subsequent treatment.

Conclusion

Parrots often mask the clinical signs of the disease, and if the clinical signs develop, it may be too late to treat it. For this reason, prevention is essential.

Unfortunately, I often meet many owners who underestimate prevention. I recommend that parrot breeders consult the prevention possibilities in their breeding facilities with veterinarians experienced in exotic bird medicine. But please note the important fact – antibiotics are absolutely not a correct way for disease prevention! 🦜



MVDr. Veronika Trhoňová, Ph.D.
Avian and Exotic Animal Clinic, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, University of Veterinary and Pharmaceutical Sciences Brno, Czechia
E-mail: info@zoo-trhon.cz



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Helena Vaidlova

on the establishment of MADA – a veterinary clinic focusing on exotic birds

By Alena Winner



To this day, I can still recall the pleasant soft voice that came from the "other end" of the phone in 2006. It was the veterinarian Helena Zímová, VMD calling. She was interested in participating in an international congress dedicated to parrots in Tenerife. I was glad that a young veterinarian with an obviously sincere interest not only in parrots, but also in other representatives of the bird kingdom would join us. That September was also fated in the sense that on the occasion of the congress in Tenerife she met her current husband, the bird breeding curator at the Prague Zoo, Anton Vaidl. Since then, they have taken a joint path. Another turning point for her came about in 2008, when their wedding took place, and in the same year Dr. Vaidlová set up the MADA veterinary clinic in the Czech Republic.

Having known you for a long time and knowing how you think everything through carefully and thoroughly, I believe that the idea of setting up a clinic did not arise from day to day.

When did you start thinking about this step?

After obtaining my degree, I joined a veterinary clinic, which provided veterinary care for the Liberec Zoo.

In essence, this is the case with most graduates.

Following university, they choose a veterinary practice and need to find their bearings to realize their direction – specialization. It was no different with me. It was in Liberec where my relationship with parrots and other feathered animals originated. Avian medicine seemed more and more interesting to me, and so I decided to go in that direction.

After meeting Anton Vaidl, you went to the Philippines and worked in a famous large parrot breeding station. Had you planned to stay there then, and for some reason you didn't, or did you take it as experience?

We spent three months in the Philippines, regarding it as experience. Upon our return, I moved into the house with my current husband and continued to work in veterinary practice. I must admit that the urge to start my own clinic was growing stronger.

You chose a very apt name – MADA, which can be remembered well. Did you plan a specialization from the very beginning?

Tanygnathus ("Mada" in Czech) is our favourite genus, so deciding on the name of the clinic was relatively quick. Of course, from the beginning my dream was to have a clinic only for birds, but this was not possible from a practical point of view. At that time, we were at the starting line and needed to buy various appliances. For that reason, I decided to start a clinic treating all animals with the plan that in time there would be a ward for birds only.

We began with basic equipment. We had an X-ray machine and an inhalator, and after a while also an endoscope. For example, a sterilizer was given to us by my uncle from his dental office. I must say that it has worked excellently to this day. The veterinary clinic began to develop and we were able to gradually equip the surgery.

And what is its current form?

We still treat other animals, but I personally only specialize in parrots and other feathered animals. Dogs and cats are taken care of by a fellow veterinarian and one helping doctor. We have three veterinary nurses. In essence, everything is going according to plan for the time being and I can devote myself to avian medicine.

Over the years, it has become known among people that there is a specialist veterinary practice in Kralupy and they come here with parrots more and more often. We are visited by pet keepers as well as breeders – it's fifty-fifty.





Also Vaidls' children are involved in the parrot world.

Is there a difference in the approach to parrot health on the part of pet keepers and breeders?

I would say that there is a difference. Since the pet keeper is in much closer contact with the parrot and is well aware of the importance of prevention, he/she comes to us more often. For instance, even in a situation when it is not needed; however, that is a better option. By having the pet there for a prevention check, we can find out in time, for example, that a parrot has suffered from mycosis and can save it. Quite a few breeders usually come with their parrot only when it shows marks that something is wrong. In essence, it is already a clinically ill, often half-dead bird. And, of course, there are cases when such a patient can regrettably no longer be saved. Therefore, I definitely recommend not underestimating prevention in breeding. But over time, I must appreciate that there are more and more breeders who have their parrots examined before placing them in the existing breeding stock. This will prevent a number of potential risks.

Whether someone keeps parrots as pets or for breeding, they should have at least basic knowledge of their needs. Perhaps, this applies twice as much for pet cockatoo owners. There have been quite a few queries regarding their problematic behaviour...

Yes, indeed. Unfortunately, in the case of cockatoos the owners tend to treat parrots as dogs. They cuddle them, sleep with them in bed, etc. If they do the same with amazon parrots, it won't hurt them that much, as they usually remain themselves. However, cockatoos are different. I would say these species can even die of grief, and this is just one example of their nature. Cockatoos often mutilate themselves to the flesh, nearly biting their entrails out, literally. It is their attitude - a reaction to an arisen situation, because they have a kind of hormonal problem, which over time

becomes a bad habit. It is the owners who must understand their parrots, so the moment a bird starts with self-mutilation, it's time for a change. We veterinarians can heal a wound - that's not a problem, but not the parrot's head and mind. This must be understood by a sensitive owner and something must be changed. Regrettably, I also witnessed a situation where a parrot was administered Haloperidol (a drug from the group of antipsychotics) for a whole year. The owners gave it psychopharmaceuticals so that their pet wouldn't bite a wound. Since the treatment failed to work and the owners wanted to find the cause, they began looking for a centre dealing with birds.

Can it be said that you currently offer comprehensive services for parrot breeders?

Yes, I can now offer all the treatments. We perform radiological and endoscopic examinations, microscopic examinations, blood tests, surgical procedures, etc. Many breeders do not ascribe importance to tests, but they should... A haematological examination is essential and no less important is a biochemical examination of the blood, which will show the condition and function of the liver, kidneys, etc. We carry out the examinations within a few minutes in our surgery, but some samples are sent to selected laboratories for further testing.

This article is intended for an international magazine and the readers may be interested in whether you also provide advisory services electronically?

I'm not against noncommittal consultations, but honestly, a personal meeting is always a better choice. To be able to treat responsibly, I need to examine the parrot and blood tests must be carried out, possibly further examinations. This is the only way to treat a bird patient with a clear conscience. Nevertheless, webinars for veterinarians, for instance, have proved effective. I am currently implementing them only in our country though, and we will see if they will spread beyond the borders.

What do you consider the most fundamental experience throughout your years of practice in avian medicine?

The most important thing is not to give up. Even though it seems that the parrot has no chance of surviving, in many cases it happened that it eventually coped with the situation and 100% pulled through. Therefore, it is important not to let things slide. With each treatment or therapy, I approach the patient as if it were my child. And I would try to save the child at all costs. Simply, I'll just do everything for it. The fact that a parrot has no legs, for example, means nothing. Even such an individual can lead a good life and raise young ones in the usual way.

Until recently, the MADA veterinary clinic had been located in a rented space and its further modifications had thus been limited. For that reason, the Vaidls decided to purchase the property and are planning to renovate it. Subsequently, the clinic will be modernized and expanded, and the veterinary team will be strengthened as well. Dr. Helena Vaidlová is now going to describe some interesting cases from the clinic:

At our veterinary clinic, we have a diverse range of patients, and some cases keep surprising us again and again with their unusualness and peculiarity. The characters of the owners, who sometimes amuse us both positively and negatively, contribute to this to a large extent. Actually, a considerable amount of literary and film work has already been created on the topic of the busy life of veterinarians. When we focus only on parrot cases, we can remember plenty of them. Some are very exciting, but often also have bad endings. We chose such stories that can give the reader some hope that in the end everything will turn out well in this long and difficult time.

My parrot flew away

At least once in their lives, most breeders experience a situation when one of their parrots discovers deficiencies in the construction of the aviary or cage, or takes advantage of the owner's inattention or mistake, and flies away. Such an experience is almost always very exciting and when looking for and catching the parrot, the owner goes through situations he/she will never forget. The parrot often sits on a tree so high that it is impossible to climb to it, and even the help of kind and willing firefighters will not solve the situation.



At least 2 X-ray projections must be made to find out where the pellet is.

One breeder fell into such despair that it occurred to him to ask a friend if he would help him with the capture. The friend happened to have a firearm and the plan was to shoot the parrot very slightly so that it would fall down, without being seriously hurt. From a certain point of view, it is understandable that the owner chose between the irreversible loss of the parrot by flying away and the hope that the gunshot wound could be only minor. However, what was extraordinary was the owner's confidence that his friend was capable of hitting a 200g large parrot with such accuracy that the consequences could be easy to solve.

Well, fortune favours the brave, so the owner came to us with a live, albeit a slightly shot parrot. We remove pellets from birds quite often, because some of our fellow citizens obviously do not have a good relationship towards birds. The sooner an operation is started after injury, the greater the chance of healing without consequences. This particular parrot had a shot in a very inaccessible place – just above the heart between the large vessels that lead to it. On X-rays, the position can be determined quite well, but finding a pellet during surgery in a deep bleeding wound in the middle of the chest was ultimately an adrenaline experience for all the clinic staff. Frankly, we were surprised to have managed to remove the pellet and that the parrot coped with the operation very well. Its owner was one of the most pleasant and nicest customers, and after all, we could not be angry with him for his sincerity as well as the joy of success.

Restless grey parrot

The grey parrot is a popular pet. That is, at least for the first few years... The young ones are very cute and pleasant even after weaning, and often restless, curious and playful as young ones usually are. The owner frequently equips their cage not only with twigs, but also with different toys on chains, ropes, often with various bells and other attractions.

Filip, the grey parrot this story relates to, loved to climb the cage and was fond of hanging upside down on its ceiling playing. A lot of parrots do that and it's nothing unusual. But one day this parrot fell from this position to the bottom of the cage. His owner and I tried to find the reason why the parrot fell. I couldn't believe the fact that he just lost his balance and fell. After all, such things must not happen to parrots. Grey parrots may have a lack of calcium, for example, when they fall from the perch and have spasm attacks. However, none of the options were confirmed for this one. His condition after the fall was not good at all. Not only did he not want to eat at all, but he plucked all the



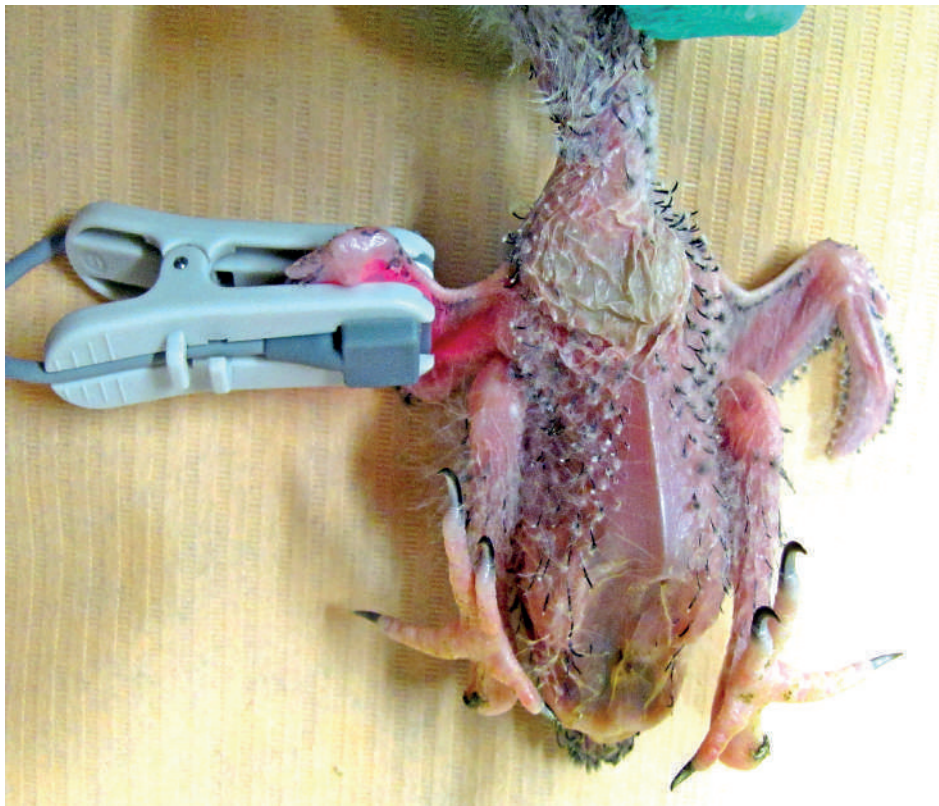
A fracture (dent) is visible on the skull.

feathers on his body as far as he could reach. Within a moment he looked exactly like poultry ready for cooking, with only the head of an unhappy grey parrot. The dedicated owner fed the parrot porridge and went for regular check-ups. An X-ray of the head confirmed a serious injury to the skull, which was behind the serious condition of the parrot. He had a dent in his skull at one point. This resulted in brain injury, cerebral haemorrhage and severe pain, which were the cause of loss of appetite and precise self-mutilation. Only after a few weeks of therapy (especially pain relief) and tireless care of the owner, Filip started eating again and the feathers began to grow.

Biologists generally believe that animals have a stronger instinct for self-preservation than humans. And so it's hard to believe that a playing parrot will simply fall to the ground and break its skull. Guarding young ones of all kinds is simply challenging.

Stretched crop

Hand-feeding the young ones is a breeding discipline for dedicated owners. If we hand-feed the young ones from the first day, the intervals between each feeding are initially hourly and it can be demanding to combine this activity with work or even with just normal family life. With the age of the young, the feeding rations increase and the interval between them increases. Laziness is one of the natural characteristics of every



This young is obviously doing poorly – it is thin and has a completely empty belly. In the healthy young the belly is big, even when the crop is empty.

person, so sometimes it happens that the volume of feed starts to be too large for the capacity of the crop, the young one begins to digest more slowly. Slowed digestion is a manifestation of any problem in a young parrot and it can be difficult for breeders (and veterinarians) to distinguish whether it is a mere overfeeding or a disorder of the young's health (which is usually again due to a mistake of the owner).

A well-known first aid is to serve one of the recommended herbal teas or you want to acidify the contents of the crop a bit. Thinner porridge is digested easier and faster, so one day the young one is fed a little differently. If these fail to help, it is time to seek professional help. Of course, if the owner allows this condition to continue for several days and sometimes weeks, the young ones do not thrive as they do not receive the appropriate amount of nutrients, digestion slows down more significantly and the rest remains in the crop for a long time. While waiting for the digestion to be finished, the young one starves and the present remainder is eventually a source of infection, which can lead to acute death. This situation is repeated every year with many breeders.

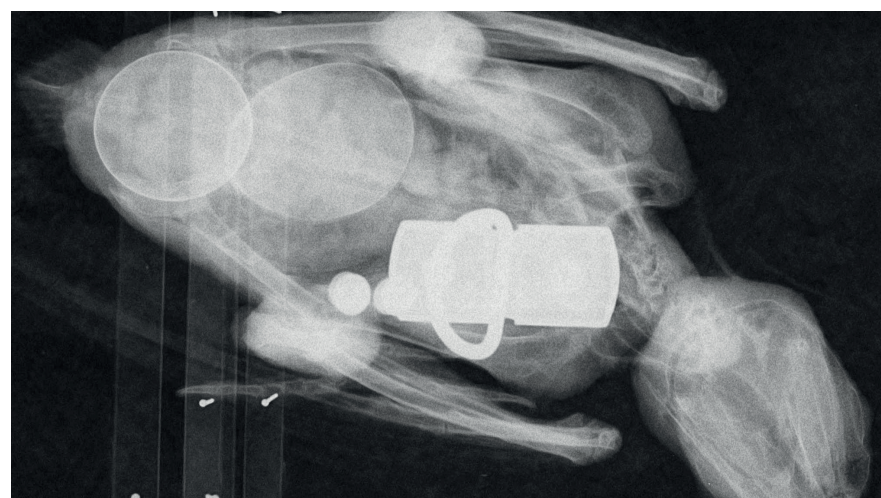
Well, we all make mistakes. Many experienced breeders find themselves in this situation, and if they evaluate it correctly and in time, and seek help, it usually turns out well. If you wait at home for a long time for the situation to sort out itself, you will spend unnecessarily more money in the attempt to save the parrot, and if all goes well, the young one will still be underdeveloped, usually smaller, and if it does not get 100% care afterwards, its difficult young age will affect its future health condition. The solution is not universal and it is necessary to proceed individually in each case. However, the basic idea is to maintain the nutrient intake and start the function of the crop.

In milder cases, you just need to reduce the capacity of the crop (there are various surgical options), and extremely shorten the intervals between each feeding. Gradually, with the help of other drugs, the young one usually recovers and slowly begins to digest better and over time even in a normal way.

The case of one macaw concerns a tiny chick where the owner arrived as soon as he noticed that the chick was lagging behind in gaining weight. This means that it is not yet apathetic, it craves food, and a surgery on the crop is sufficient enough for the chick to be able to return to home care almost immediately, with only a change in the frequency and amount of feeding. Even this young macaw could return the next day and the owner reported that it was thriving normally, quickly catching up.

Double egg binding

An interesting case concerns a pet – the grey parrot called Kačenka, which was brought to us by the owner due to her apathy. In these cases, a basic blood test and X-ray examination are appropriate, because apathy is usually a symptom of almost all diseases and a mere clinical examination may not reveal everything. An X-ray image revealed an egg, actually two eggs, completely unexpected by the owner. If egg binding occurs in the female, and another egg is formed in addition to that, the solution is usually not easy, and the hope for a good ending is always lower, as the first egg is typically already bound to the oviduct and



To find out if there is an egg in the female's body, an ordinary inbox projection is best – the parrot is placed in a box or left in its carrier and an X-ray is taken without any manipulation. It is more gentle on the female.



Wing fracture before the surgery.



Wing fracture after the surgery - healing phase.

the application of drugs that have the effect of expelling the egg is without effect. In the case of Kačenka, it was necessary to get the bound egg from the oviduct under anaesthesia. Kačenka coped well with everything without any problems and continued to receive medication in the expectation that the second egg would also come down to the opening of the cloaca so that she could lay it.

If this did not happen, she would have to undergo abdominal surgery, in which the egg would be removed from the oviduct in the same way as a child during a caesarean birth in a woman. However, this would increase the risk that she could get into trouble again when laying eggs. After a few days, the egg finally came down to the cloaca, but because Kačenka was again unable to lay the egg, we had to remove it again under anaesthesia. After this operation, however, Kačenka revived and recovered quickly. She has not laid any more eggs since that time.

Wing fracture

There are still plenty of parrots with fractures. The causes are various, but if the case is resolved in time, we usually manage to return all movement functions to the parrot. The fracture of Ferda's wing was truly exceptional in that the wing was essentially all crushed. In severe cases, we put together, for example, 6 fragments, but in this case there were 3 broken bones and countless fragments - no hope of flying again. Life can always be saved by amputation, but life with a wing, albeit less mobile, is always easier than life without a wing. Therefore, we chose the option of trying to save the wing and performed the operation.

We usually try to fix all the fragments and there is a massive construction of metal wires on the wing after the operation. In this case, fixing of each fragment was absolutely not realistic, and the operation was therefore intentionally simple, with the expectation of reduced momentum and impaired healing. The goal was only to preserve the wing. However, birds are incredible in their ability to heal and try to survive. The wing has healed very nicely and all the joints are sufficiently motive. Ferda holds the wing perfectly normal at his body and is able to fly.

No matter how serious or mysterious your parrot problem is, let's not lose hope. The phrase "being positive" is taking on a rather negative touch today, so let's be optimistic. 🐦



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Erica Pacifico and local guardians
with Lear's Macaw chick.

Photo by Joao Marcos Rosa



By Dr. David Waugh
Correspondent
Loro Parque Fundación

Bee control results in Lear's Macaw breeding population increase

The world needs honeybees. Aside from their key ecological function, honeybees are responsible for pollinating nearly 85% of all food crops for humans, and provide us with several useful products, honey being top of the list. But what about Africanized honeybees? These are the infamous aggressive "killer bees", descendants of African honeybees introduced into South America in 1956 which have rapidly spread through most of South and Central America, arriving in the USA in the 1990s.

Although through specific management techniques they appear not to affect the production of honey or beekeeper investment significantly, at least in the USA, they can have serious impacts on native wildlife. In South and Central America, Africanized honeybees frequently occupy cavities suitable for threatened native species of cavity-nesting birds, and the potential negative effect of this competition is worrying.

The world also needs Lear's Macaws (*Anodorhynchus leari*), an endangered species endemic to northern Bahia in Brazil, which nests in cliff cavities frequently invaded by Africanized honeybees. Native to the tropical dry forest and scrub of the arid caatinga zone, the Lear's Macaw has a very small geographical distribution and



A Lear's Macaw pair overflies, and checks out, the photographer.

Photo by J. Cornejo/LPF

Typical sheer cliffs on which the Lear's Macaws breed.

Photo by J. Cornejo/LPF





**Bees occupying a cavity
on a nesting cliff.**

Photo by Julio E.

is threatened by continuing degradation of its habitat and food supply, by occasional farmer persecution for foraging on maize crops, and by illegal removal of chicks from nests for trade, although the latter has diminished over recent years. Lear's Macaws nest on the cliffs at two traditional sites, but have recently colonised at least two additional sites, such expansion is most likely related to the continuing increase of the wild population, which reached a total of 1,694 individuals in 2018. The improving fortunes of the species are largely due to efforts, supported to date with US\$ 482,602 by the Loro Parque Fundación (LPF) since 2006, to better understand its ecological

requirements, and in parallel to execute conservation actions for its immediate recovery and long-term security.

Although improving, the situation of the species is still precarious, not only because of its very restricted nesting areas, but also because of the discovery by the Brazilian biologist Dr. Erica Pacífico that only about 20% of individuals are reproductively active in any one breeding season. Using rock-climbing equipment, and courage, Erica has spent years ascending and rappelling the cliffs to study the breeding biology of the Lear's Macaw. Over time she has recorded that Africanized bees have progressively occupied an increasing number of cavities in the breeding cliffs. Not only do the bees exclude the macaws from suitable nesting cavities, but also that bee colonies located near active macaw nests prevent safe access for monitoring.



▲
**Lear's Macaws trio
on a nesting cliff.**

Photo by Caio Brito

In one count, more than 100 bee nests were recorded in the nesting cliffs, and these nests outnumbered Lear's Macaw nests tenfold in two areas recently recolonized by the macaws. Cavities occupied by bees were significantly higher on the cliffs than those occupied by macaws, possibly forcing the macaws to breed in lower, more accessible cavities.

Therefore, action was taken to assess the effectiveness of the so-called "push-pull" method for the reduction of the bees. Championed by bee control expert Dr. Caroline Efstathion, founder of the Florida-based Avian Preservation and Education Conservancy (APEC), this method pushes the bees away from nesting cavities with a safe permethrin repellent, and simultaneously pulls the bees close towards bee trap boxes, each with an attractant pheromone to act as a lure, installed at a lower level. The LPF has previously

helped to support the work of Caroline in using this method to reduce bee occupation of nest-boxes installed for threatened Cape Parrots (*Poicephalus robustus*) in South Africa.

The bee nests in cavities on the macaw nesting cliffs were treated with permethrin by shooting a crossbow bolt that distributed the repellent upon impact. When feasible, the comb was removed from the cavity and an insecticide of lower toxicity (fipronil, used to control fleas on household pets) applied to deter bee recolonization. Despite that this was an experimental treatment, the results were very encouraging. None of the untreated cavities (50) were occupied by nesting



Lure-trap box for bees placed on a nesting cliff.

Photo by APEC

Lear's Macaws, but 15% of the treated cavities (52) were occupied within two years following treatment. The treated cavities occupied by macaws were significantly higher on the cliffs than those not occupied. A subsequent survey of the macaw breeding population has shown that bee nest management contributed 71% to the increase of the breeding population*.

An intensive and continued eradication programme is recommended to enhance the expansion of the Lear's Macaw population into historical areas, but long-term success will depend on the involvement of local people. It is common in this region for people to collect wild honey, and on the cliffs they construct stick ladders to reach the higher bee nests. In some cases this brings the collectors close to Lear's Macaw nests, with the risk that they can poach chicks out

Installing a bee lure-trap box in the vicinity of a nesting cliff.

Photo by Fernanda Lacerda





Lear's Macaws often rest in groups in larger trees.

Photo by Juan Cornejo/LPF

of convenience. However, part of the ongoing work is to provide interested farmers with hive boxes, personal protective equipment, and instruction on how to maintain bee colonies for honey production. In this way they will have a new source of sustainable income, and an incentive not to cut down trees or scale cliffs to obtain honey, and thus assist in keeping poachers out of the area. 🐝

* Pacífico, E., Efstathion, C., Filadelfo, T., Dénes, F., Gilardi, J. and Tella, J. (2020). Experimental removal of invasive Africanized honeybees increased breeding population size of the endangered Lear's macaw. *Pest Management Science*. 10.1002/ps. 5972.



Dr. David Waugh
**Correspondent, Loro Parque Fundación
Tenerife, Spain**
E-mail: lpf@loroparque-fundacion.org
www.loroparque-fundacion.org



Wooden pole "ladders" access bee nests, but also sometimes Lear's Macaw nests.

Photo by APEC



Benjamin birds

▲
Grey blackwing blackface
- world's first breeding.

WORLD'S FIRST BREEDING OF Blackwing and blackface mutation combination in the Budgerigar

His name is Benjamin Seyed. This 25-year-old successful breeder of mutation budgies lives in Belgium, where he managed to breed a combination of blackface and blackwing mutations. Benjamin is thrilled and has an accurate idea how and where his breeding should go. We would like to thank him for the permission to publish a photo of the first breeding in the world, but also of other interesting mutation budgies from his breeding stock.

By Martin Rašek, Benjamin Seyed



Grey yellow-cheeked blackface.

Where and when did the first melanistic Budgerigars appear?

Beautiful blackface budgies appeared in the Netherlands in the 1990s at a breeder called Dirk, who happened to buy them at one of the larger breeders' exchange meetings. That's the way it happens sometimes! Regrettably, the previous history is not known, and despite my trying to find out, I failed to ascertain their earlier origin.

Can you give us an idea about heredity?

Yes, blackface Budgerigars are a 100% recessive mutation. I must say that their breeding is much more difficult than breeding regular budgies.

How long have you been breeding melanistic budgies?

I bought the first pair in 2019 from my good friend's company called Phoenix birds and I paired the parrots with blackwing individuals so that I could breed Budgerigars 100% split for blackface and blackwing that would be unrelated at the same time.



Grey yellow-cheeked blackface – world's first breeding.



Green opaline fallow blackwing.



Blue opaline fallow blackwing.

Why was your decision made specifically in favour of this breeding project?

I must admit that I have always liked challenges in the form of rare and interesting mutations and their breeding. Creating new combinations is a good motivation for me. I consider the fact that the blackface and blackwing combination turned out well to be a success on which we can build further. Of course, my goal is to raise sturdy parrots in good shape and condition.

I believe you had a lot of people interested in the young ones...

Yes, the news quickly spread to the world and perhaps every breeder would like to have a few budgies in this unconventional and impressive colouration. The Blackface mutation is still very rare and naturally, very expensive as well.

How far on is their breeding in Europe?

Most blackface mutation individuals are in Europe. But we are the only ones – not only in Europe but also in the world – who have bred two blackface blackwings. I can't deny that it gives me a lot of joy! The subsequent selection will make parrots darker and darker, which will be very attractive in my opinion.



Grey-green blackwing blackface – world's first breeding.



▲
Grey-green blackface.

However, you do not only have this combination in your breeding stock. How many pairs of other Budgerigars do you own?

We specialize in interesting colours in budgies and currently we have about forty pairs. Budgies are kept in pairs in cages measuring 50 cm x 70 cm and young birds can fly in aviaries 1m x 2 m. The budgies receive fresh food and water on a daily basis, and every day I give them an egg mix, which I mix with ten different natural vitamins and minerals.

What would you recommend to mutation budgie breeders?

The most important thing is to focus on putting together pairs of unrelated parrots, ideally in terms of a line of strong birds. I dare say that I can recognise if the figure of a parrot looks as it should do. I have bred them privately so far and I have not exhibited melanistic budgies yet.

However, I have been working on preparing to show blackwing budgies. I'll start preparing the blackface



Benjamin Birds

▲
**April 2021 update!
Green blackwing blackface – world's first breeding.**

a little later, but honestly I still have a lot to learn about exhibiting before I can get into it.

The world's first breeding that has succeeded in Belgium will certainly go down in the history of mutation budgie breeding. It is really an impressive colour and if the breeder plans to darken its shade by selection, it will be interesting to await the next generation. These interestingly coloured budgies seem to be in good hands. Benjamin will not be rushed and it seems that his goal is to maintain physical fitness and strengthen the mutation. 🇧🇪



Martin Rašek
Genetic mutation specialist, Czechia
E-mail: martin@rasek.biz
www.gencalc.com



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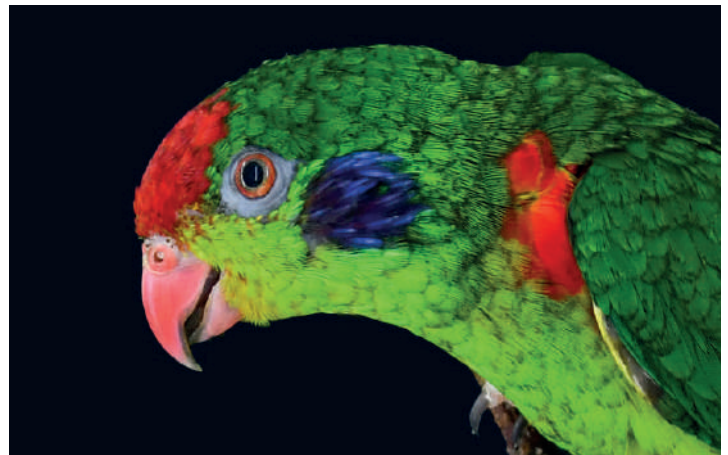
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- ▶ *Charmosyna rubronotata*
- ▶ *Charmosyna placentis subplacens* (**green rump**)
- ▶ *Neopsittacus pullicauda*
- ▶ *Neopsittacus musschenbroekii*

CONTACT

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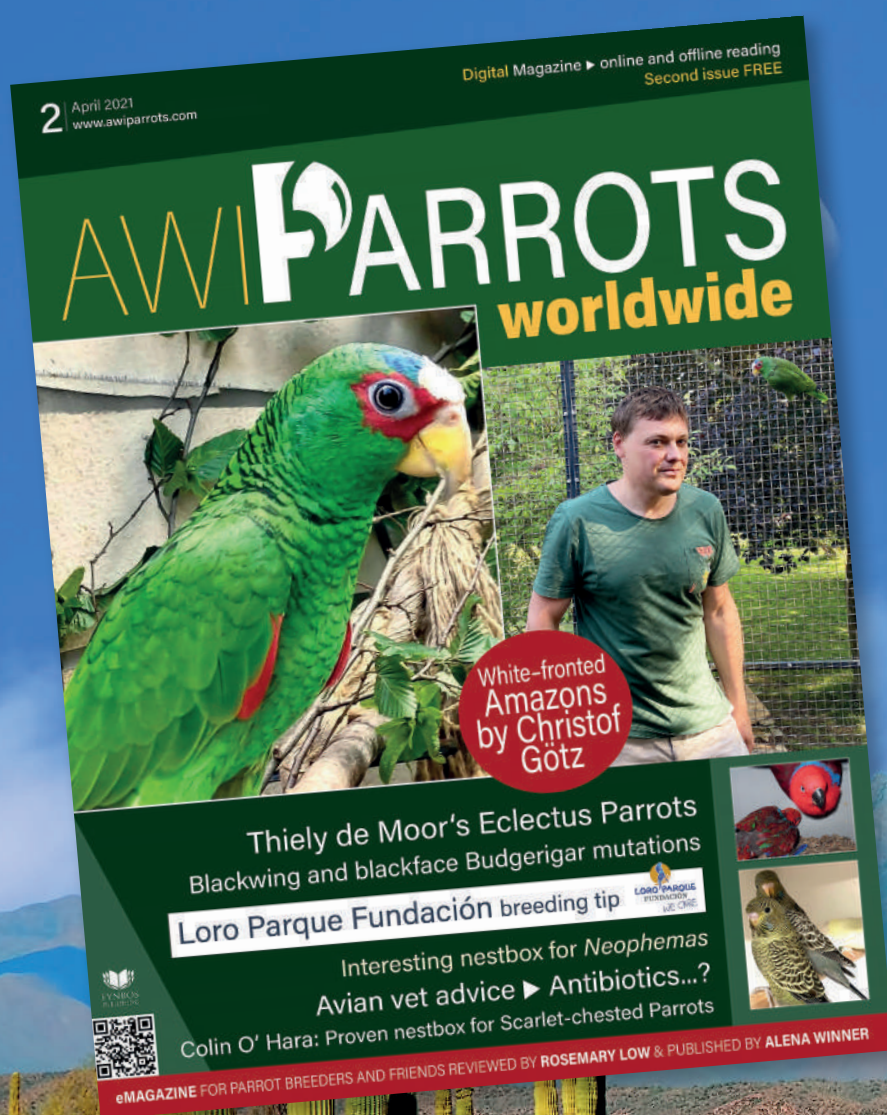
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