

BREEDING THE BARE-FACED CURASSOW *Crax fasciolata* AT EXMOOR ZOO

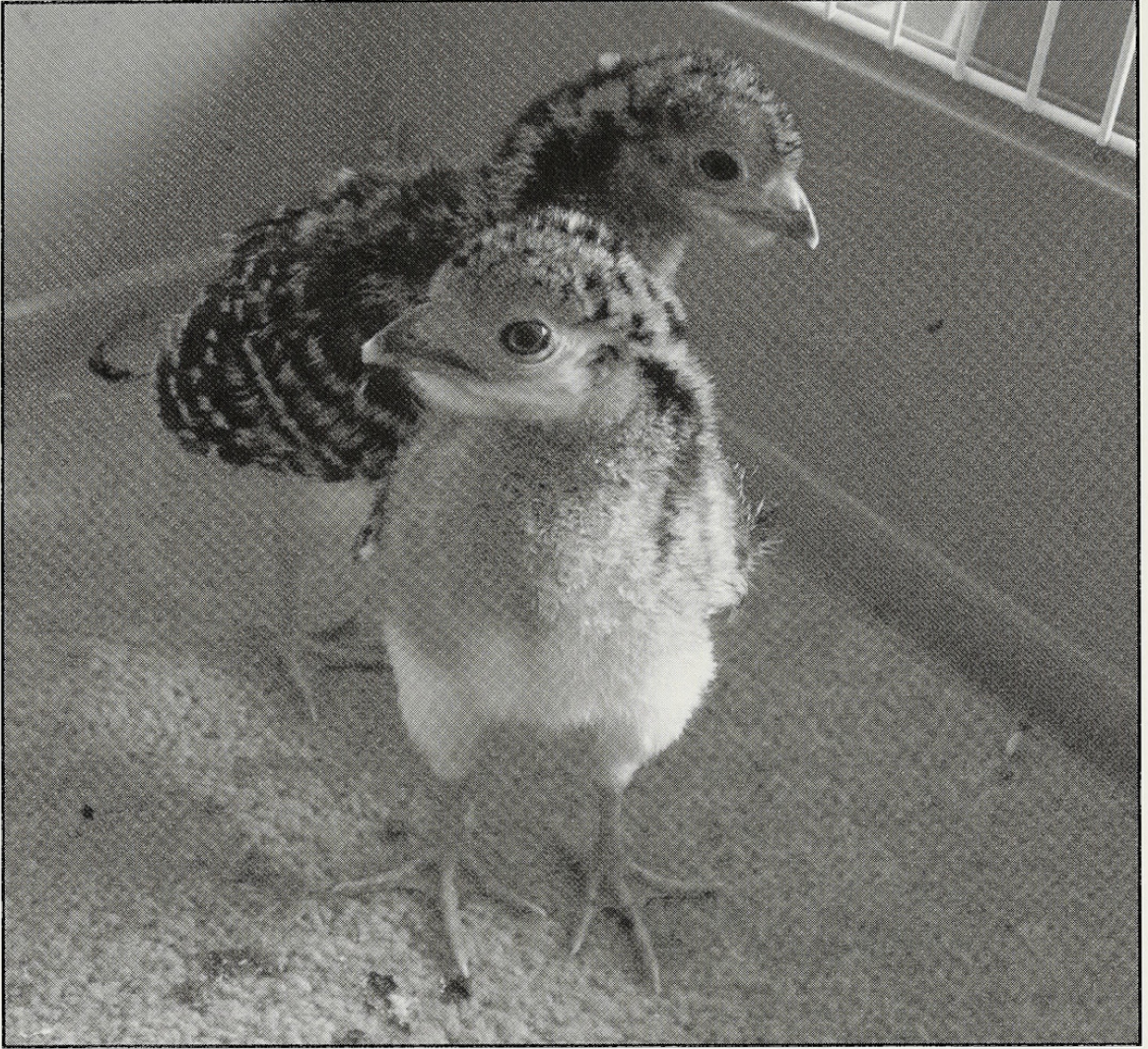
by Derek Gibson

Exmoor Zoo has had its current pair of Bare-faced Curassows *Crax fasciolata* since 2003, when a female was acquired to pair with our male that had been obtained from Beale Park in 2002. Both birds saw out 2003 and the beginning of 2004 in harmony together in an aviary measuring 6m x 3m x 6m (approx. 20ft x 10ft x 20ft). On September 30th 2004 the first egg was laid on a pile of twigs and leaves, that could loosely be described as a nest. It was about 3m (10ft) above the ground in a wooden box measuring 1m x 1m (approx. 3ft 3in x 3ft 3in). The egg was incubated by the female and after a period of 32 days, a chick could be seen putting its head over the side of the box. Unfortunately, the following morning the chick was found dead on the floor. We are not sure what went wrong, but put it down to the parents' lack of experience and hoped that next time a more successful outcome would ensue. No further breeding activity was recorded during the remainder of 2004.

During the early months of 2005, there was a lot of activity: the male's low-pitched booming; food being passed from the male to the female; the choosing of titbits for food passing (in nearly all instances mealworms); and the female making a nest from willow twigs and straw. While nest building was in progress, the male perched close by, seemingly standing guard, but unwilling to help construct the nest. Both birds exhibited the head-flicking motion that all curassows seem to exhibit from an early age.

On June 12th 2005, the female was observed to be spending more and more time in and around the nesting area and, on June 6th 2005, was noted to be looking noticeably heavy. The male was spending a considerable amount of time following her every move. An egg was laid on June 28th 2005. The decision was taken to remove the egg and replace it with a dummy egg. No further egg was laid and the artificially incubated egg was found to be clear. A further egg was laid on July 24th 2005, that was removed and placed in an incubator. A dummy egg was left in the nest. A second egg was laid three days later. It was laid from a perch and hit the only hard piece of wood on the aviary floor. Again the first egg proved to be infertile. On July 29th 2005 it was noticed that the female was limping on her left leg. A closer inspection revealed no obvious injury, but it did seem to bring the 2005 season to an abrupt end.

Throughout the early months of 2006, booming and food passing again occurred and finally, on May 15th 2006, mating was observed. An egg was



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Bare-faced Curassow chicks.

laid on May 27th 2006 and was transferred to an incubator. This egg proved to be fertile and the chick hatched from it was successfully hand-reared by the bird staff. A further egg was laid on August 17th 2006. It was removed for artificial incubation and the chick hatched from it was reared successfully.

On December 20th 2006 the birds were moved to another aviary so that we could accommodate a pair of Pied Crows *Corvus albus*. The aviary they were moved to is much larger, it measures 6m x 6m x 8m (approx. 20ft x 20ft x 26ft), and has a small stream with running water and *leylandii* conifers planted to provide cover. Half of the aviary is grassed and the other half is covered with bark chips. The grass is left to grow and set seed and the curassows seem to enjoy searching for whatever insects they can find. A nest basket is provided at floor level, hidden from view by a conifer, but they have made no attempt to use it.

The female was noted to look heavy on May 6th 2007 and an egg was laid on May 9th 2007. A further egg was laid on May 11th 2007. Both eggs

were removed and proved to be fertile. Both were hatched in an incubator and the chicks were successfully hand-reared.

Adult management

The adults are wormed with Panacur 10% solution twice a year on March 1st and October 1st. A faecal sample is taken in February. To date, no worms or eggs have been found in the samples. The female still tends to limp occasionally. The curassows seem to be relatively hardy and no heating is provided for them through our rather long winters. As long as they have a snug shelter, they seem more than capable of toughing out the most inclement weather.

Adult diet

Maintenance diet fed to adults November 1st-February 13th.

8.30am feed

- 50g Seasonal fruits (cut into 1cm cubes)
- 1 Slice of brown bread (crumbled)
- 4 2cm Balls of minced (ground) meat
- 100g Waterfowl maintenance pellets
- 20-30 Soaked Zoo A pellets
- 10g Insectivorous mix

4.00pm feed

- 15-20 Mealworms (scattered)

200g Oystershell grit is added to the food once a month

Breeding diet fed to adults February 14th-October 31st.

8.30am feed

- 50g Seasonal fruits (cut into 1cm cubes)
- 1 Slice of brown bread (crumbled)
- 6 2cm Balls of minced (ground) meat
- 100g Waterfowl maintenance pellets
- 20-30 Soaked Zoo A pellets
- 20g Insectivorous mix

4.00pm Feed

- 15-20 Mealworms (scattered)
- 2-4 Locusts
- 5-10 Waxmoth larvae

Egg management

The eggs were incubated in Brinsea Octagon Pro 20 incubators at a temperature of 37.4°C/37.6°C (99.3°F/99.7°F) with relative humidity of about 55%. Upon external pip the eggs are transferred to a hatcher, with greatly increased humidity to prevent the membranes from drying.

Chick management

Once the chick has hatched, it is first weighed, then transferred to a Brinsea Octagon TLC-4 brooder, in which it remains for 24 hours. No food is offered during this time in order to allow the yolk sac to be fully absorbed. Only water is available in a small dish with pebbles on the bottom to prevent drowning. The chick is later transferred to a rearing pen, heated from above at one end to a temperature of 31°C (87.8°F). The heat is decreased by 1°C each day until only background heat is available.

Chicks are fed the following diet:

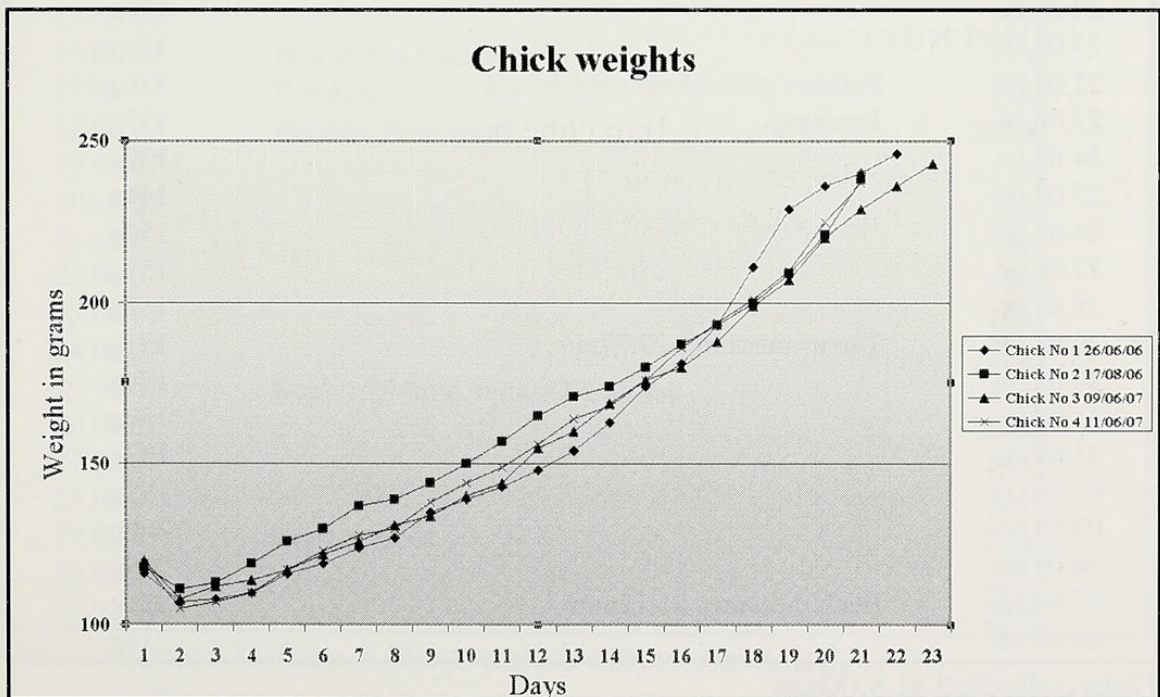
Chick crumbs

Insectivorous food

Soaked Zoo A pellets

Fruit cut into 0.5cm cubes

Waxmoth larvae are offered, also crickets, locusts and mealworms, but although livefood is available at all times, it is very rarely taken. Food is offered from tweezers for the first two days. A dish of fresh water is always available. A perch is provided from day five and is used almost immediately.



Hand-rearing record - Chick No.1.

Date	Observations	Weight
26.06.06	Given silky bantam chick for company.	116g
27.06.06	Observed drinking.	107g
28.06.06		108g
29.06.06		110g
30.06.06	Eating food from food pot.	116g
01.07.06		119g
02.07.06		124g
03.07.06		127g
04.07.06	Perching.	135g
05.07.06		139g
06.07.06	Middle toe measures 26.61mm.	143g
07.07.06	Feeding from hand.	148g
08.07.06		154g
09.07.06	Bird very nervous.	163g
10.07.06		174g
11.07.06		181g
12.07.06		193g
13.07.06		211g
14.07.06	Silkie removed because of bullying by curassow.	229g
15.07.06		236g
16.07.06		240g
17.07.06		246g

Data collected at 8.00am.

Hand-rearing record - Chick No.2.

Date	Observations	Weight
17.08.06	Given guineafowl for company.	118g
18.08.06	Observed drinking,	111g
19.08.06		113g
20.08.06		119g
21.08.06		126g
22.08.06	Follows guineafowl everywhere.	130g
23.08.06	Perching.	137g
24.08.06		139g
25.08.06		144g
26.08.06		150g
27.08.06		157g
28.08.06		165g
29.08.06	Tarsus measures 29.77mm.	171g
30.08.06		174g
31.08.06		180g
01.09.06		187g
02.09.06		193g
03.09.06		200g
04.09.06		209g
05.09.06	Beak measures 21.12mm.	221g
06.09.06		238g

Data collected at 8.00am.



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