

BREEDING THE ELEGANT CRESTED TINAMOU

Eudromia e. elegans

by Bryan Andrews

Living in West Wales, just a few miles (kilometres) from Phil Cleeton of C&J Bird Brokers, enables me to call in on a regular basis to see his fresh imports. These are mainly softbills, but on one such visit I saw and purchased two juvenile Elegant Crested Tinamou, that had been captive-bred in Europe. The Elegant Crested Tinamou is found throughout Argentina and Chile. It is one of 46 species of these ground-dwelling, omnivorous species, that range in size from that of a quail to that of a guineafowl. They inhabit arid and semi-arid grassland, dry savannah and open woodland, favouring open sites. Thought of as a primitive group of birds, they appear to be closely related to the ratites, the tinamous having strong legs and feet that lack a hind toe (Davies, 2002).

The half-grown birds I had purchased grew well and turned out to be a true pair. They were housed in a well planted aviary, that they shared with pairs of Crested Wood Partridge *Rollulus roulroul*, Schalow's Wheatear *Oenanthe schalowi* and a group of six White-headed Mousebirds *Colius leucocephalus*. The tinamous never roosted in the sleeping quarters, which had heating and lighting, but instead slept in a shallow scrape in the only uncovered part of the aviary. They roosted there even during the worst weather.

Over the Christmas 2005 period, four eggs were laid in a deep scrape. Because of the poor weather they were removed for artificial incubation and were measured, weighed and photographed. On the 10th day they were candled and all four proved to be infertile.

Both tinamous came through the winter without any ills, enjoying a diet of diced mixed fruits, Beapher softfood and Puik wild birdseed with added chopped peanuts. A couple of buckets of sand mixed with crushed oystershell provided them with a play area into which a number of mealworms were thrown each morning, and both the tinamous and the partridges spent time hunting for them.

The tinamous started the 2006 laying season on April 6th, using the same scrape as before. This is at the base of a very large *Japonica* shrub. As no attempt was made to conceal the eggs, I was able to keep a close check on them and remove each fresh egg as it was laid and replace it with one of the eggs from the earlier infertile clutch, hoping as I did so that the female could not count beyond four! I used Brinsea Octagon 20 incubators run at a temperature of 37.6°C (99.7°F) and a wet bulb reading of 60%-65% for the first 16 days, which was raised to 70%-75% for the remainder of the



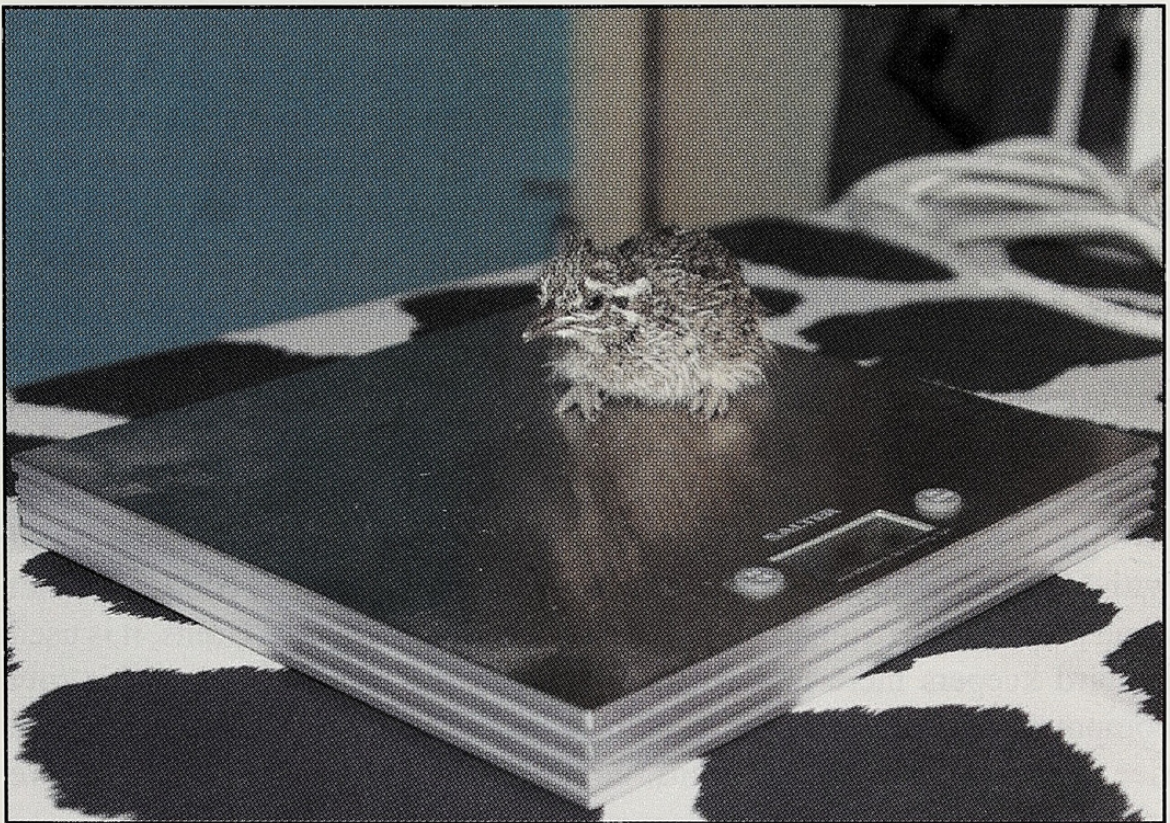
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Elegant Crested Tinamou.



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Distinctively coloured eggs of the Elegant Crested Tinamou.



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This photo gives an idea of the size of the chick .



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Taking mealworms from the hand.

hatching period. The incubation time varied from 18-21 days, with the heavier chicks being the earliest to hatch (see Table 1). The egg colour, as seen in the photograph (p.113), never varied, but there was a slight variation in both the dimensions and the weight of the eggs, although these differences did not correlate with the hatching weights of the chicks.

The chicks hatch fully feathered and with the crest already visible (see photo p.113). As can be seen in Table I, all did not go well at the start of rearing, which was due to the reluctance on the part of the chicks to take any of the foods offered, which included micro crickets and skinned mealworms. The breakthrough came when I started to force-feed the chicks at two-hourly intervals with soaked trout pellets. These seemed to do the trick and by day five the chicks were playing with compound crumbs that had been dressed with livefood. The preferred dry food was a pin-head sized compound that I had purchased in Singapore. Made by a company called 3 Coins, it is used by bird keepers there to feed their white-eyes *Zosterops* spp. This tiny compound is made from green peas, soya beans, black beans, unpolished rice, sugar, proteins and vitamins. So far I have been unable to find it here in the UK.

By the second week, the chicks were hunting down medium-sized crickets and eating a few mealworms each day. I think I may have overdone the amount of protein provided for two of the chicks as both suffered from slight angel wing. This was easily corrected using micropore tape left on

Table 1. Eggs and chicks hatched in incubator.

Egg	Set	Hatched	Weight	Remarks
1	8.4.06	-	-	Infertile
2	8.4.06	26.4.06	31g	Hand-reared
3	12.4.06	30.4.06	32g	Died at seven days
4	14.4.06	3.5.06	30g	Died at five days
5	17.4.06	5.5.06	32g	Hand-reared
6	26.4.06	15.5.06	30g	Angel wing
7	26.4.06	17.5.06	28g	Hand-reared
8	26.4.06	15.5.06	30g	Angel wing
9	30.4.06	21.5.06	27g	Hand-reared
10	4.5.06	25.5.06	27g	Hand-reared
11	4.5.06	24.5.06	30g	Hand-reared

the wings for seven days. A second school of thought suggests that rearing chicks under a white light contributes to this problem. So, perhaps it was more than coincidence that these were the only two chicks reared under a white light.

All of the chicks were by then eating softfood and a mixture of finely diced soft fruits, along with seed.

Having reared enough chicks for my purpose, I now plan to leave the male to incubate any further eggs, and hope to report that he managed to hatch and rear the chicks, assisted perhaps by the female (as is the way with tinamous).

Reference

Davies, S. J. J. F. 2002. *Ratites and Tinamous*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.

BREEDING THE WHITE-HEADED MOUSEBIRD

Colius leucocephalus

by Bryan Andrews

In February 2005, Phil Cleeton of C&J Bird Brokers imported, amongst a number of other birds, some White-headed Mousebirds, six of which were obtained by me. They arrived in fine condition, with full tails; these being twice the length of the body are not always so complete.



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Two females sitting on the same nest.

I housed them indoors, keeping them at a temperature of 73°F (22.8°C), in an all-wire suspended cage. In the spring of that year they were moved to a 9ft x 3ft x 6ft (approx. 2.7m x 1m x 1.8m) planted aviary with a sleeping box, with heating and lighting in it. The box was rarely used, the birds preferring instead to spend the nights hanging in a cluster from the roof netting, until the morning sun brought them out of their torpid state.

Housed on their own, they were offered and ate the same softbill diet as my other birds. This consisted of diced fruit, Bogen Universal and chopped greens, with sliced papaya (pawpaw). I should add here that since January 2006, following constant nagging by Phil Cleeton, I now feed all fruits and vegetables halved not diced.

At the beginning of June, all six mousebirds were seen feeding each other and showing great interest in the canary wicker nest pans placed amongst fir cuttings and bamboos. They would add to and take away fresh



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