

BREEDING THE YELLOW-FRONTED TINKERBIRD

by M & N. Curzon

The Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* is a small African Barbet with a general distribution from Senegal to North-western Ethiopia, Uganda and Zaire. There has been no colour plate in the *Aviculutural Magazine*. Its size is approximately 11cms. A brief description is a yellow forecrown, a lemon yellow rump with a yellowish edge to some feathers including a buffish yellow belly. There are also white, black and buff colours all combining to make a rather starker coloured bird in comparison to some of its more gaudy relatives. The male's bill in our pair is thicker and the yellow on the bird is more intense than the female when in breeding conditions. When they are out of breeding conditions they are alike.

There appears to be no previous references to the Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird in the *Aviculutural Magazine*. Its close relative, the Red-fronted Tinkerbird is mentioned when it was imported in 1930 and in the wild in 1958. It was in the late 1980's that a small number of Tinkerbirds were imported but no breeding reports have been published.

Our birds were purchased from a dealer in the Spring of 1993. Their accommodation consists of an inside flight 1.8m wide x 3.6m long x 1.8m high at the front increasing to 2.25m at the back. There is a sloping roof. It is block built onto an old brick wall and half the front is glass. The roof of the inside is corrugated perspex. In winter the temperature is maintained at between 50° to 55°F. On occasions in winter there is a supplementary light from 6am to 8pm on a time switch. The birds have fought but now with more cover this no longer occurs. The cock was taken away in order to reduce his condition. On to the back brick wall is a double breeder and he was put in this for some time. This cage acts as a release cage for new birds.

Some of the plants inside include *Plumbago auriciata* (Cape Leadwort) a good climber which goes all the way to the roof via a log and cuts off about a third of the flight: *Datura* (Angels Trumpet) and *Cassia corymbosa*.

Other occupants at the time of nesting were pairs of Rodensingus, Lavender Finch, Fernando-Po Mannikin, Black-naped Fruit Pigeon, Cape Dove, 4 Red-headed Tits, a hen Roulroul Partridge and a single Chestnut-flanked Zoestrop. The Roulroul always roosts next to the night light and therefore gets some extra warmth as this is on all the time.

The birds also have access to a large landscaped flight, the dimensions are 3.6m x 3.6m x 2.25m high, which has been well planted with many different shrubs, grasses and ferns. This gives the birds a more interesting

environment, which in turn we hope will encourage breeding. There are also many a large logs (potential nest sites), and a small shallow pond which is situated on the top of a walled raised border, planted with dwarf shrubs and ground cover plants.

Some of the plants used are:-

Lonicera nitida "Baggesens Gold" - a good shrub for nest cover.

Viburnum davidii - a small evergreen shrub which copes with light shade.

Photinia x Fraseri "Red Robin" - large laurel like shrubs, the new growth is red.

Chosiya ternata "Mexican Orange Blossom"- medium sized with fragrant white flowers

Matteuccia struthioptiris "Ostrich Feather Fern" - has beautiful feathery fronds (leaves).

The foods available were grapes and soaked sultanas (cut very small), apples, bananas, Orlux insectivorous mixture and mealworms. Obviously in the summer other livefood would enter the aviary, especially earwigs. This summer was very hot and we were plagued by wasps which in fact eat the mealworms at times.

The previous year (1994) the Tinkerbirds had played at nesting, spending a great deal of time burrowing into a lime log. This lime log is quite soft being 60cms x .25cms diameter. It is 23cms from the roof to the top of the log. Halfway along the underside is the entrance to the nest. This hole had been dug in 1994. Other suspended logs were burrowed but only for about 5cms. Could they have been searching for grubs or perhaps practising ?

We are certain that there was a failed attempt early in the summer of 1995, when both birds went missing for some time. During July another attempt was underway. They were the dominant birds in the flight when seen. There were extra mini mealworms given and on Sunday 6th August there were 3 Tinkerbirds in the inside flight. The young bird was a paler version of its parents especially its yellow colouration. Since the bird fledged the Red-headed Tits now are the "top dogs" and incidentally each morning these Tits drink from the nectar dish.

We will not be splitting the log to examine the nest. The log was roughly positioned north to south. You are able to put your finger in the hole for about 2.5cm before it turns right. It was not easy to find a suitable lime log. There is a bigger log in the outside flight. After 6 weeks the youngster was removed into a small 1.2m x 61cm x 1.8m high flight inside where it lives with a pair of Grey-checked Parrotbills which have been brought inside from their flight for the winter. Incidentally the young bird is a cock. The Parrotbills built a nest in a *Buxus sempervirens* "Common box" 30 cms from

the ground. It was washed out in a rare summer thunderstorm for 1995.

A few further points are that we never saw the birds mating and have never seen an egg. They dislike rain as they go inside but will stay outside in drizzle. An adjoining aviary had a pair of Blue-crowned Hanging Parrots that reared a single youngster and a hen Yellow-winged Sugarbird.

Early this year (1996) another youngster fledged. The parents used the same log as in 1995.

January 8th - only one bird could be seen

January 17th - neither bird was seen

January 21st - tails bent

January 26th - noise in the log

February 16th - both birds were out and there was still a noise in the log

February 28th- young bird flying about in the flight

The young birds are being sent to London Zoo. If any member knows of other Yellow-fronted Tinkerbirds please could they contact us here at Rode.

As described above the Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus* was bred by M & N. Curzon in 1995 and this is believed to be the first success in this country. Anyone knowing of a previous breeding in Great Britain or Northern Ireland, or of any other reason that would disqualify this claim, is asked to contact the Hon.Secretary.

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FIRST BREEDINGS

On page 189 of Volume 100 no. 4 the breeding of the Black-backed Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus cinctus* was reported as being bred at London Zoo.

On page 49 of Volume 101 no. 2 the breeding of the Red-tailed Amazon *Amazona brasiliensis* was reported as being bred at The Tropical Bird Gardens, Rode, Somerset.

On page 73 of Volume 101 no. 2 the breeding of the Mountain Peacock Pheasant *Polyplectron inopinatum* was reported as being bred at Birdworld, Nr. Farnham, Surrey.

It is believed that these are the first breedings in this country. Anyone knowing of a previous breeding in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. or of any other reason that would disqualify this claim, is asked to contact the Hon. Secretary.

THE SOCIETY'S VISIT TO HALLOW

by Stewart Pyper

On Sunday 3rd September members accepted the kind invitation of Ken & Mona Dolton to visit their beautiful home at Hallow, Nr. Worcester. This was the society's third visit - the previous years being 1986 and 1991. Despite the long hot dry summer the lawns had a touch of green about them as it has rained on the Thursday evening. There were a few drops of rain in the morning but we had a lovely warm afternoon.

Before describing the birds a few notes must be penned reference the rest of the collection. There are approx. 200 tortoises of various forms from the small to the large giant tortoises. It is believed to be the most comprehensive in the country, perhaps even in Europe. They have access to heated indoor shelters. The heat comes from lamps which helps to maintain the temperature in inclement weather. They have a varied diet and several have successfully reproduced. Ken was able to point out that if certain vitamins are not available or are consumed in too great a quantity, it affects the shell. There are various mammals including Morai and Wallabies. Recently Ken has added a new large paddock. The gardens are always a joy and there are various greenhouses, one of which is devoted to ferns. Of historical interest to members there is a *Pamianthe* handed from Major Pam to Alfred Ezra OBE, to Raymond Sawyer to Ken Dolton. Four members to whom the Society owe a great deal.

It is Parrots that Ken is best known for. Altogether there are 121 aviaries all having various types of shelters. Amongst the birds noticed were Hyacinth, Scarlet, Military and Buffon's Macaws, various Cockatoos, including a magnificent pair of Leadbeaters. There were Australian and Amboina Kings, Lesser Vasa Parrots, Blue-throated and Queen of Bavaria Conures, plus a varied selection of Australian Parakeets. Lories were well represented including Duyvenbode's, Stellas, and Blue Streaked. Many species had bred and some pairs still had young with them. Having a large number of flights, Ken is able to keep a selection of singletons in case of emergency. It is always a pleasure to see Thick-billed Parrots for which Ken was awarded the Society's Medal in 1969 for the first breeding in Great Britain. Numerous Amazons were seen including Yellow-naped, Green-cheeked and Double Yellow-headed.

There is a large selection of waterfowl including all seven species of Swans. There were also Crowned and Demoiselle Cranes. As always time was short to do the collection full justice. Out thanks to Ken and Mona for allowing us into their beautiful home and gardens.

REPORT OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT HALLOW ON SUNDAY 3RD SEPTEMBER 1995

Present:

Prof. J.R. Hodges (Chairman), Miss R. Ezra (President), K.W. Dolton (Vice-President), R.C.J. Sawyer (Vice-President), G.R. Greed (Hon. Secretary/Treasurer), J. Blossom, M. Curzon, M. Ellis, N. Hewston, K.J. Lawrence, S. Pyper, J. Trollope, R. Wilkinson.

The Chairman Prof. J.R. Hodges resigned after approximately 15 years. K.J. Lawrence was elected Chairman for 1996.

The Editor F. Woolham resigned. A new Editor was not appointed.

G.R. Greed in his report anticipated a deficit for 1995 due to a fall in membership and cost of colour plates in the Avicultural Magazine. Donald Risdon, a former Vice President and long standing member, had given the Society a bequest. It was agreed that each year an award be made for the most interesting article published in the Avicultural Magazine. Members to forward their views for the Council to decide. A painting by Malcolm Ellis to be the first award.

REPORT OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT COBHAM ON SUNDAY 24TH MARCH 1996

Present:

K.J. Lawrence (Chairman), Miss R. Ezra (President), K.W. Dolton (Vice-President), R.C.J. Sawyer (Vice-President), G.R. Greed (Hon. Secretary/Treasurer), J. Blossom, M. Curzon, R. Grantham, N. Hewston, R.E. Oxley, S. Pyper, J. Trollope, Ms. R. Wiseman.

The Accounts for 1995 showed a small surplus.

Betty Risdon and Dr. Henry Quinque (France) were invited to become Vice-Presidents.

The Society has been invited to visit Chester Zoo on Saturday 13th July. Various ways of promoting the Society and increasing membership were discussed.

NEWS & VIEWS

Three species of birds considered "lost" have been rediscovered recently in Indonesia. In May 1995 the Invisible Rail *Habroptila (Rallus) wallacii* was observed by an Indonesian ornithologist in a sago swamp on the island of Halmahera. Second in August 1995 two British ornithologists successfully rediscovered the Lampobathong Flycatcher *Ficedula bonthaina* in south Sulawesi. Finally a Caerulean Paradise Flycatcher *Eutrichomyias rowleyi* was recorded on Sangihe island (see item later in News & Views). The latter species was believed extinct while the other two are rediscoveries of species not seen in the wild for a number of years.

IBIS

The *Glaucidium minutissimum* complex has recently been revised by Mark Robbins and Steve Howell in the Wilson Bulletin 107. They describe a new species. Subtropical Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium parkaeri* from the Eastern Andes of Ecuador and Peru where it was found between 1450 and 1975m in the canopy of subtropical forest. In addition, they explore species limits within the group and have recognised a further 3 species. Another related species has recently been described - Amazonian Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium hardyi*.

IBIS

The Woodcreepers of South and central America fill the same niche as the Treecreepers of the old world. They are very similar in appearance and it was only the close examination of one specimen and further research by staff at the Museum Paraense Emilio Goeldi in Brasilia that this has now been classified as a separate species *Hylexetastes brigidae*.

BULLETIN OF THE B.O.U.

Laughing Thrushes have long been a speciality of Beale Park. The collection consists of twenty species and in the last four breeding seasons over 70 young have been reared from nine species, several to second generation.

The May 1995 Newsletter of the Megapode Specialist Group gives an account of the rediscovery of a major nesting ground for the Moluccan Megapode *Eulipoa wallacei*. The exact locality of the find has been kept secret but it is reported to be larger than any nesting ground previously known. The newsletter also contains up to the minute details of the various projects being undertaken by the group with this fascinating family and makes interesting reading.

MEGAPODE NEWSLETTER Vol. 9, No 1

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The last Japanese Crested Ibis *Nipponia nippon* native to Japan has died, aged 26, on Sado Island, shortly after being paired with a three year old female borrowed from China. It is not known if the five eggs from the pairing are fertile.

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The Aviornis U.K. 1996 Pigeon and Dove census is now under way. If you haven't come across a form in any of the avicultural journals, please write to Philip Schofield, Little Maen, 123 Prince of Wales Drive, Dorchester, Dorset.

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Surveys undertaken in the Mehoo and Pakhui Sanctuaries in Arunchal Pradesh between 1990-94 have confirmed both as new sites for the White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata*. Both locations have yielded two confirmed sightings plus local tribal people in the area of Pakhui report seeing the ducks on many occasions.

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A study of the Scaly-breasted Merganser *Mergus squamatus* has been carried out at Xiao Xingangling mountain in north eastern China. The mountain is one of the main afforested areas in north eastern China and is an important breeding area for the species. The Scaly-sided Merganser was frequently seen some years ago along the Tan Wang river and its tributaries, the Cue Ulan, Ann Tea and Yong Cue rivers. Numbers have been drastically reduced with deforestation, illegal hunting and human disturbance given as the main causes. Suggestions have been made that a nature reserve be established in the Yong Cue river area as this now seems to be the main breeding area.

A group of birds in extreme danger of extinction is the Hawaiian Honeycreepers. Some good news which hopefully augurs well for the future is the reported rearing of 16 Common Amakihi *Loxops virens* at the Keauhou Breeding Conservation Centre in Hawaii. All are destined for release.

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Details of a new species of Shearwater appear in the Bulletin of the British Ornithologists Club 115(2). It is a medium-sized species and has been named Mascarene Shearwater *Puffinus atrodorsalis*.

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In the same issue of the Bulletin, yet another account appears of a recently described species. This time it is the Bahia Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes beckeri*, recently discovered from remnant Atlantic forests in the vicinity of Boa Nova, southern Bahia.

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Recent surveys undertaken in Zaire have found additional sites outside the present known range of the Congo Peafowl *Afropavo congensis*. Locations 200-300 kms west have been found, one of which is close to where the species was originally discovered.

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Since August 1995, the Danish Ministry for the Environment has financed the Khao Nor Chuchi project in Thailand. It is working with villages to demarcate their land holdings in order to define boundaries between cultivated areas and forest, and to help establish the marketing of green vegetables which are in demand locally and in the larger towns. A conservation management board has been set up which will bring together all appropriate officials to consider in detail conservation and development activities at the site. Khao Nor Chuchi is one of the few locations where the highly endangered Gurney's Pitta *Pitta gurneyi* is still to be found.

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Preliminary results following an analysis of bird data from Chu Yang Sin nature reserve in Vietnam seems to indicate a much larger population of the rare Black-headed Laughing Thrush *Garrulax milleti* than first thought.

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Since 1988 Birdlife International has run a collaborative Recovery Programme with the Government of Seychelles and the owner of Fregate Island to conserve the endemic Seychelles Magpie Robin *Copsychus sechellarum*. The species reached a low of 17 birds some 6 years ago. After the implementation of a series of measures numbers have risen to 60, most of which are still found on Fregate, the largest rat- and cat-free island in the Seychelles.

However, on 11th September 1995, a single brown rat was discovered and subsequent details reveal that a small colony is now established. A programme is now being undertaken to eradicate the rats in-situ. If this fails more drastic measures will be adopted, even to the point of holding all birds in captivity until all rats have been destroyed.

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Many members will remember the Programme for Belize started in the late 1980's with the aim of raising money to buy and then to manage an area of rainforest in northern Belize. Over 20,000 people worldwide supported the undertaking and the goals are well on the way to being met. The success has led to the formation of the World Wide Land Conservation Trust which now, not only continues to oversee the efforts in Belize, but has also instigated two new projects; one on the Osa Peninsular, Costa Rica and the other on Danjungan Island in the Philippines. Further information can be obtained from W.W.L.C.T., Blyth House, Bridge St., Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 8AB.

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Despite an embargo on exports to Iran, efforts by government officials and international researchers cleared the way for two Siberian Cranes *Grus leucogeranus* reared at the International Crane Foundation's headquarters at Baraboo, U.S.A. to be sent to Iran to bolster the western flock of this endangered species that has for two decades clung to a population of between eight and eleven birds. Only two other flocks are known, one that winters in India may be reduced to a single pair while the Chinese population of around 3000 winters on the Yangtze river.

The article by Dr. Karl Shuker (A.M.1992:27) on the attempted introduction of Tinamou on to Brightlingsea marshes at the turn of the century made interesting reading. The family as a whole was well represented in U.K. collections with between eight and ten species mentioned in various articles published in the Avicultural Magazine around that time.

Interest in this group has waned since then and until recently only the Chilean *Nothoprocta perdicaria* was present in the U.K. breeding in several collections. Vigour certainly seems to have dropped away in recent years and the introduction of new blood is vital if the species is to be maintained. Three other species are presently in the U.K., Crested *Eudromia elegans* and Red-winged *Rhynchotus rufescens* are kept at Beale Park while the third, kept privately in Norfolk has yet to be identified.

D. Coles

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Further to my article in News and Views, volume 98, no. 2 1992, the male Thick-billed Parrot *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha* which was the remaining one of the pair which I obtained from San Diego Zoo in 1966 died in February this year.

This bird had been totally blind, first with cataracts and then the eyelids closed altogether for the last two years, but it had no difficulty in finding food and water in his aviary and in his cage in the bird room in which he lived for the last two months of his life.

K.W. Dolton

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The San Diego Zoo has a pair of Javan Rhinoceros Hornbills, housed in an enclosure at the base of Sun Bear Forest. They have also been successful in breeding these rare birds - five chicks have hatched since May 1992. This success was probably due in the large part of the care the keepers took in providing the birds with just the right nesting cavity, in which the female sealed herself up contentedly, just as in the wild.

ZOONOOZ

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The University of York Exploration Society's expedition to the Sangihe and Talaud islands in August, September and October of 1995 was very successful. The Expedition was put together by Jon Riley from the University of York and the area was suggested by Birdlife International.

The team consisted of five students from the University of York and five students from the University of San Sam Ratulangi (Manafa, Sulawesi), along with two aviculturists from the United States. The aims were to find and check the status of a number of endemic species that are considered rare and/or endangered as well as to do transects and point counts on the islands to check the avifauna and forests.

One of the members of the team saw the critical endangered Caerulean Paradise Flycatcher, the third time it has been seen in 100 years. Also on Sangihe the nominate race of the Red and Blue Lory *Eos h. histrio* was seen and which was thought to be extinct. 6 birds were seen and from a former trapper it was learned that possibly a total of 30 specimens of the Lory remain in the area. The Sangihe Hanging Parrot and the Elegant Sunbird which are considered endangered were seen in the southern part of the island where they are locally common.

On Karakelong, the largest island in the Talaud's, the sub-species of the Red and Blue Lory *talautensis* was found to be more numerous than originally had been expected. Also a single Grey Imperial Pigeon *D. pickeringii* was seen and it was a pet of one of the trappers we spoke with. We were also able to confirm that the Talaud Kingfisher *Halcyon enigma* which was formerly thought to be a sub-species of *Halcyon chloris* is indeed a full species as both species were seen in the same habitat.

Three of the most common birds in the Talaud's were the Black Sunbird, the Pacific Swallow, followed by the Grey-sided Flowerpecker and in fourth spot the Tree Sparrow.

Much more was seen and that will be related in an article to follow.

Jan Roger van Oosten (USA) and Jon Riley (England)
(also sent in by Trevor Buckell (England))

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The Rose-crowned Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus regina* has been bred at the Territory Wildlife Park, Northern Territory, Australia in 1994 and 1995 writes Nick Atchinson in the January issue of Australian Aviculture. The article emphasises the importance of diet in maintaining these birds in captivity. Chopped fruit on its own is not enough. The birds have access to Wombaroo Lorikeet and Honeyeater food that they drink from a bowl. Trials using an imported fruit eating bird pellet have proved successful and will be incorporated into their regular diet soon.

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Curzon, Mike and Curzon, N. 1996. "Breeding The Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird." *The Avicultural magazine* 102(1), 36–46.

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