

NEWS OF PARROTS AT WELTVOGELPARK WALSRÖDE

by Simon Bruslund and Martin Gaede

Our first Red-tailed Black Cockatoo chick *Calyptorhynchus banksii* hatched in December 2008 and remained with its parents for a good seven months. A year later, almost to the day, the female laid for the second time. Again only a single egg was laid and the chick was reared successfully. In 2010 the pair kept up this tradition and at the time of writing (February 2011) is rearing its third chick. The Australian black cockatoos are rare in aviculture outside of Australia and successful breeding is seldom achieved without resort to hand-rearing. Most hand-reared males display some degree of imprinting and will not accept females of their own species. For this reason, parent-reared young black cockatoos are especially welcome at Walsrode.

The Karimunjawa Islands subspecies of the Moustached Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri dammermani* first arrived at Walsrode in 2008 and bred in 2010. When the first clutch of young was in the nest, we discovered that the pair brooded the chicks for only a short time each day and during the cold and rainy spring of 2010, they were not developing as well as we hoped. Therefore, the two chicks were removed and hand-reared and both made a fine recovery. When the second clutch was in the nest the weather was much better and the parents reared a further three chicks without any problems. We cannot at present say whether the limited time spent in the nest with the chicks is a particular adaption peculiar to this subspecies or just a characteristic of this particular pair. Other subspecies of Moustached Parakeet kept at Walsrode in the past did not behave in this way.

The Blue-bellied Parrot *Triclaria malachitacea* and the Pileated Parrot *Pionopsitta pileata* are two mid-sized species that inhabit the seriously threatened Atlantic rainforest of Brazil. The Blue-bellied species has bred regularly at Weltvogelpark Walsrode since the 1980s and, in 2009, we achieved our best result so far, with seven young being reared. We have been less successful with the Pileated Parrot. However, in 2009 we received two eggs from a breeder whose pair had destroyed all of its previous clutches of eggs. Two chicks hatched and were reared by our nursery team, enabling us to add this species to our collection for the first time in a decade.

Another new bird added to the collection in 2009 was the New Caledonian Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus deplachii* of which we received an unrelated pair from France. We also managed to establish an unrelated pair of the closely related Edward's Lorikeet *T. capistratus* for the first time in 2009. The pair bred that year and has since proved to be very prolific, the

parents rearing four clutches of chicks in 2010. As soon as the young fledged, the female laid a further clutch of four eggs. Eventually, we removed the nest box to force them to take a break.

One of our breeding pairs of Blue-crowned Lorikeets *Vini australis* has repeatedly produced single egg clutches and, having reared the chick, takes a five to six months break before producing a further single egg clutch. This means that this little lorikeet has one of the slowest reproduction rates in our collection.

Following an even longer break our Purple-naped Lories *Lorius domicella* have begun to breed again. The current pair consists of a female bred here in 1994, paired with a male imported from Indonesia via Köln Zoo. A male offspring hatched in February 2010 remained with its parents throughout the breeding season even though they went on to produce a second clutch. The adult male has the unusual habit of “clicking” his bill when he is excited. It is interesting to observe how his offspring try to imitate this but never quite succeed. In 2010, we succeeded in breeding the Purple-bellied Lory *L. hypoinochrous* for the first time at Walsrode. During incubation and the rearing of the chicks, both parents spent most of the time in the nest box. As a result, every few days keepers had to clean out the nest box and put in fresh wood shavings.

Our Goldie’s Lorikeets *Psitteuteles goldiei* have long been maintained as a group and seem to do well when kept this way, though not all of the pairs breed. When we placed the group of 12 birds in our 2,800sq m (approx. 30,000sq ft) Nusantara Rainforest exhibit we expected to see an increase in breeding results. However, the contrary was the case and during the following six months there was not a single successful breeding. Therefore, we returned the birds to their familiar surroundings in the Lory Atrium in which the group share a smaller aviary and, within a few weeks, they began breeding again.

The Musk Lorikeets *Glossopsitta concinna* fledged a single chick in a breeding complex behind the scenes. It is interesting to see that young Musk Lorikeets have an indistinct overall brown tinge to their first plumage. Young Galahs *Eolophus roseicapilla* are rather more grey than rose coloured when they fledge. Although this cockatoo is highly social, breeding success is only possible in a group when the pairs are given the opportunity to defend their nest sites. When the young leave the safety of the nest they are normally accepted by other members of the group. Initially, they appear baffled by the number of unknown birds around them, but after a little while begin to pursue all of the adults in the group and beg them for food. It generally takes up to a day for the young Galahs to learn to recognise their own parents outside the nest chamber. Their grey plumage seems to serve as an inhibitor,

causing the otherwise rather coarse Galahs to be gentle with them.

We have a group of four Keas *Nestor notabilis*, consisting of an older pair and a younger pair, on exhibition in the park and in the spring keepers were surprised to find a clutch of eggs. Unfortunately, they were damaged, possibly by the younger and less experienced pair. They were removed and placed in an incubator and the chicks were hand-reared. Kea chicks are covered with down and are well adapted to a cold climate and steps must be taken when they are being hand-reared to avoid them overheating, as this leads to slowed digestion, regurgitation and dehydration.

The Blue-naped Parrots *Tanygnathus lucionensis* reared a single chick in 2010. The pair, consisting of an experienced female and a much younger male, also reared chicks in 2008 and 2009.

The Horned Parakeets *Eunymphicus cornutus* reared six chicks in 2010. The two chicks, a male and a female, from the first clutch remained with the parents while they were rearing the second clutch. This did not seem to cause any problems, but the older siblings did not assist their parents rearing the second clutch as we were expecting.

Weltvogelpark (World Bird Park) Walsrode in northern Germany has 125 species of parrots. The majority of these are housed in the Parrot House (Papageienhaus) and Lory Atrium (Lori-Atrium). A new attraction in the Paradise Hall (Paradieshalle) is an area specially set aside for free-flying lorikeets, where visitors can purchase a pot of nectar and feed the colourful Rainbow Lorikeets T. haematodus.

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NUMEROUS FIRST BREEDINGS

Weltvogelpark Walsrode was the first collection in the world to successfully breed a member of the Toucan family (Ramphastidae), when it bred the Red-breasted Toucan *Ramphastos dicolorus* for the first time in 1965, a few years after the opening of the park. The impressive list of other species bred for the first time at Weltvogelpark Walsrode includes the Greater Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea apoda*, Secretary Bird *Sagittarius serpentarius*, Giant Coua *Coua gigas*, Blue Coua *C. caerulea*, Knobbed Hornbill *Aceros cassidix*, African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* and Bateleur (Eagle) *Terathopius ecaudatus*. It was also first to breed the African Grey Hornbill *Tockus nasutus* and the Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis*.

The Weltvogelpark Walsrode Foundation supports conservation programmes around the world. It has carried out important conservation work in countries such as Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Cambodia, Madagascar, New Caledonia, Mexico, Perú and Pakistan.

THE GREY SINGING FINCH *Serinus leucopygius*

by John Santegoeds, Huub Vervest and Gaetan Vicentini

The Grey Singing Finch (or White-rumped Seed eater) *Serinus leucopygius* is a small grey bird with a beautiful song and a special character. In France it is called *Chanteur d'Afrique* and in Italy *Cantore d'Africa* - singer of Africa - while the Dutch, Belgians and Germans call it *Edelzanger* or *Edelsänger*.

In the early days there was a desire to breed good singing canaries by crossing a male Grey Singing Finch with a female domestic canary. It was not easy. The main problem was that most imported male Grey Singing Finches were not in breeding condition at the same time as the female canary. The male Grey Singing Finch's song was usually at its peak when the female canary was moulting and was no longer in breeding condition.

The Grey Singing Finch is, of course, closely related to the domestic varieties of canary, which are descended from the wild Canary *S. canaria* of Madeira, the Azores and Canary Islands. In Africa, where it is found across the continent from Senegal to Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Grey Singing Finch has, however, a different breeding season to that of the domestic canary. This is one of the reasons why it is difficult to cross a male Grey Singing Finch with a female canary. Nowadays, of course, if we wish to maintain the Grey Singing Finch and other *Serinus* spp. in aviculture in Europe, it is vital that we concentrate on breeding only pure-bred birds and, to help promote the breeding of birds of the genus *Serinus*, we have set-up the European Society of *Serinus* Breeders (ESSB).

There are probably still many Grey Singing Finches in Belgium and the Netherlands that are kept in outside aviaries. Often they were acquired with the idea that they are peaceful birds (which they are unless housed with closely related species) and because of the male's song and the fact that Grey Singing Finches fit in well housed with more colourful birds. Unfortunately though, when housed outside and sharing an aviary with other birds, Grey Singing Finches very often do not breed successfully. One reason for this is that imported birds are usually not ready to breed until autumn, when here in western Europe the climate is often too cold and too wet for them to breed successfully in an outside aviary. It is far better to bring pairs inside at the end of July/beginning of August and house them in breeding cages (one pair per cage). This will greatly enhance the chances of success.

When the male Grey Singing Finch is ready to breed he begins to sing and chases the female with his wings hanging down and the two chase one another in a butterfly-like display flight. They prefer to build the nest in a



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