

ASA

A JOURNAL FOR BIRD BREEDING, CONSERVATION,  
RESTORATION AND EDUCATION

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2017





## NEXT ISSUE



**MALEO HUSBANDRY AND  
CONSERVATION AT THE  
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

The purposes of the Society are the study of foreign and native birds to promote their conservation and protection; the dissemination of information on the care, breeding, and feeding of birds in captivity; the education of Society members and the public through publications, meetings, and available media; and the promotion and support of programs and institutions devoted to conservation. Front Cover: Golden Conure/Queen of Bavaria *Guaruba guarouba*, photo Steve Duncan. Inside front cover: Maleo pair *Macrocephalon maleo*, Photo Julie Larsen Maher©WCS

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November/December 2017  
*President's Message*

Greetings, fellow Aviculturists:

At a recent ASA board meeting it was decided the Bulletin would become the e-Bulletin.

Due to rising printing and distribution costs, the board decided an online e-Bulletin has many benefits, whilst saving ASA thousands of dollars a year.

Some of the benefits you will be getting with the e-Bulletin include:

Online access 24x7 - read online articles anytime, anywhere

Video - when available, video will be provided to accompany articles

Flip book format - easily enlarge, search and change pages

I believe the benefits of an online presence will provide access to many more aviculturists and increase membership - definitely something ASA needs badly.

I will personally miss the printed ASA Bulletin but, look forward to the new world that will open up for aviculturists online and am hopeful we broaden ASA's recognition as the oldest avicultural society in the United States.

Yours truly,

Carol Stanley

President, YOUR Avicultural Society of America

# Officers & Staff

## President

Carol Stanley 925-698-0191

## Vice-President

Alex Culp alex@asabirds.org  
714-308-0270

## Secretary

Kimberly Robertson kroberson@safariwest.com

## Treasurer

Steve Duncan 909-599-7577

## Board of Directors

Roger Bringas rogerbringas@gmail.com

Jennifer Culp 714-894-6146

Sheri Hanna turacoldy@aol.com  
805-208-1759

Susie Kasielke skasielke@aol.com

Rick Rosenthal rickatbnb@aol.com

Dick Schroeder 760 743.3156  
dick.schroeder.911@gmail.com

Jack Wikoff 909-428-5756

## Aviculture Apprentice Program

Kimberly Robertson Director kroberson@safariwest.com

Carol Stanley 925-698-0191

Alycia Antheunisse acampidonica@gmail.com

## Board Advisor

Genny Wall 949-859-0861

## Communications Director

Dick Schroeder 760 743.3156  
dick.schroeder.911@gmail.com

## Web Master

Steve Duncan 909-599-7577  
www.asabirds.org

## Legislative Liaison Officer

Laurella Desborough 904-291-9043

## Membership Committee

Alycia Antheunisse Chair acampidonica@gmail.com  
209-333-2185

Steve Duncan 909-599-7577  
Director

Alex Culp alex.k.mullenex@gmail.com  
714-308-0270

Jennifer Culp 714-894-6146

Rick Rosenthal rickatbnb@aol.com

Sheri Hanna turacoldy@aol.com  
805-208-1759

## Ways & Means

Alex Culp alex@asabirds.org  
714-308-0270

## Conference Coordinators

Alex Culp alex@asabirds.org  
714-308-0270

Steve Duncan 909-599-7577

Carol Stanley 925-698-0191

## Editorial Panel

Susie Christian winged1s@aol.com  
805-772-2038

Steve Duncan 909-599-7577

Sheri Hanna 805-208-1759

Carol Stanley 925-698-0191  
Art Director

Margrethe Warden 678-296-1892

Lisa Woodworth birdbrain@mindspring.com  
templeaviaries@gmail.com

## AFA Delegates

Steve Duncan 909-599-7577

Carol Stanley 925-698-0191

## Lifetime Honorary Members

Frank Miser Dick Schroeder

Steve Duncan

## Conference Raffle Coordinator

Richard Dickinson 623-544-6973  
408-313-4986

email: rgdickinson@yahoo.com  
Mary Rose maryd4\_8@msn.com

---

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*Golden Conures*

*Tony Silva*

GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN





*As he spoke, I focused on his eyes and gestures; had he not shown the firmness and fluidity in his words I would have suspected the person had been overly fond of cachaça, or firewater.*

The road was bumpy and added to the aches my body felt after having flown from the USA to Rio de Janeiro and then the Amazonian city of Belém do Pará. I had not had proper rest for 30 hours, though I would dose off occasionally, until the vehicle would hit a large hole in the road, causing my body to jump and my mind to awaken. The driver, Nascimento, would occasionally swear or mumble something after having to backtrack, as the dirt roads were not marked and he would get lost, until he would recognize a landmark and back track. Finally after driving much of the afternoon and night we arrived at our destination.

I had first met Nascimento many months earlier. We had a casual meeting after as we drank *cafezinho*, the strong overly sweet coffee drunk in Brazil, in the store of aviculturist Juan Carlos Ferreira. The discussion centered on Ararajuba, as the Golden Conure *Guaruba guarouba* is known in Brazil. What Nascimento related seemed incredible. He told me that the brilliant yellow and green conures nested in a group, selecting an emergent typically in a cleared area or agricultural field and rearing the young as a family. As he spoke, I focused on his eyes and gestures; had he not shown the firmness and fluidity in his words I would have suspected the person had been overly fond of *cachaça*, or firewater. No conure was known to nest



in such a manner; indeed the perception was that these parrots were highly territorial when breeding, aggressively chasing any pair some distance from the immediate vicinity of their nest. Nascimento argued vehemently against the concept of nesting in isolation. He was aware of group nesting in Amazonian *Pyrhura* and Golden Conures.

Nascimento was a bird trapper, though occasionally traded in other wildlife—snakes, monkeys, other mammals and I was told also animal parts used as fetishes in the Amazon. In his home I saw the first living specimens of *Amazona ochrocephala xantholaema* and *Gypopsitta vulturina*. He had intimate knowledge of parrots in the field. Indeed, every detail he described in our many conversations over the years were confirmed decades later. He told me that the Blue-fronted Amazon *Amazona aestiva* nested in some areas in terrestrial termitaria (at the time the only ground nesting Amazon was the Bahamas race of *Amazona leucocephala*), that the “Sun Conures” *Aratinga solstitialis* in the Brazilian range were a different type than those found further north (ie. in the Guianas and Venezuela), sporting a perpetual immature plumage (the form is now called Sulphur-breasted Conure *Aratinga maculata*), that the Lear’s Macaw *Anodorhynchus leari* originated in a desolate dry


*Suddenly Nascimento pointed and said look. There I saw one of the yellow conures emerge from a cavity, followed by another and yet another. They were adults; they lacked green feathering typical of immatures. In all more than a dozen birds emerged from the cavity.*





GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

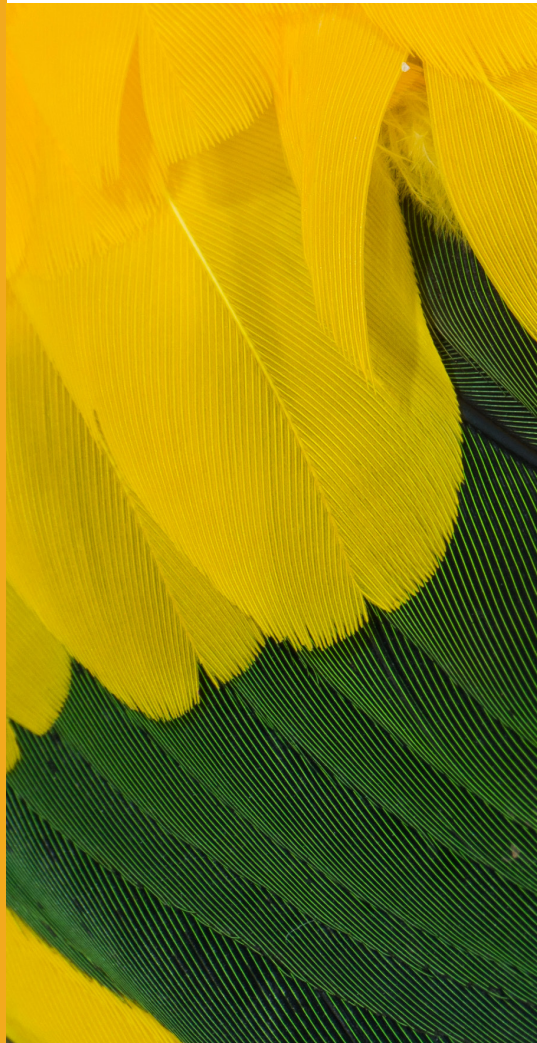




*Golden Conures  
are stunning birds.  
Georg Marcgraf, who  
apparently knew the  
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described the species  
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1638. No writer since  
then has failed to  
be impressed by its  
beauty and unique  
personality: a gentle,  
albeit vocal demeanor.*

area (subsequently confirmed by research) and that the Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* was destined to vanish, as the population was small and facing pressures ranging from habitat modification by goats to excess trapping. He was correct in every instance.

As the sun began to show its face, I was wide-awake. The adrenaline rushing through my body contributed to the excitement. Suddenly Nascimento pointed



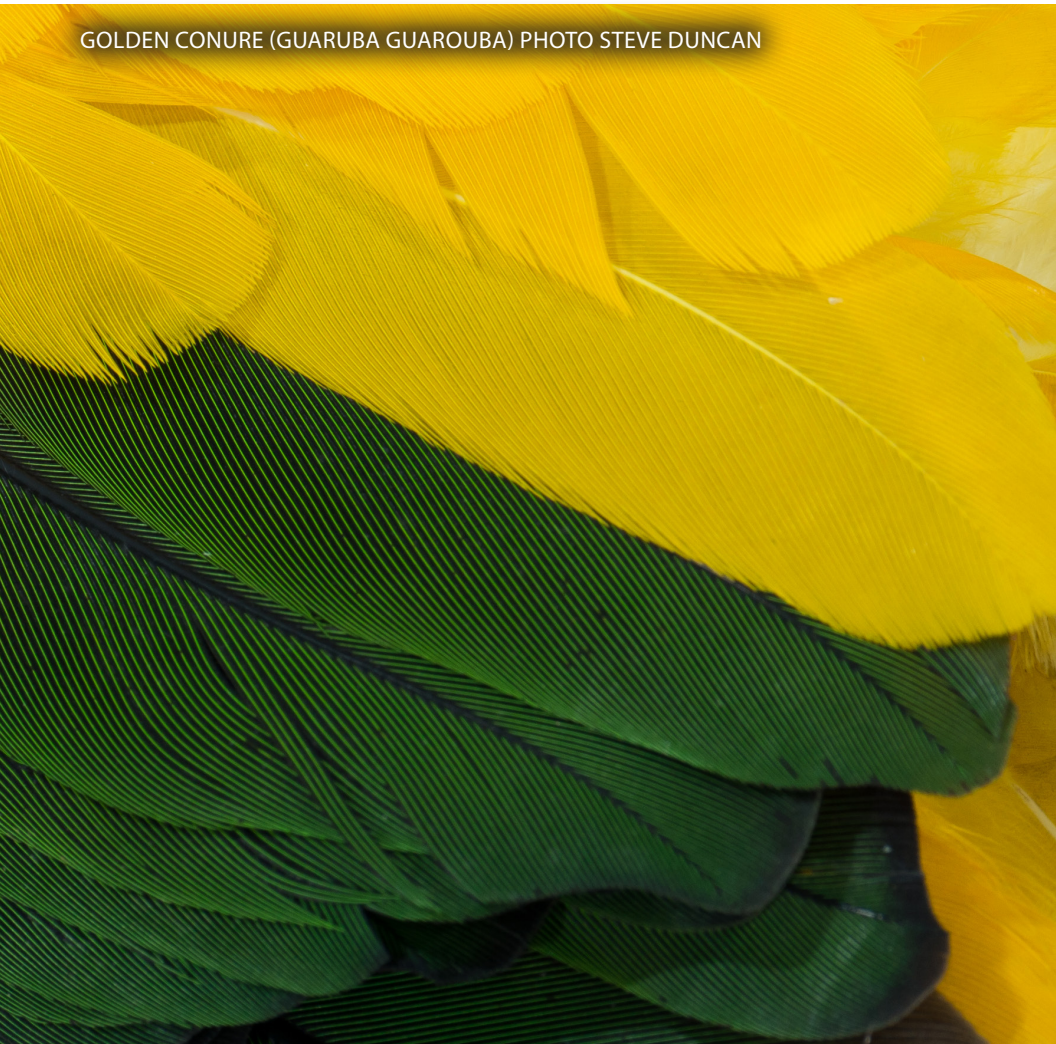
and said look. There I saw one of the yellow conures emerge from a cavity, followed by another and yet another. They were adults; they lacked green feathering typical of immatures. In all more than a dozen birds emerged from the cavity. They called, preened and took short flights. After the group had emerged, Nascimento pounded the tree trunk with a thick branch and there in my binoculars I saw evidence of colonial breeding: two young, green streaked birds oozed out

from the tree cavity. Nascimento was right.

Golden Conures are stunning birds. Georg Marcgraf, who apparently knew the species as a cage bird, described the species for the first time in 1638. No writer since then has failed to be impressed by its beauty and unique personality: a gentle, albeit vocal demeanor.

Golden Conures are also very sociable, though in captivity

GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN





*The sociable nature of the Golden Conure allows it to be bred in groups or in trios; in Brazil several collections breed two females to one male. I breed mine in pairs but house them collaterally, with full visual contact, because this has a stimulating effect.*

they are poor at playing with enrichment and toys. In groups they constantly interact with one another. In such a setting, the feathers seem to typically suffer from the excess attention, with the flights and tail feathers being chewed, this being especially a problem in youngsters. Only if they are trained to play with items introduced into their cage will they ignore their feathers. To achieve this training, we rear our young *Guaruba* with Sun Conures *Aratinga solstitialis*, who entice the Golden Conures to chew palm fronds, sections of decomposing wood, fresh branches, flowers, pods, small cardboard boxes, paperback books, palm seeds, coconuts and more. We learned this trick some years ago, when we had a single Golden Conure that we reared with a Sun Conure for company; it would have been cruel to rear such a sociable species alone. The result was evident after many months, when I would see the Golden Conure explore all of the enrichment provided—something always ignored in groups of Golden Conures. We experimented the following year and the result was the same.

The effort to rear the two species together is in my opinion justified, as the interaction of the group will provide hours of observation that is even more enjoyable if the birds sport flawless feathering. Singly housed pairs will maintain

the interest in enrichment they learned from the Sun Conures and as such they tend to be less vulnerable to feather chewing. If they do chew their feathers, it

*Interestingly I have also found that the pairs housed in groups collaterally will nest much more prolifically (average 2.9 clutches per annum) than those housed singly (1.7 clutches per annum).*

will be around nesting time. Most will allow their feathers to regrow if they chewed them once the post breeding hormonal state has dissipated.

The sociable nature of the Golden Conure allows it to be bred in groups or in trios; in Brazil several collections breed two females to one male. I breed mine in pairs

but house them collaterally, with full visual contact, because this has a stimulating effect. Indeed, over the decades I have also found that pairs housed in a group tend to nest successfully earlier (average 31.9 months, 18 pairs) compared to pairs kept in an isolated manner (average 42.3 months, 11 pairs). Interestingly I have also found that the pairs housed in groups collaterally will nest much more prolifically (average 2.9 clutches per annum) than those housed singly (1.7 clutches per annum). The auditory and visual contact is with this species (like some other neotropical parrots such as caiques *Pionites* spp) key to inducing breeding.

In terms of diet, we treat Golden Conures like miniature macaws; indeed, their Brazilian name is derived from the Tupi words signifying yellow macaw.

Our Golden Conures are fed a little fruit, especially those that are not sweet, vegetables (particularly steamed carrot, pumpkin and sweet potatoes, which are beta carotene rich), cooked whole grain pasta and brown rice, pellets, sprouted grains and seeds, *and* wheat bread liberally smeared with almond or peanut butter, some cracked walnuts or almonds, or a bit of sunflower seed. The fatty component to the diet is varied. We can grow a number of items that they find in the wild in

GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN





tropical south Florida and these, even in birds that are generations from their wild ancestors, are preferred above other fruit. They will, for example, eat the astringent cashew fruit (note fruit, not the nut) and also the seeds of guava over temperate fruits or vegetables. The diet is made austere during our Florida winter, and consists primarily of pellets, vegetables and a fat component, but starting in February (the approach of spring) they receive sprouted seeds, pasta or rice, fruits and much more fat. Their nests are filled with rotted wood and sprinklers are placed over the cages to allow daily bathing for a period of about 10 minutes. The birds typically nest a month later. The original birds did not stop nesting during the heart of summer like many other parrots in the collection, being impervious to the heat, but the latest generation takes a rest in July, August and September and nest again in November.

Why do we augment the fat in the diet for nesting? Many years ago I collected the crop contents of wild youngsters being parent reared, as well as of adults which Nascimento had trapped. There was a distinct increase in the fat content of foods being fed to the young. Both myself and other researchers have also made this observation in macaws and other species. The fat provides energy that the growing young require.

*We can grow a number of items that they find in the wild in tropical south Florida and these, even in birds that are generations from their wild ancestors, are preferred above other fruit.*



GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY



GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY



GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) AND HYACINTH MACAW (ANODORHYNCHUS HYACINTHINUS) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY



### *Steve's Photo Pick*

The Jenday Conure, *Aratinga jandaya*, has a large range in Eastern Brazil. The large population is stable and probably benefits from human clearing of rainforest. They do well around human establishments and sometimes feed on agricultural crops. In aviculture, Jendays are very easy to maintain and can be prolific breeders. They do have a well-deserved reputation for being vocal in the wild and in aviaries. Steve Duncan

Avian Resources





GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY



In my opinion, enclosure and nest size seem to be less important than diet in this species. I have had pairs nest successfully in cages 1.8 m (6 ft) long and aviaries 4.5 m (15 ft) long. Rarely will the pairs utilize the flight space; instead they will quickly crawl from one end to the other, often stopping along the way to display. Mine nest in boxes 40 cm (16 in) deep and 30 cm (12 in) square or in L-shaped nests made for medium sized parrots. They do not seem to be very demanding in terms of the nest and once a pair laid in a log placed on their enclosure floor for chewing, the birds tunneling into one side. I realized what was happening when I reached into the cage to replace the log. The female, which had been great at hiding her activity, flew at me and latched onto my shirt. I immediately realized that she was nesting inside. When I was able to distract her and look, I found the nest to contain three eggs.

Golden Conures produce clutches containing from 3 to 5 eggs, with 4 being average. Incubation in my birds oscillates around 26 (23-27,  $n = 47$ ) days. Young are born covered with a white down that is yellow hinted. The bill is large and is shovel like, with the typical soft pads along the sides. Up until this stage they are very much like *Pionites*. They develop a scant secondary down, being rather naked. The chicks from a young age recognize their feeder and

people they see regularly and are extremely alert; I often see them following me as I move around the hand-rearing room. They are adorable as they feather out and this results in them receiving far more attention than the other young. Like macaws, they can flip on their backs when startled. Weaning can be a problem, with some calling constantly with wings outstretched and others weaning relatively easily. I have found that young that tend to cry for food incessantly during weaning and are slow to become independent often have slight





bacterial or fungal infection. Once treated, they wean quickly.

The Golden Conure was once an avicultural rarity, but as more and more young are produced in aviculture, this species is becoming more readily available. Indeed, in Brazil there are collections that focus on producing young for the pet trade. In the USA there are a number of breeders who also provide young for the pet trade. As aviary birds they would be one species I would never be without.

They still mesmerize me like that morning decades ago when Nascimento took me to the Gurupí area and showed me as the birds emerged from a dead tree in a field. That day I was realized the importance of fieldwork to understand the biology of parrots and then to apply this knowledge to captivity. This knowledge also makes aviculture a much more rewarding endeavor. That day also cemented a fascination for this species that persists until today.



GOLDEN CONURE (GUARUBA GUAROUBA) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY





# Cockatoo Aggression

*Tony Silva*

Some time back I visited a home for unwanted birds. As I walked around, I discussed with the director the problem of unwanted cockatoos. Like me, she has found that males are the gender most commonly found in rescues. This is because males can become exceptionally aggressive as they reach sexual maturity, or when the unpredictable nature ingrained in their genes emerges.

As I read messages several days later, a typical scenario appeared in a communiqué. It involved a Moluccan Cockatoo *Cacatua moluccensis* that had been a pet for 23 years. First he attacked



BLUE-EYED COCKATOO (CACATUA OPHTHALMICA) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY

the husband five years ago, the cut requiring 9 stitches and then more recently the wife. That bite required six stitches to the upper and another six stitches to the bottom lip. The wife adored the bird but it was evident from the message that bites were not uncommon, the serious ones only having been displayed twice.

Only after 40 years in aviculture, have I begun to understand cockatoos. They are highly intelligent, complex creatures whose social structure in the wild is only now being deciphered. The position of each flock member is clearly defined, and

males mock fight continuously, even when breeding, to spend up hormonal flares. I have seen males fight viciously in the wild but never two females. I also know that males in the wild can and will attack their mates much as they do in captivity. We simply document such attacks more frequently in captivity because the corpse of a bird in the wild has a very short life span before being found by a scavenger.

Cockatoo aggression is a problem that is primarily seen in males. I have several birds that their owners could no longer manage, or which had attacked them,

resulting as described above in the need for stitches. Can such bouts of aggression, often unpredictable, be completely stopped is a question I often receive. My answer is invariably no, but then I complement that negative word with a comment that the owner can significantly reduce the risk of being bit if they learn to understand their pet's body language.

Here are known facts that over 40 years I have verified time and time again by questioning the owners of problem cockatoos or that I have personally experienced:

1) Attention or lack of attention does not contribute or diminish the probability of attack. I have seen males that received considerable attention suddenly turn on their owners, and I have seen birds that led relatively lonesome lives also become demons.

2) Cockatoos become agitated on full moons. I have heard them call in the wild and in captivity. Moluccans are especially vocal. I get more calls regarding bites directly after a full moon than at other times of the month.

3) The Indonesian cockatoos can nest throughout the year in captivity, with a peak during warm weather, meaning that a hormonal flush can occur throughout the year. I do not believe that the onset of the spring and summer breeding season increases the risk of attack, though firmly believe that conditions that the bird may perceive to induce breeding can contribute to an attack. As an example, I know of one Umbrella Cockatoo *Cacatua alba* that after 11 years of living in the home was placed on the floor of the bedroom to play with a ball. The bird soon discovered that the area under the bed was dark. It would play under the bed each day. The owners felt that there was no harm—until

one day they reached for the bird while under the bed. They noticed that the bird hissed and clicked its beak continuously, both signs that when combined mean a bite is impending, but nonetheless pushed to get the bird from under the bed. The effort resulted in the hand being badly lacerated. The dark conditions had emulated a nest and the bird had come into breeding condition.

Never—EVER—give the bird a cardboard box, wooden wine box, paper bag, or access to a dark closet, the underside of a bed or couch, or permit it to chew a hole into a wall to hide. If you do, it will only be a matter of time before you will be bit. In 81% of the cases that I have documented, the birds had suddenly taken a huge interest in something dark. In one case, the bird would hide under the Christmas tree, between the boxes of gifts; in another someone had recommended placing a cardboard box for the bird to destroy as enrichment on the cage floor; in another the bird had been allowed to live under the couch, where it would hide for the greater part of the day. The list of scenarios is endless. In most of these cases, when the owner tried to retrieve the bird, it attacked.

4) Never give access to mirrors or windows where a bird can see its image. In 49% of the cases of attacks I have recorded, the bird could see themselves in a window or mirror and had an infatuation for being near those areas. The attacks occurred near those areas.

5) Do not think that giving the bird a playmate of the same or another species will reduce the risk of aggression. Cockatoos can be phobic and may see the other bird as a strange being to be avoided or alternately to be attacked. Pairing cockatoos or integrating former pet cockatoos into a flock of their kind is a slow process that requires tremendous patience. It may take years before the bird realizes that the other birds are of their species and not some feathered foreign entity that they cannot relate to. As an example, I have a Moluccan that was introduced to a flight cage 7 years ago. It avoided all contact with the other cage occupants until this March, when it bonded with another bird. The two now play endlessly and are showing many traits typical of their kind when interacting.

6) Cockatoos that are agitated call loudly, shy away, raise their crest, strike their feet against the perch, hiss, click their beaks in an agitated matter and move in a premeditated matter. These are warning signs to stay away. Let the bird calm down before attempting to retrieve it from the cage or stand or it will likely bite. Train the bird to step up and down from a perch whenever possible to allow a better control of being removed from or returned to its cage.



SULPHUR-CRESTED COCKATOO (CACATUA GALERITA) PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

Listed for periods of agitation. It is common for individuals that are displaying aggression to become perceptively noisier over a period of a week or more.

7) Never allow the cockatoo to perch on the shoulder. A full 92% of the cases that I have seen involved birds that had been allowed to perch on the shoulder, where the bird considered itself to be in a dominant position. Turning to look at the bird or reaching up for it is when the bite was recorded.

8) Understand that cockatoos have a strong powerful bill that can

crack very hard nuts. If in doubt, give the bird a Brazil nut or a fresh branch and see how quickly the nut is opened or the branch is converted to splinters. That bill can cause a nasty laceration.

9) Individuals that bite or attack often display a trance like behavior, focusing on their sight on their owner. The bird that bites in a rage one moment may be extremely tame and gentle the next, behaving as if nothing had happened. I have seen this same feeling of remorse in males that have brutally mailed their mates.

10) Never torment the bird, as this is not only abuse but it can also heighten aggression. I know of one case where an alleged trainer instructed the owner to lightly strike at their hormonal male cockatoo with a rolled up newspaper, this to apparently distract it from a hormonal rage. The bird reacted by flying at the person and biting it on the shoulder. Under NO circumstances should you do anything that increases the level of agitation or can be considered punishment.

11) When a bird is agitated and aggressive, ignore it completely. Paying attention to it at that time may only increase the aggression, as the bird will deduce that through its behavior it can attract your attention.

12) Do not give the aggressive bird a plush toy, mop head, a wig or anything that it can perceive to be a mate and which it believes it must protect from you. More than one caller has noted that they gave their bird a plush bird for companionship

and that they got bit when they tried to remove the toy for washing.

Apart from the above, there are other important considerations.

I do not like to clip the flight feathers in pet birds bird, but with male cockatoos I believe that keeping them grounded gives you some control over the bird. I recommend clipping both wings to prevent a one-sided fall that can result in an injury.

Hormone implants work quite well at reducing the mating urge and the aggression. They are not cheap and require a veterinary visit, but clinicians in Europe that have used such implants tell me that the calming effect is quick. The implants will need to be refreshed periodically, so please consult with your avian veterinarian.

Cockatoos are highly destructive birds in the wild. In every country where I have seen them in the wild, they have spent the greater part of the day destroying their environment. They remove bark from branches, chew leaves, pluck tender shoots, tear open coconuts and more. They are high activity birds that need to be kept occupied. Toys should form part of their everyday life, but enrichment is also important. Pine cones, whole green coconuts, palm seeds, fresh branches, pieces of decomposing wood,

# Who's Your Daddy?



**Stumped?**

**See answer on page**

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freshly cut natural wood and much more should be available to the birds to destroy. They may at first eschew the enrichment but I assure you that once familiarized they will prefer them to any commercial toy available. Keep them busy. This is not simple, but a bird who has burned a lot of energy is less inclined to attack.

When you pet the bird, avoid sexually sensitive areas. For females, this is the vent and back. Pet cockatoos often squat on the perch, vibrate their bodies and grasp their tail with a foot. This is a copulatory stance. Males should not have the vent, back or tail touched, as this can stimulate them. (Many years ago I had Dr Nicole van der Heyden scope a male pet cockatoo. I then played with the bird daily, touching the back and tail. After two months

that bird was endoscoped again. Its gonads had swollen significantly, indicating that my touching had stimulated it into breeding condition.) Pet the bird on the head, upper chest and nape, or preen the crest. Male cockatoos mate by stepping on the hen's back, so the lower body should be avoided.

Never allow the bird to control play periods. Always be informal, as a set schedule in my observation contributes to demands by the birds and bellicose fits when its expected playtime is ignored.

I trust that these words will help those whose pet cockatoo is displaying aggression and will warn potential new owners of the potentially serious implication of owning a cockatoo. 🍆

WHITE OR UMBRELLA COCKATOO (CACATUA ALBA) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY





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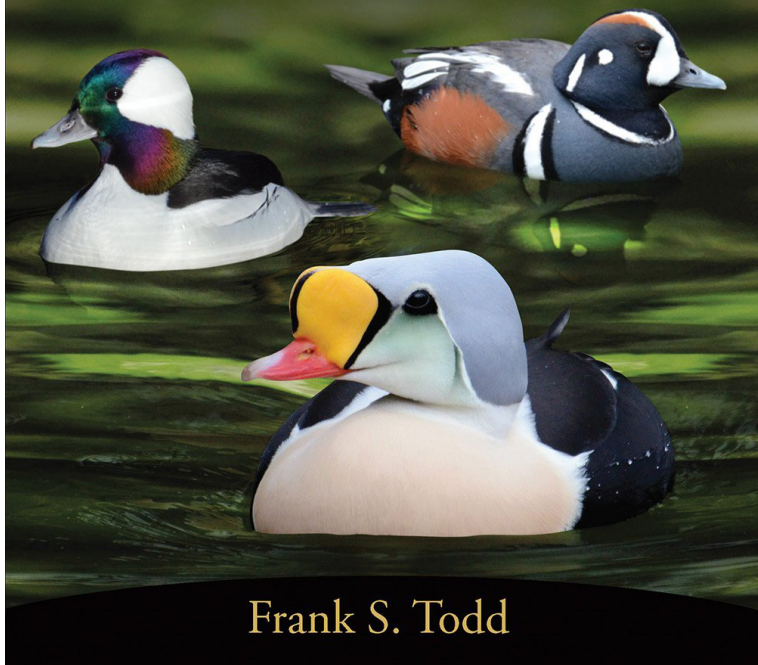
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# NORTH AMERICAN DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS

## IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



Frank S. Todd

In honour of our friend, colleague, and author, Frank Todd, Hancock House is pleased to commit a percentage of all revenues of books sold through our website to the Frank Todd Memorial Foundation to continue to promote the work Frank spent much of his life striving towards- wildlife conservation and education.

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PEKIN ROBIN (LEIOTHRIX LUTEA) PHOTO CAROL STANLEY

## Who's Your Daddy?

From page 29, Answer: Pekin Robin (*Leiothrix lutea*)

The red-billed leiothrix (*Leiothrix lutea*) is a member of the family Leiothrichidae, native to southern China and the Himalayas. Adults have bright red bills and a dull yellow ring around their eyes. Their backs are dull olive green, and they have a bright yellow-orange throat with a yellow chin; females are somewhat duller than males, and juveniles have black bills. It has also been introduced in various parts of the world, with small populations of escapees having existed in Japan since the 1980s. It has become a common cagebird and amongst aviculturists it goes by

various names: Pekin robin, Pekin nightingale, Japanese nightingale, and Japanese (hill) robin, the last two being misnomers as it is not native to Japan 

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For more information, Google "Pekin Robin" or see:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-billed\\_leiothrix#References](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red-billed_leiothrix#References)

# EVENTS

## 2019 EVENTS



**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE - AFA's 45th Annual Educational Conference and Avian Expo** will be held **August 8th – August 10th** B Resort and Spa | 1905 Hotel Plaza Blvd. | Orlando, FL 32830 More info on [www.afabirds.org](http://www.afabirds.org)



**AVICULTURAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA - ASA's 14th Annual Education Conference** in Fall of 2019 will be announced soon. Watch for more details online at [www.asabirds.org](http://www.asabirds.org)

Let us know of your avicultural event to be posted on our Events page at:  
[info@asabirds.org](mailto:info@asabirds.org)



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www.ccasbirds.com

Long Beach Bird Breeders  
6444 Spring St # 132  
Long Beach, CA 90815  
longbeachbirdbreeders@gmail.com

Contra Costa Avian Society  
P.O. Box 23115 Pleasant Hill, CA 94523  
www.contracostaaviansociety.org

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[LoryLeague.org](http://LoryLeague.org)

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National Finch and Softbill Society

Zoological Association of America

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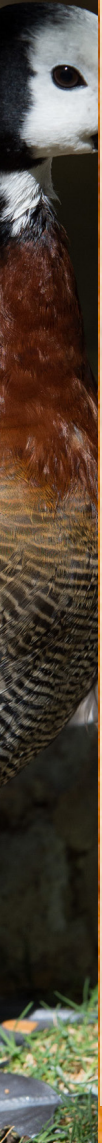
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