

ASA
Avicultural Bulletin



ASA

A JOURNAL FOR BIRD BREEDING, CONSERVATION,
RESTORATION AND EDUCATION

January-February 2021



NEXT ISSUE

**MANAGEMENT AND BREEDING OF
CRACIDS IN CAPTIVITY - Isolee Smith**

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: Kokomo Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) Photo: Lisa Marun. Inside Cover: Greater currawow (*Crax rubra*) Photo: Carol Stanley. © 2012-2021 Avicultural Society of America. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced without express written permission by ASA.

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President's Message

Greetings, fellow Aviculturists:

Welcome to the New Year!

It's bound to be better. Several COVID-19 vaccines are being rolled out and we may have the possibility of normalcy in the very near future.

I can think of no better way to celebrate than to have another ASA/OPA conference. To me, it's like sugar plums dancing in my head. Too much information? Okay.

Now, more than ever, coming together, working together, and supporting the future of aviculture is paramount. Using whatever methods are available to you—be they time, money, ideas—just contribute to protect our right to keep birds.

As you may know, Lisa Marun is a powerhouse that has helped tremendously on editing and providing photos and just being a great supportive person for our e-Bulletin. Lisa has written our feature article this month on Papuan hornbills (*Rhyticeros plicatus*), which you may or may not know is a species that is dear to my heart and living in my household. You can see pictures of Kokomo and Teddy here and get to know Teddy here. Thank you Lisa, you brilliant human being. Be sure to check out award winning Lisa's [photography site](#).

Lou Megens. You are unbelievable! The love and appreciation you have for your birds can be palpated in every word you write about them. Thank you! I don't even ask. It's like Christmas when I get your emails!

And last, but not least, Jim Sorenson's Birds in Shoes offering epitomizes 2020 like no other could. Check it out on page [19](#).

Aviculture. Go forward into 2021 with purpose and direction, and let's meet once again next fall if the timing is right.

Carol Stanley,

President, YOUR Avicultural Society of America

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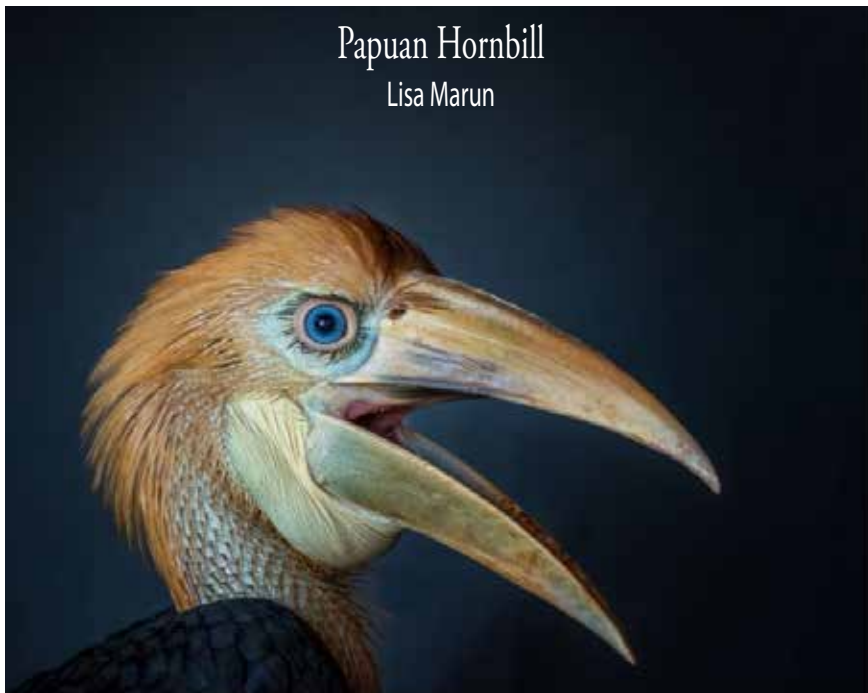
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Papuan Hornbill

Lisa Marun



Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) male, two months old. Photo: Lisa Marun

A Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) really does need a lot of room to spread its wings. These birds' wings are made for an impressive—and surprisingly audible—flight, with a wingspan of around 60 inches that will delight the eyes and ears of anyone lucky enough to see one in motion. Even standing still, Papuan hornbills are on the larger end of the hornbill species size range (measuring about three feet as adults).

What's in a name?

Papuan hornbills, sometimes called Papuan wreathed hornbills, are found north to northeast of Australia, throughout Indonesia and Melanesia. Sulawesi, Lombok, Sumbawa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and—yes—Papua New Guinea are among the many places that these birds call home. If you speak Tok Pisin, or New Guinea Pigin, you're likely to refer to *R. plicatus* as *kokomo*.

Rhyticeros plicatus (sometimes placed in the genus *Aceros*) are also known by another name: Blyth's hornbill. The English zoologist Edward Blyth (1810-1873) is known for his association with the Royal Asiatic Association of Bengal, where he served as the museum's curator for over two decades. While there, he published [Catalogue of the Birds of the Asiatic Society](#)

(1849) and corresponded regularly with Charles Darwin, who held Blyth in high regard. In the first chapter of [On the Origin of Species](#), Darwin wrote: ...*Mr. Blyth, whose opinion, from his large and varied stores of knowledge, I should value more than that of almost any one...*

Edward Blyth also authored *The natural history of the Cranes* (1881) and edited the 1840 English edition of Georges Cuvier's *Animal Kingdom* "Mammalia, Birds, and Reptiles" section. He identified dozens of previously unknown species of reptiles and amphibians—three of these bear his name, as well as twelve avian species, including Blyth's hornbill.



Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) 12 and 14 days old. Photo: Lisa Marun

Distribution and distinctions

Six Papuan hornbill subspecies have been described based on their distinct ranges:

R. p. plicatus (South Maluku Islands)

R. p. ruficollis (North Maluku Islands and Papua New Guinea)

R. p. jungei (Eastern New Guinea)

R. p. dampieri (Bismark Archipelago)

R. p. harterti (Bougainville Island and Buka Island)

R. p. mendanae (Solomon Islands)



Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) seven weeks and six-day-old. Photo: Lisa Marun

On the whole, *R. plicatus* are on the IUCN's Least Concern list, with most subspecies thriving within the lowland primary and secondary forests of their native lands. Despite some hunting pressure due to tribal groups' culturally-based use of the birds' feathers and bills, the Papuan hornbill is securely maintaining healthy population numbers.

So what makes a kokomo unique? Adults have black bodies, wings, and feet, and white tails. Their unfeathered throat skin is also white, with a bluish tint, and another blush of blue is seen around the eyes. As for two of the typical hallmark hornbill features, a casqued yellow-brown upper mandible enlarges and develops furrows with age, and gorgeous eyelashes that appear at a young age are hard to ignore.

While adult females are smaller than males, the truly distinguishing feature between the genders is that males' neck feathers, rather than being black, are a rufous color.



Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) male, three weeks. Photo: Lisa Marun



Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) male, aged six weeks. Photo: Lisa Marun



Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) male, nine weeks. Photo: Lisa Marun

Also, while immature birds' eyes range from a blue to a gray-brown depending on subspecies, adult

males' eyes are distinctly more red when compared to adult females' brown eye color.

The life of a Papuan hornbill

Fruit, insects, and small animals make up the buffet of food items Papuan hornbills enjoy. And like other hornbills, females receive their meals by special delivery from their partners during the long incubation and nesting period when they are holed up in a large tree hollow about 50-100 feet above ground. The female first plasters herself in (sometimes with more or less help from the male depending on the individual pair) with a mixture of fruit and wood pulp, mud, and feces. Then she, and eventually her young chicks (usually two per clutch), are reliant on the male for their nutritional needs for several months.

Papuan hornbills make a wide array of vocalizations, ranging from grunts and honks to the sort of tweets one might expect from a much smaller bird. As mentioned earlier, aside from their vocalizations, one of the most impressive sounds Papuan hornbills make is that of the powerful *whoosh, whoosh* of their wings while in flight.

Socially, Papuan hornbills forage in pairs or family groups, but can also be seen in flocks of about 50 members that break off from larger roosting groups made up of hundred of birds.

Papuan hornbills in captivity

Papuan hornbills can be found in captivity around the world, including in [more than 25 European zoos](#). Until a few years ago, a handful of them could be seen [in zoos in the United States](#), including at San Diego Zoo, Saint Louis Zoo, and Lincoln Park Zoo.

Today, there are likely no more than 12-15 in the United States, none of which are living at zoos. Steve Duncan—founder and owner of [Avian Resources](#), accomplished nature photographer, current National Avian Welfare Alliance president, former ASA president, interim president of the Organization of Professional Aviculturists, and wearer of multiple other hats—has, or has bred, four of these individuals.

Steve has a breeding pair of *R. p. ruficollis*. The male is approximately 30 years old and the female, formerly part of the San Diego Zoo collection, is approximately 10 years old. Paired in March of 2016, they went to nest a few months later, and hatched and parent-fed a chick that died in the nest at about a month of age. The cause of death was not determined since the nest was not being disturbed by inspections. The following two years, the pair laid eggs but failed to hatch any.

It was decided to pull eggs for artificial incubation in 2019, which resulted in offspring for the first time—a male and a female hand-reared from hatching. In 2020, again, two offspring (both males) were hand-reared after incubator hatching.

While the offspring from 2019 remain in Steve’s collection, one of the males born in 2020, Kokomo, is now an animal ambassador representing his species at the [Embery Institute for Wildlife Conservation](#). The other, Teddy (Theodore Roosevelt), has his own fandom and is known and loved by many of our members who regularly see him showing off on ASA President [Carol Stanley’s Facebook page](#).

Breeding and care essentials

Housing

Steve houses his pair of *R. p. ruficollis* in an aviary approximately 30 feet by 15 feet and 10 feet high. A [plywood nest box is provided](#) that is about 20 square inches on the bottom and top and 36 inches high. As the nest box should be set near the top of the enclosure, this one is set about two feet from the top, with the bottom of it being five feet up off the ground.

To accommodate the natural *sealing in or mudding in* nesting behavior described above, the front of the nest box is doubled ¾-inch plywood, but some two-by-fours were added around the entrance to give more surface to mud up. The entrance is about four inches wide and nine inches tall, with the bottom of the hole about eight inches up from the floor. Unlike most parrots, hornbills generally prefer a nest entrance that is located closer to the floor of the nesting chamber, which allows the female to be fed by the male while incubating and also allows her to defecate out of the nest.



Papuan hornbill (*Rhyticeros plicatus*) male, 30 years, and nest box.
Photo: Steve Duncan

Diet & Rearing

With regards to diet, Steve has created a menu of nutritious food items that his birds enjoy, while some individual preferences for particular items can also be seen.

Adults: The basic adult daily diet is chopped papaya and blueberries mixed with [ZuPreem® Low-Iron Softbill Diet](#) or [Mazuri® Softbill Diet for Iron-Sensitive Birds](#). Other fruits, such as loquats, bananas, and grapes are added periodically. To this mix, a smaller amount of soaked cat kibble is added, along with small mice and superworms. The mice and worms are often ignored outside of the breeding season though. Also, the exact amounts and ratios of the food items will vary depending on factors, including individual preferences, gender, time of year (breeding vs. non-breeding), and activity level. Also, although hornbills get most, if not all, of the water they need in the food they eat, water is provided in large, relatively shallow containers and used by the birds for cleaning and cooling off.

Chicks: Hand-reared chicks are fed the same diet as the adults with the exception that newly hatched chicks are fed a version that has been turned into slurry in a blender with extra water to keep them hydrated. This is fed every two to three hours throughout the day. Chicks are not fed from about midnight to 7 AM since Steve likes to get a full night's sleep!

Once the chicks are around a week of age and growing steadily, they are transitioned to the adult (non-slurry) food. The chicks eagerly take this from hand or forceps. Hornbills can begin feeding themselves when they are very young, so at around three weeks of age, a bowl of food is provided in their brooder tub.

Chicks are kept in plastic tubs until they are around seven or eight weeks of age when they are moved to a fledgling cage of three cubic feet. There, they can explore a bit more and begin perching. By this time, they have been self-feeding for several weeks, but they are still very happy to accept food given to them by hand. In fact, both Kokomo and Teddy seem to have something in common with the ancient Roman nobility. They continue to effectively employ their sweet, longing gaze on those who try to put a food bowl in front of them until they are hand fed by their family members!

Once the chicks are ten to twelve weeks old and expertly hopping from perch to perch in the fledgling cage, they are moved to outdoor aviaries where they can stretch their huge wings and practice flying.

Temperament and adaptability

Comparing the four Papuan hornbills that live with Steve (the breeding pair and the male and female that were born in 2019), as well as Kokomo (at the Embery Institute) and Teddy

(part of Carol Stanley's family), it's interesting to note the similarities and differences among them.

All of the birds seem to share a desire to bond—either with their primary human caretaker(s) or with each other. Steve's breeding pair showed an interest in each other as soon as they were placed in adjacent flights. The male immediately began offering food to the female through the wire divider. He probably hadn't seen another of his kind in many years, so he was very anxious to make a good first impression with this lovely lady. Fortunately, she was very receptive to his offerings. The breeding aviary for this pair was under construction at the time, so they would wait a few months until it was completed before being placed together. They wasted no time after moving to their breeding flight on March 1, the female was beginning to mud-in on March 23, and was completely mudded in by March 30.

Between the brother and sister that Steve has, he's noted that they often sit side-by-side, especially at night. These two have been raised together and have never been separated, but they've also had minimal human interaction other than hand rearing. While not afraid of people, they are wary and try to keep their distance from any people that approach by moving to the back perches of their aviary or waiting until there's nobody around before approaching the food bowls.

Kokomo is likely exposed to the most diverse environment of all of his (hornbill) family members. His new family includes a vast range of humans and about thirty different species of animals that he sees and/or hears regularly on the property, not including the wildlife all around. He lives 'next door' to the laughing kookaburra, and across from him is the red kangaroo.

His caretakers include the facility manager, Pinky Wall, who sees Kokomo every day, as well as a scheduled rotation of staff and volunteers, since exposure to—and comfort with—a wide variety of both people and animals is important for all animal ambassadors' well-being and safety during presentations. While Kokomo is constantly surrounded by and interacting with (visually and audibly) his animal family, he is most bonded with the Institute manager and a handful of the staff and volunteers.

There are very few people he has not developed at least some degree of a relationship with, and even with those he is not particularly close to, he has never shown aggression—rather, he will distance himself by flying to another perch in his spacious enclosure. For those of us fortunate enough to have developed a close bond with Kokomo, I can personally attest to his playful nature—he's my personal hair stylist and he rings his bell when his barking or laughing vocalizations don't get our attention—and to his gentleness: he tweets like a tiny bird and will close his eyes and

begin to slide off his perch when he's 'in the zone' while being pet.

Teddy, who lives in a U-shaped house with two standard poodles, a flamingo, and a bipedal mom and dad, has a very different physical and social reality from that of Steve's birds and Kokomo. In fact, however, Carol and Teddy have unwittingly teamed up to create their own amusing and educational documentation of life in the Stanley household. As his own animal ambassador, [Teddy has shown us](#) how he bathes, stops to use a toothbrush between dunking for pinkies, trains for a career as a vintner, and rocks out to music while helping Carol organize her office (or at least he does a good job of overseeing her work!).



The author (L) and Pinky with Kokomo, each of them wearing personalized embroidery created by Carol Stanley. Photo: Grace Sinclair

While nothing beats getting to know a Papuan hornbill in person, you can enjoy the journey of getting to know these birds from afar by visiting the links within these pages. Physically, behaviorally, and socially, these are great birds for aviculture enthusiasts and professionals alike to watch and learn about.

About the Author

Lisa Marun's life purpose is to engage, empower, and inspire people to be more effective environmental stewards. Although her love of nature is deep and broad, her curiosity about the avian world began about twenty years ago when she began assisting in the care of a large and diverse private collection of birds. Lisa's interest in Papuan hornbills is very personal. Thanks to Steve Duncan and Kokomo's great patience, she was able to document much of [Kokomo's early development](#), and thanks to Joan Embery, Lisa continues to be bonded with Kokomo where she works at the [Embery Institute for Wildlife Conservation](#).

Lisa is grateful to Steve Duncan for his feedback and his generous sharing of his Papuan hornbill expertise, as well as Carol Stanley for her support and input in the writing of this article.



Ringo

The Tale of Two Chatty Robin-chats

Lou Megens

Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) Photo: Lou Megens

Only two years ago, I described the (unplanned) hand rearing of a white-browed robin-chat (*Cossypha heuglini*), or Heuglin's robin, in detail for you. From the hatching of a damaged egg in an incubator to a beautiful free-flying bird in our living room, that was Dodo's story. Now this is Ringo's story.

An enthusiastic robin-chat arrives

This year, I was again surprised by a similar situation. My pair of snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) were still brooding late in the year. I placed a loose newly-arrived cock snowy-crowned robin-

chat in an adjacent aviary with a hen who had recently lost her mate. Though adjacent, the two aviaries are out of sight of one another.

The new male robin-chat was clearly enthusiastic and sang all day long. Apparently, that affected not only his new aviary mate, but also the neighboring brooding couple. Before long, two couples were singing!

Since I hardly saw the brooding hen during the entire incubation period, but now suddenly saw her singing on a perch just one day before the anticipated hatching, I performed a nest check-up. The two eggs I found



Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) eggs. Photo: Lou Megens

were cold as stone! I was really convinced that life was no longer possible and opened one egg to see at what stage the embryo had died. A nearly fully grown embryo with a small outer yolk sac lay in the palm of my hand. Probably because of the contact with my body heat, I saw a slight movement!

Persevering despite the odds

Feeling guilty because I judged that the arrival of a new, very vocal bird had likely disrupted the brooding pair with its infectious enthusiasm, I wondered if I might be able to limit the extent of the negative consequences. As the brooding pair would not breed again, I decided to try to salvage one, if not both, of the chicks.

With the incubator at 37.6 °C, I quickly put both the chick whose egg I'd opened and the cold egg in it. As expected, the chick died quite quickly. I didn't have much hope for the egg, either. Even if it could still hatch, I thought it wouldn't be healthy. But after 20 hours, the egg hatched and a tiny chick squirmed in the palm of my hand! It was September 23. We called him Ringo.

With perseverance, I did my best to try to make this chick's survival a success story. For the first five days, I fed it [NutriBird A19 High Energy](#) paste. It contains the probiotics and enzymes that are absolutely necessary for young birds in their



Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) chick day zero. Photo: Lou Megens



Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) chick day one.
Photo: Lou Megens

the temperature. As the weather became more mild, I left the incubator off during the day—it never got colder than 20 °C in the living room anyway. At night, the incubator was still on at a comfortable 25 °C.

Ringo sings his tune

Ringo grew rapidly and, of course, became very affectionate. On day 8, he was ringed with a 3.8 mm

first days. I kept the temperature at 37.6 °C and immediately placed the chick in a coconut fiber nest for the necessary grip and support. Oh, yeah—and I fed Ringo as much as he would eat every hour from 6 AM to 9 PM.

After those first five days, I switched Ringo's diet to moist, homemade egg food with pinkies, buffalo/lesser mealworms, and crickets, which were supplemented with [Avian TrioVit-Nutriboost](#) multivitamins and minerals. He also regularly ate white (just shed) mealworms, dusted with [Gistocal](#) for the added vitamins, minerals, and resistance to illness. His stools were always well formed, and he never had diarrhea (which Dodo experienced while I raised him).



Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) chick day eight.
Photo: Lou Megens

As soon as Ringo's feather shafts came through, I gradually lowered



Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) chick day 11
Photo: Lou Megens

Lou Megens has been caring for, breeding, photographing, and writing about birds since his early youth. Born in the Brabant Valkenswaard, Netherlands, Lou has expertise in European aviculture that he has shared in many publications, including three books written in Dutch: [*Europese cultuurvogels in opmars*](#), [*'t Jaar rond*](#), and [*Dappere Dodo*](#). You can see what Lou is up to on his [Facebook page](#).

closed ring. Within two weeks, he left the nest, and at 13 days, he was already on a perch roosting! At three weeks, he independently ate both live buffalo and white mealworms! Incredibly fast!

I took a picture daily to document Ringo's progress. Now (October 23), he is one month old and is completely comfortable with me and my wife, and he regularly spends time on our heads and shoulders. Usually, he flies freely in the living room. When I sit on the couch next to my wife and we chat a bit, Ringo joins in and starts mumbling his tune. That is why I know for sure that he is a male. So, in addition to Dodo, Ringo is now also a keeper in our colorful household!



Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) chick day twenty.
Photo: Lou Megens



Snowy-crowned robin-chats (*Cossypha niveicapilla*) chick day thirty.
Photo: Lou Megens

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of-a-kind items to benefit the Mabula
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Jim Sorenson, Birds in shoes. Jim's Maribou stork in shoes pretty well sums up the vibe of 2020.

About

I enjoy nature and adding something out of the ordinary. All my drawings are available online [here](#).





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until women joined the research



For more than 150 years, scientists have considered bird song to be a male trait. Image: REUTERS

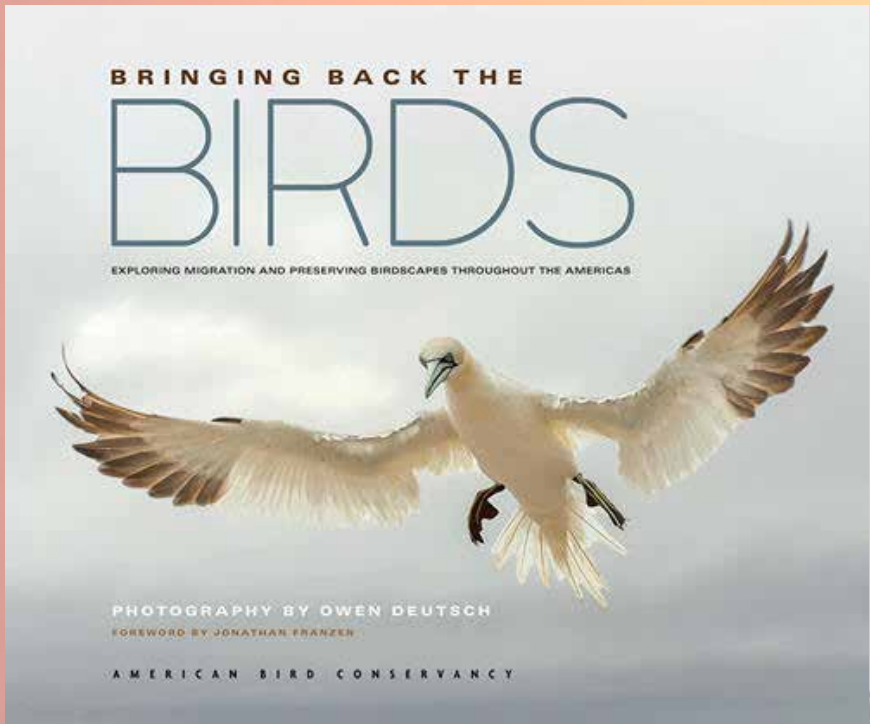
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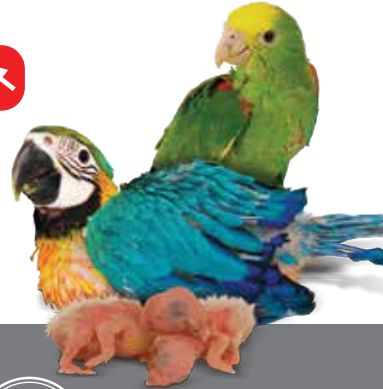
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Who's Your Daddy?



Photo: Lisa Marun

Stumped? See answer on page 30



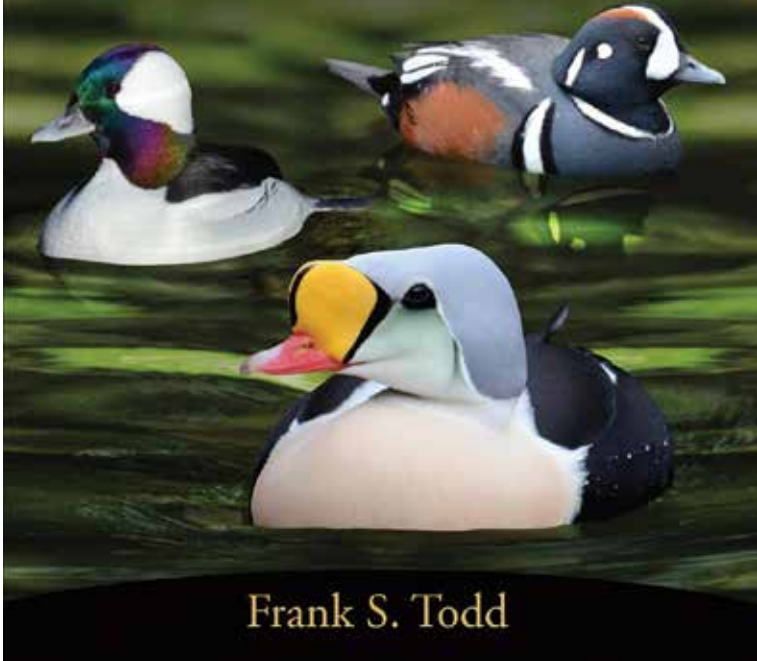
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Frank S. Todd

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Slender-billed parakeet (*Enicognathus leptorhynchus*) Photo: Lisa Marun

Who's Your Daddy?

From page 27, Answer:

Slender-billed parakeet (*Enicognathus leptorhynchus*)

The slender-billed parakeet, also called the long-billed parakeet (*Enicognathus leptorhynchus*), is a medium size South American parrot. It belongs to the smaller long-tailed Arinae (macaws and parakeets). It is known by the local common name choroy.

Distribution and habitat

The slender-billed parakeet is endemic to southern Chile. Its natural habitat is temperate forests, and its range stretches from central Chile, at the level of Mount Aconcagua, down to the island of Chiloé and the continental section of the country. The birds are social and flock together in large numbers. They are not especially afraid of

humans, and the sighting of flocks in urban areas is not uncommon.

The species is reported to be locally common and is in the IUCN Red list category Least Concern.



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

EVENTS

2021 EVENTS

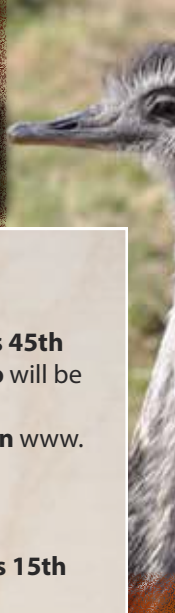


AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE - AFA's 45th Annual Educational Conference and Avian Expo will be held **August 12-14, 2021**
Hilton Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport More info on www.afabirds.org



AVICULTURAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA - ASA's 15th Annual Education Conference Fall 2021
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Let us know of your avicultural event to be posted on our Events page at:
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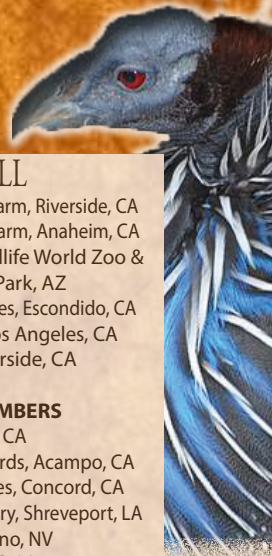
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