





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: European nuthatch (*Sitta europea*) Photo Lou Megens. Inside Cover: Javan Green Magpie (*Cissa thalassina*) Photo: Jonathan Beilby © 2012-2020 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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May/June 2020

President's Message



Greetings, fellow Aviculturists:

As this issue came together, it was apparent we are very lucky to have some of the most brilliant aviculturists contributing their expertise and true-life experiences to share with our readers far and wide.

The information you garner from the pages within has been applied over and over in the aviaries of our authors. Their contributions are the multitude of threads that make up the beautiful tapestry we call "aviculture."

Let's not forget the photographs that bring these pages to life. Their contribution tells the important pictorial story that accompanies each article.

It is very rewarding for me to reach out to a total stranger that is an aviculturist and ask for an article for the ASA e-Bulletin. It is even more rewarding to get a positive response—along with the promise of one or more articles, which they deliver!

I have long passed the age of being fearful of asking for something. Within the aviculture community, when you ask, most times you receive a positive response. Okay—some people will screen your call knowing you want another article—but, when we're seeking information, aviculturists will share their experience. I've learned to just ask.

The enticement to me of aviculture is the continual opportunity to learn. You will NEVER know it all. Nobody does. And there lies the investigative part of you to take the reins and write or call another aviculturist, or two, for that pearl of wisdom. The purpose of the ASA e-Bulletin is to share the combined wisdom of hundreds of years experience. Enjoy!

Stay safe and stay well!

Yours truly,

Carol Stanley
President, YOUR Avicultural Society of America

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Breeding European Nuthatches

Sitta europea

Lou Megens





relevant to nuthatch aviculture. I did not even have the benefit of a good breeding report, which would have helped me learn from both the successes and mistakes of fellow breeders.

Breeding European Nuthatches

By Lou Megens

In addition, at the time, the limited literature about Eurasian nuthatches was also inaccurate. I encountered repeated references to the notion that males and females were sexually monomorphic, and that feather sexing or an endoscopic gender determination would therefore

It often takes a few years before you get to know a certain bird really well. It seems that you have all available information immediately within reach (especially in this time with smartphones), but suddenly the practice turns out to be slightly different, or you see things that are not described in any of your resources.

That's how it went when I started with a pair of Eurasian nuthatches (*Sitta europaea*) many years ago. Reviewing the literature available at the time did provide interesting information, but little of it was



EUROPEAN NUTHATCH COCK *SITTA EUROPEA* PHOTO LOU MEGENS

be required. In fact, years ago, a DNA certificate was regularly requested when buying nuthatches! But there is a visually noticeable difference between genders by the time they fledge at around three weeks. Depending on the subspecies, the cock shows sharply drawn rusty, buff, or orange-colored flanks and ditto color under the tail, while the hen's coloring is much lighter, with a less-pronounced demarcation.

The Eurasian nuthatch, also known as the wood nuthatch, consists of no fewer than 20 subspecies and is generally divided into three subspecies groups: *caesia*, *europaea*, and *sinensis*. Eurasian nuthatches are found throughout most of Europe, as well as in northwest

Africa and parts of Asia. All nuthatches can climb both up and down tree trunks, which they do by holding on with their sharp nails as they do not use their tails for support—and Eurasian nuthatches are the only European bird species capable of this feat.

Most nuthatches, including Eurasian nuthatches, do not migrate. Where I live in the Netherlands, we are leaving more old trees in the woods where the population of the Eurasian nuthatches lives year-round. As a result, they are thriving today after a previous decline in numbers. From 1990 to 2005, the number of

EUROPEAN NUTHATCH HEN *SITTA EUROPEA* PHOTO LOU MEGENS



nuthatches in the Netherlands has doubled! There are now around 20,000 breeding pairs in the wild in the Netherlands.
Housing Construction and Provisions

I successfully breed a pair of European nuthatches (*S. e. europaea*) that stays together year-round. They do not show any aggression towards each other or towards other birds. In the past, however, nuthatches were regarded as aggressive birds that made each other's lives miserable. Because the nuthatch has been cultivated in aviculture for many generations, this aggressiveness has largely disappeared. As such,

since pairs generally only breed once per season, fledglings can safely stay with their parents, even after the autumn molt.

My birds' housing is a covered aviary of 2 x 2 x 2 meters, with a concrete floor covered with wood shavings. About half a meter from the back, I lay a row of stones in which I place plastic foil. This area contains black sand, some plants, and a few decayed tree trunks. I also assemble a number of thick Scots pine branches as European nuthatches make their nests from bark flakes of this tree species.

PLASTERED NEST ENTRANCE PHOTO MART ROUSSEAU





EUROPEAN NUTHATCH *SITTA EUROPEA* NEST WITH 8 OUT OF 9 FERTILIZED EGGS
BELOW: DAY OLD NUTHATCHES *SITTA EUROPEA* PHOTOS LOU MEGENS





ABOVE: EUROPEAN NUTHATCH *SITTA EUROPEA* NEST WITH 4 DAY OLD CHICKS

BELOW: 10 DAY OLD NUTHATCHES *SITTA EUROPE* PHOTOS LOU MEGENS





ABOVE: EUROPEAN NUTHATCH *SITTA EUROPEA* NEST WITH 16 DAY OLD CHICKS

BELOW: AFTER BANDING NUTHATCHES *SITTA EUROPE* PHOTOS LOU MEGENS



The nest block is made of a waterproof multiplex plate with a thickness of 1.5 cm. The internal floor size is 12 x 15 cm and the height is 25 cm. At 5 cm from the top I made a hole of 3.4 cm diameter without a landing stick. The lid is hinged.

Nuthatches sometimes want to “plaster” in order to narrow the 3.4 cm hole. That urge is sometimes so strong that even if the hole is the appropriate size, a “roof” is plastered over it. If the lid is plastered from the inside, it is quite difficult to break open for nest control! My simple solution when this problem presents is to put a sheet of firm paper under the lid. At check-up, the lid can be pivoted open and you cut a hole in the plasterd paper. In this way, the birds can continue to show off their construction worker talents and you can continue to perform nest checks!

Bathing, Nesting, and Feeding Needs

Bath water is always available to my birds. Even during our frigid winters, all of my birds, including the European nuthatches, still like to bathe!

As for diet, I provide my homemade egg food, which I

supplement with pinkies and mealworms. During the winter period, the nuthatches get some seed, including sunflower seeds, in addition to their normal diet. A cracked walnut is a nice winter treat for them as well! In spring, I supplement the base diet (egg food, pinkies, and mealworms), with unlimited live buffalo worms. They also receive a few wax moth larvae per day. Grit and fine-ground eggshells are also always available.

Our European nuthatches generally start early with their nest, as early as the beginning of April, but sometimes not until May. Normally, between seven and nine eggs are laid, but I’ve also had a nest with as few as four eggs. Larger clutches (up to 11 eggs) are almost exclusively found in the wild. The eggs are milky white with rust-brown spots. They resemble the eggs of a great tit. The dimensions are not particularly large (only 20 x 15 mm) considering the adult bird’s size. The hen is sometimes fed in the nest by the cock while she incubates the eggs for approximately 16 days. Depending on when the eggs are laid, chicks may hatch by the end of April.

If there are chicks, I leave out the brown mealworms and give only



EUROPEAN NUTHATCH HEN *SITTA EUROPEA* WITH
SUNFLOWER SEED PHOTO LOU MEGENS



EUROPEAN NUTHATCH HEN *SITTA EUROPEA*
ON BRANCH PHOTO LOU MEGENS

the white specimens. I have had a number of bad experiences when I give brown mealworms to young chicks—not just those of Eurasian nuthatches, but also with other bird species. Chicks sometimes get spreading legs, hanging wings, and/or develop rotated necks. The brown mealworms can be fed safely once the chicks are two weeks old.

In terms of diet preference, I've found that the white mealworms are the European nuthatches' favorite, followed by the pinkies and buffalo worms.

The chicks stay in the nest for around 23 days, after which they fledge. Both parents feed their offspring, even for a short while after they fledge. Immediately after fledging, the chicks are often a bit shy, but that disappears quickly, so that we can fully enjoy these beautiful birds!

As an aside, the maximum allowable ring size was fortunately adjusted years ago from 2.9 to 3.3 mm. With the old (small) size it was necessary to ring the chicks on the 4th day, while the chicks still have very weak toes. Since nuthatches have very long thumbs over which

the ring must be slid, they were susceptible to damage. With the current ring size of 3.3 mm, the horror stories of toes torn apart and bleeding legs belong to the past, as well as the inevitable removal of the injured chick from the nest by the parents.

Eurasian nuthatches are extremely suitable aviary birds. They have a calm character and a beautiful appearance, and are always tight in feathers and full of energy. They are always interesting to watch: they actively hide and retrieve food, and are often found inspecting the entire cage for something edible. Eurasian nuthatches thrive in our Dutch climate and are not sensitive to any particular diseases. Overall, they tend to be healthy birds with a very beautiful call and song!

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 his book, [*European Birds on the Rise*](#) (2015).



Find out who this eye belongs to in the next issue.

Shipping Birds

Lewis Buddy Waskey IV

There are many bird owners who are not open to having a new bird shipped to them. Unfortunately, this greatly limits the bird options available to them.

Please be opened minded as you read the following information. Unless you have already shipped or received a parrot or other bird by commercial airline, it is understandable that you may have some justifiable fears. The following information may be just the knowledge you need to check those fears.

Available airlines

At writing of this article, we are very limited in terms of which airlines will ship live birds in the United States. The three main airlines that are shipping are Delta, American, and Alaska—though there may be other airlines that ship on a very limited basis. At present, due COVID-19, all shipping of birds is done on nonstop, non-connecting flights.

Shipping policies

Regarding animal carriers, factors including: size; shape; materials used; type and number of water and feed bowls and perches; screening; and reinforcement of the carriers all come under the policies of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). IATA is a global

airline trade association with 290 members in 120 countries.

The IATA policies are mostly enforced by the airlines themselves, but also by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The policies for bird shipping are spelled out in the 46th edition of IATA's Live Animal Regulations Manual (LAR), effective through December 31, 2020. LAR is available in print, floating license, and mobile forms for approximately \$300 (depending on the version you purchase). Beginning mid-September 2020, the 2021 version of LAR will also be available.. Learn more about LAR and IATA here.

Purchasing an IATA manual may not make sense or even be financially feasible for many, but air cargo facilities generally have a copy in their shipping office. Whether you have your own manual or are referring to someone else's older version, be aware that the manuals change often. Also, the policies in the manuals can easily be misinterpreted or misunderstood, including by airline employees who are not familiar with birds. It is also worth mentioning that many of the policies are species-specific.

Booking a reservation and preparing the carrier

Listed below are the current numbers for the three major airlines that provide live animal shipping services:

American Airlines: 1-800-227-4622

Delta Airlines: 1-800-352-2746
Alaska Airlines: 1-800-225-2752

Booking your flight is much the same as booking a flight for yourself. The cost is based on the weight and dimensions of the animal carrier, not the number of stops or the distance traveled.

As mentioned earlier, the IATA manual and its live animal shipping policies can be confusing and can be interpreted differently by those who refer to it. When you book your flight, you may receive information that is different from what you are told when you arrive at the air cargo facility. It is recommended that you study the section of the manual that is pertinent to your shipping situation and refer to this and/or speak with a supervisor when at the facility if there is any confusion.

To get started with the bird carriers, it may be easier to speak to someone who has shipped recently. I can share my personal experience with shipping parrots.

There are two basic carrier styles used for psittacines. One is a plastic carrier that is used for cats and dogs. These carriers need some modifications for shipping parrots. A perch is usually required. Welded wire must cover any opening on the inside to deter the birds from chewing through and escaping. Also, a wire screen is required to protect the airline handlers from being bitten through the carrier. The second type of carrier is custom built from plywood with a perch

and welded wire screen on the inside to prevent escapes and another screen on the outside to protect airline handlers.

All carriers require food and water bowls and shavings or an alternate substrate. Requirements vary from species to species of bird. Also, going to the air cargo department a few days before your flight with your carrier is recommended. A pre-flight inspection by the shipping facility staff may help prevent problems on the shipping day.

Temperatures

One of the biggest fears for those of us shipping birds is that the birds will be put in an unpressurized compartment that is not climate controlled. Rest assured that all live animal shipments are in pressurized, temperature-controlled compartments. The airlines also take into consideration the temperatures of the cities that your birds depart from and arrive at, because the birds have to be outside to go from air cargo to the plane in the departing city and from the plane to air cargo in the arriving city.

While shipping can be stressful for the bird owner, it is perfectly safe for our beloved birds.

A final note for those of you new to shipping birds: I have shipped and received birds and other animals for over 30 years. I have shipped my free-flighted birds from coast

to coast to do demonstrations and visit conferences. Yes Gimpy, Little Edy, Cosmo, Shylor, and Mikhail have all flown in air cargo.

Laney Rickman trusted her blue-throated macaws to be shipped by commercial airlines, and the last birds at the Bird Endowment flew from Austin, Texas to both the East and West Coast. While shipping can be stressful for the bird owner, it is perfectly safe for our beloved birds. I have never seen or experienced a negative effect on birds I have received or shipped on commercial airlines.

About the Author

Lewis “Buddy” Wasky IV is a hands-on kind of guy whilst free-flying birds—no airline needed—with East Wings Freeflight Club. Together with his avicultural know-how, we find it appropriate that he write a piece about shipping birds.

Buddy is also a staunch advocate for aviculture. He has gone to the mat for all of us by fighting proposed laws that would negatively impact our ability to keep birds.

*While shipping can
be stressful for the
bird owner it is
perfectly safe for our
beloved birds.*









Not Steve's Photo Pick

Congo African grey *Psittacus erithacus*
The grey parrot is a medium-sized, predominantly grey, black-billed parrot that is native to equatorial Africa. Its typical weight is 400 g (0.88 lb), with an approximate length of 33 cm (13 in), [2] and a wingspan of 46–52 cm (18–20 in). [3] It has darker grey than its body over the head and both wings. The head and body feathers have slight white edges. The tail feathers are red.

Due to selection by parrot breeders, some grey parrots are partly or completely red.



Pooja Pawar, Hornbill Specialist Group member sent this:

“Indian Grey Hornbill has been seen using holes in the concrete walls for nesting, in urban areas of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh states in India. Attaching a short video taken in this year from Maharashtra.”

There had been one report earlier from Indore, and these are some additional reports. **Click on photo above to see wonderful video.**

Record-Breaking 60,000 Flamingos Flock to Southern France



The Unbelievably Tough Animals of Lake Natron



Mabula Ground Hornbill Project



I decided to draw this crow in a plague mask wearing pink high tops to honor the medical professionals and volunteers that are putting in long hours and risking their lives to care for people with the Covid-19 virus. In the 17th and 18th centuries Doctors invented these masks to protect themselves and prevent contagion. These masks have lenses on the eyes and a long cavity in the nose, which was filled with aromatic items such as ambergris, mint, or rose petals. These were meant to ward the disease away because people believed miasma (bad air) spread the disease. I picked pink for the hightops because pink represents caring, compassion and love and is associated with giving and receiving care. I decided to use a crow because I like crows and they symbolize wisdom as well as intellect and being fearless and strong. This will join my other vtbirds in my Birds in shoes Facebook group -- Jim Sorenson

Jim's artwork is available to decorate your walls, clothing and other items at:
https://www.redbubble.com/shop/?query=jim%20sorensen%20birds%20in%20shoes%20series&ref=search_box





Woman hatches cracked duck egg by carrying it in her bra for 35 days after kids destroyed its nest



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This is a very interesting photo. You are seeing a Black Vulture preening a Crested Caracara. Why is one bird species helping out another? The act is known as Inter-specific allopreening - a symbiotic relationship. I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine sort of thing. As Vultures are circling over a dead carcass and eventually landing to feed, Caracaras will give out warning calls of predators

(something vultures can't do due to lack of a syrinx). So basically, the vultures will give their friends a beauty treatment every once in a while because they want them to stick around! Their lives sometimes depend on it. Nature works in mysterious ways!

Photo: Ron Chiasson

Cockatoo chicks hatch among burnt bushland on Kangaroo Island



Cassowary eggs are green



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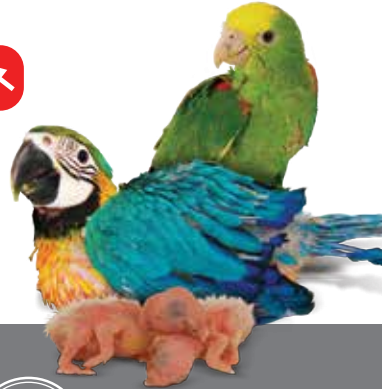
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Who's Your Daddy?



PHOTO TONY SILVA

Stumped? See answer on page 44



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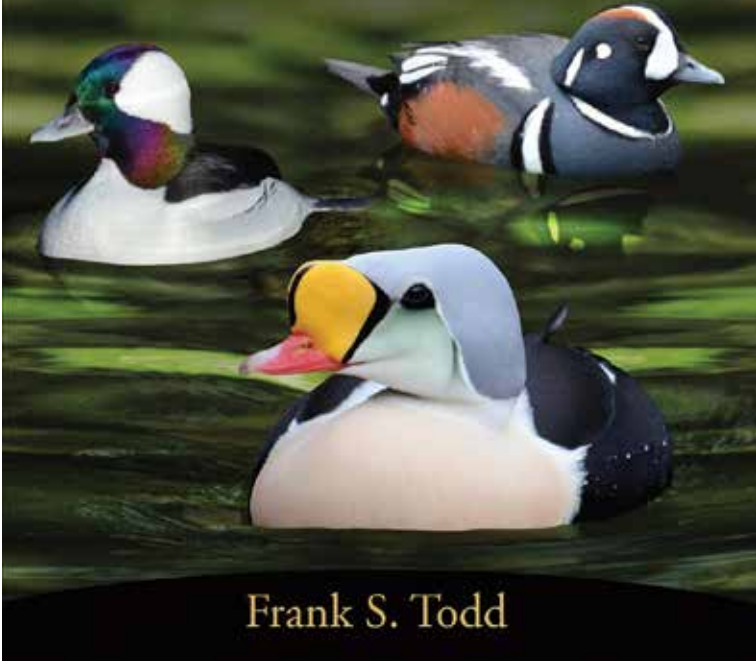
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NORTH AMERICAN DUCKS, GEESE & SWANS

IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



Frank S. Todd

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Help us keep Frank S. Todd's memory alive by continuing the tradition he started with the first Avicultural Society of America Educational Conference. Frank developed the conference and, for many years, arranged for speakers from around the world to attend and make presentations.

Your donation will allow ASA to continue the tradition and help with travel expenses for our conference speakers. <http://asabirds.org/frank-s-todd-memorial-fund/>



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VSLENDER-BILLED COCKATOO *CACATUA TENUIROSTRIS* PHOTO TONY SILVA


Who's Your Daddy?

From page 41, Answer:

Slender-billed cockatoo (*Cacatua tenuirostris*)

The Slender-billed cockatoo also known as the long-billed corella or slender-billed corella (*Cacatua tenuirostris*) is a cockatoo native to Australia, which is similar in appearance to the little corella and sulphur-crested cockatoo. This species is mostly white, with a reddish-pink face and forehead, and has a long, pale beak, which is used to dig for roots and seeds. It has reddish-pink feathers on the breast and belly.

With a conservation status of "least concern" it is actually increasing in population.

These are a delightfully interactive interactive species and sought out in the pet trade for its humorous behavior and confiding nature. 

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia and Carol Stanley

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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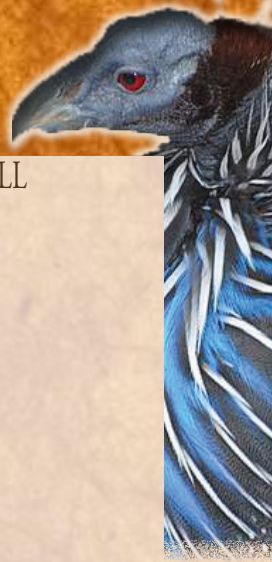
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Closed Sunday,
Monday, and
holidays

TWO
LOCATIONS!

12200 Magnolia Ave.
Riverside, CA
951-278-0878
(closed for vacation first
two weeks of August)

