

AVICULTURAL MAGAZINE

THE JOURNAL OF THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

Vol. 108 - No. 1 All rights reserved ISSN 0005 2256

2002

MY EXPERIENCES BREEDING THE VICTORIA CROWNED PIGEON

by Rosemary Wiseman

Following the publication of the article by Nigel Simpson on breeding the Victoria Crowned Pigeon at Bristol Zoo Gardens (*Avicultural Magazine* Vol.107, No.2, pp.76-84 (2001)) I feel it might be worth recording my own experiences with this species. This is simply because there were substantial differences between my birds and those at Bristol in both the breeding and rearing of the chick. Clearly any private aviculturist would have difficulty in providing the same facilities in terms of space and housing that birds can enjoy in a zoo. My birds happily used a wooden platform fixed about 2m (6ft 6in) above the ground in an aviary with a total height of about 2.7m (8ft 9in). This contrasts markedly with the approximately 6m (20ft) high nesting platforms at Bristol but proves nothing more, I believe, than that if birds are keen to breed they will adapt to the prevailing conditions. My second pair also use a nesting site at a similar height to the first pair but have unfortunately produced only infertile eggs.

Since most pigeons seem to prefer to lay undercover the nesting platform was initially placed inside one of the huts but the pair did not really like it and laid an egg which was immediately abandoned. The egg was incubated and the chick was hand-reared to five weeks but had a badly splayed leg which could not be corrected. The nesting platform was accordingly moved to the side of the flight and, to protect it from rain, rigid plastic sheets were placed on top of the roof above it. The birds had access only from one long side, as the short sides were built up with pieces of wood to prevent the egg from being kicked off the platform. Access to the nest was via a long rustic pole fixed at a right angle to the front. As with the Bristol birds, sticks were provided and a very half-hearted nest was constructed. I had placed a layer of very fine wood chippings on the top of the platform and slightly hollowed out the centre so that any egg laid would not roll about on the platform. This seemed to work well, with the birds arranging the sticks on top of the chippings.

I cannot provide the wealth of data that was collected at Bristol. This is because my pair spent most of the year on their platform either with an infertile egg (twice) or later with a fertile egg from which a chick hatched but died almost immediately. I knew the pair had yet another egg but did not think much about it and it was therefore with some amazement that I heard the unmistakable sound of a pigeon chick soliciting food. As the platform was above my head and I did not want to disturb whatever was going on, I left well alone. About 10 days later I saw the chick's head peering out from the parent bird's breast feathers. It was enormous and obviously not the hatchling I had imagined. It was probably about three weeks old. From that time the chick became increasingly visible. Although brooded constantly by the parents it would push through the breast feathers and stretch upwards to feed by thrusting its beak into the side of the parent's beak.

Unlike the Bristol pair my birds shared the brooding and feeding of the chick fairly equally. In fact if anything the male spent more time brooding the chick, and certainly spent more time with the chick once it had fledged. This may have been because the female was hand-reared and has no fear of human beings. She therefore tends to remain at the front of the aviary and attack anyone who attempts to enter. The male, captive bred but parent reared, is shyer and stays further back in the flight. He certainly seemed to sit from the early morning until about 4.00pm. She took the night shift but was always off the chick and waiting for me when I arrived to feed them in the morning. The birds were given mixed seeds - sunflower mix plus small dove condition seeds, pigeon pellets, extra peanuts (which they love), Witte Molen without iron, and a special pigeon softfood, as well as fruit and grated corned beef.

Once it had fledged at, I assume, the same age as the chick at Bristol, that is 30 days, I was concerned that at night it would become chilled - by this time it was the beginning of September. However from the first night onwards the chick returned to the nesting platform with the parents and all roosted there together. The adult birds proved excellent parents which is not always the case with pigeons. The Victoria Crowned Pigeons however are totally focused on the chick and if it is not right beside them, the male will immediately go looking for it.

The chicks of these big pigeons are completely enchanting. Not only do they share the adult plumage of blue and maroon but they also boast a disproportionally large crest which is an exact copy of that of the parents. The eyes of the chick also seem to be exceptionally large. I have seen the chick raise both wings up above its head and perform a little running dance, and have also seen the parents do this.

THE BREEDING BEHAVIOUR OF A PAIR OF CINEREOUS VULTURES AT LINCOLN ZOO PARK

by Nicole Kehl and Megan R. Ross

Propagation of the Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, also known as the European Black Vulture, has been a challenging task. In 1994, the captive population in North America consisted of an ageing potential founder stock of 21 individuals ranging from 21-36 years of age and an F1 generation of 25 individuals from one to 10 years of age (Diebold, 1994). Today there are a few F2 generation birds (Synder pers. comm.), but many of the offspring have been hand-reared, which may or may not affect the ability of individuals to breed successfully when adult. This paper documents the varying levels of success between 1995 and 2001 of two hand-reared Cinereous Vultures at Lincoln Zoo Park, Chicago, Illinois, USA.

According to the IUCN *Red List* (2000) the Cinereous Vulture is classified as near-threatened. Its current range extends from those European countries where it still survives and North Africa to the Middle East eastwards to Mongolia and China (del Hoyo et al. 1994). This species faces numerous threats to its survival, including habitat destruction, poisoning, illegal hunting, disturbance at nest sites and reduction of food supplies.

This species is not as social as other vultures. For the most part, it is observed singly or in pairs, but can be seen sometimes in small groups of up to six at a carcass. Cinereous Vultures form a monogamous pair bond between the ages of five and six years that is generally life-long. Nests are immense structures of sticks, twigs and grasses, and are re-used year after year with additional material being added each new breeding season (Cramp et al. 1980). This species prefers arboreal sites, but will sometimes use rock ledges or crags.

In the wild egg-laying can take place between February and April (del Hoyo et al. 1994). The clutch usually consists of one egg, but cases of two eggs have been documented. The breeding frequency varies from year to year and from pair to pair. Long before the egg is laid, the pair spend much time together in the nest (Hiraldo, 1983). Both male and female are said to be equally involved in incubation, brooding, feeding, guarding and tending the chick. The incubation period is 50-55 days. Fledging occurs at 100-120 days. The young remain with the adults during the day and will spend nights in the nest until six to eight weeks after fledging (Cramp et al. 1980).

Lincoln Zoo Park added Cinereous Vultures to its collection in October 1987. The current breeding pair has been together since May 1989. Both the male, born in April 1988, and the female, born in May 1987, are captive born and were hand-reared at other North American zoological gardens.



Wiseman, Rosemary. 2002. "My Experiences Breeding The Victoria Crowned Pigeon." *The Avicultural magazine* 108(1), 1-3.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/253459>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/314966>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In Copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder

Rights Holder: Avicultural Society

License: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Rights: <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions/>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.