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## **VISUALLY SEXING THE SENEGAL PARROT** *Poicephalus senegalus* **TOGETHER WITH AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL BREEDING BEHAVIOUR BY THIS SPECIES**

by Paolo Bertagnolio

A reliable way of visually sexing the Senegal Parrot *Poicephalus senegalus* linked to the colour of the under tail-coverts - those of the male being yellow or almost completely yellow and those of the female being green or yellowish-green - was, to my knowledge, mentioned first by Silva (1991), but was subsequently ignored in later ornithological literature by, for example, Borrow & Demey (2001), Collar in del Hoyo et al. (1997), Forshaw (2006) and Juniper & Parr (1998), etc.

A few years ago I realised there is another easy way to distinguish between the male and female adult Senegal Parrot. With the male, the green of the chest ends in a V-shaped pattern which barely reaches the abdomen<sup>1</sup>, whereas with the female the green extends down to the lower abdomen and between the legs. On the internet, an author wrote recently that: "The V-shape of the vest is usually longer in females, the green area extending down over the chest to between the legs, whereas in males the tip of the green area ends midway down the chest." I go along with this, but would exclude the word "usually."

Here in the northern hemisphere the Senegal Parrot tends to breed during the winter months. At the Centro per lo Studio e la Conservazione degli Psittaciformi (CSCP) here in Italy, the female of a pair of the orange-bellied form *P. s. versteri*, for years ignored the nest box and laid in December or January in a hole she excavated in the ground. If not removed just after hatching, the chicks invariably died when only one or two days old.

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<sup>1</sup>The bird belonging to the nominate form depicted by Bill Cooper in *Parrots of the World* by Cooper & Forshaw (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1973) fits this description and is shown to be an adult male.



At the beginning of 2009, the pair was moved to a different flight in which for the first time the female laid in June in a conventional nest box and successfully raised four young, which were left with their parents in an attempt to discourage the pair from nesting again during the winter. In February 2010, however, much to my surprise there were seven birds in the flight and, on checking in the nest box, I discovered a further two chicks ready to fledge. During the following three or four weeks the group was kept under close observation from some distance, through a pair of binoculars, and on two occasions I witnessed one of the freshly fledged young, easily recognised by its almost completely green underparts, being fed by one of its siblings that had hatched the previous year.

No doubt the presence of so many birds in the nest box during the cold winter nights (when the temperature occasionally dropped to  $-1.7^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $-2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $29^{\circ}\text{F}$ - $28^{\circ}\text{F}$ )) helped to generate sufficient warmth to prevent the freshly hatched chicks becoming chilled. Considering the size of the nest box, which measured 18cm x 18cm (7in x 7in) square, the young from 2009 and their parents, must have had to move around very cautiously, so as not to damage the eggs or trample on the freshly hatched chicks. Whether the cooperation of the 2009 young extended to assisting with the incubation of the eggs and/or the care of the chicks while they remained in the nest, must remain a matter of conjecture.

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*It would be interesting to hear from any members who keep and breed the Senegal Parrot, and also anyone who keeps and breeds the Hawk-headed Parrot *Derophtcyus accipitrinus* (see Vol.117, No.2, p.51 (2011)), whether their observations confirm the author's findings. - Ed.*



## LORIKEET EXHIBITS IN UK ZOOS

by Rosemary Low

I bought my first lorries in 1971 and have specialised in these birds ever since. Indeed, my oldest bird, a Yellow-streaked Lory *Chalcopsitta sintillata*, which has now been with me for more than 35 years, originates from that decade. As Curator of Birds at Loro Parque, Tenerife, and Palmitos Park, Gran Canaria, during the late 1980s and 1990s, I was very fortunate to have in my care almost every species of lory in aviculture, excluding certain Australian species which were not permitted to be exported.

I have seen the popularity of lorries and lorikeets in aviculture rise and fall like a big dipper. In the late 1970s, when many species were imported commercially for the first time, they reached the height of popularity. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when dealers brought in large numbers of wild-caught birds at low prices, many breeders sold up. The birds went to dealers who sold them abroad. Gradually the numbers in the UK fell to the low level of the current decade.

In the early 1990s, some zoos in the USA followed the example of San Diego Zoo and set up lorikeet exhibits where the public could feed the birds, which would descend onto their hands to take nectar from tiny pots. The public bought this food and as a result the idea that money can be made from such exhibits gradually spread to the UK. New lorikeet exhibits, usually with Rainbow (Swainson's) Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus moluccanus* or Green-naped Lorikeets *T. h. haematodus*, are still being opened.

Unfortunately, some of these leave a lot to be desired. It seems that lorikeets are being exploited - the commercial aspect apparently taking priority over proper management. As an example of good management, Paradise Park in Cornwall can hardly be bettered. Indeed, staff from other lorikeet exhibits have visited Paradise Park to learn the correct method. This approach is to be recommended, especially if they act on what they have learned.

### Source of stock

### Quarantine methods

There are some important lessons that need to be learned by any zoo that is considering opening a lorikeet exhibit. At Paradise Park, Curator David Woolcock had the good sense to set up pairs of Rainbow and Green-naped Lorikeets well in advance of the exhibit opening and to breed the required birds. Indeed, from the initial 10 Rainbow Lorikeets acquired from a UK breeder in 2004, well over 60 young have been reared. These young are used in the exhibit, not the breeding pairs. The advantage was that the birds were



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