The definition of the word “austral” is “southern”; and, as that name implies, the Austral Conure occupies the most southerly range of any parrot. Its native habitat is Southern Chile and Argentina extending to the island of Tierra del Fuego.

There are two types of Austral Conures. The Magellan Conure, Encogathus ferruginea, is a fairly large conure averaging fourteen inches in length. E. ferruginea minor, the Chilean Conure, differs from the Magellan only in its slightly smaller size of twelve inches. The overall color of the Austral is dark green, fading to a paler shade on the breast and abdomen. The feathers are heavily bordered with black, predominately on the head and back, thus giving a scalloped appearance to the plumage. This effect and the presence of feathers densely covering the cere are characteristics shared with the Slender-billed Conure which is the only other member of the genus. In the Austral, the feathers on the cere are reddish-brown, encircled by a small, dark grey, naked eyering. The beak is black with the tip of the lower mandible being somewhat more gray in color. The beak is proportionately smaller than that of the Aratinga family of conures. The primaries and primary coverts are green tinged with blue. The tail is maroon, and this color is repeated in a large patch in the center of the abdomen. I have also noticed small areas of this same maroon color on the upper thighs of my young Australs. In immature birds the abdominal patch is slightly less extensive. As with many parrots, the Austral is not sexually dimorphic.

While the Slender-billed Conure, E. leptorhynchus, is now frequently imported, the Austral Conure is seldom available and I was pleased to have the opportunity to obtain a pair of the Magellan variety from Gene Hall of Fortune Glen Aviaries. The birds arrived in good condition in May of 1979, and shortly after their arrival I arranged to have them surgically sexed by laparoscopy. I have found surgical techniques invaluable not only for determining gender, but also as a means of revealing sexual maturity and internal disease problems which may not be evident upon external examination. When performed by a competent veterinarian, this procedure can provide maximal information regarding maturity and health while involving little risk to the bird’s life.

After they were ascertainment to be a pair, the Australs were housed in a 4' x 4' x 3' cage constructed of ½” x 1” welded wire. A wooden nest box was lined on the in-
Austral conure in a raphis palm. Note how the cere is feathered.

BE A WATCH BIRD

A major purpose of the WATCH-BIRD is to monitor legislative events at the national level which might adversely affect aviculture. We, however, cannot follow events that take place at the state and local levels of government. We, therefore, call upon the readers to keep us informed of similar legislative attacks in the lower levels of government. We would like to publish the various threats to aviculture, and what the final outcome was. Perhaps your story will aid someone else in keeping aviculture unencumbered by government. Editors.

Austral conures, like other parrots, have smaller bills than other conures! Pine shavings were placed in the box to a depth of four inches, and this was the only nesting material used.

The birds were fed a seed mixture consisting of striped sunflower seed, safflower, scratch, white millet, canary seed, and oat groats. Their daily diet also included a mixture of finely crumbled whole wheat bread, grated carrots, and chopped endive sprinkled with a powdered vitamin and mineral supplement. Fresh corn on the cob was given each day, and fresh apple was fed five times a week. Mineral blocks supplying calcium were available to the birds at all times.

From my experience in breeding many types of psittacine birds, I have learned to be patient; and, therefore, I was not surprised to observe that the Australs did not begin copulating until mid-January of 1980 (though they were always compatible). During this period and the months that followed, the pair began to "work" the nest box by spending more time inside it, and by removing some of the nesting material and chewing the areas of the box not protected by wire.

The first week in April I noticed that the hen appeared very swollen in the vent area—a condition often seen in hens which are about to lay. On April 6th while inspecting the box, I found the first egg. On April 8th, the hen was seen sitting on the perch, again very swollen at the vent. There was no second egg in the box, and this combined with her lethargic behavior led me to believe that she was egg-bound.

Although I knew that she had been consuming sufficient calcium in the form of mineral block and cuttlebone, I suspected that she was unable to fully utilize this essential mineral. For this reason, I began to supplement her diet with large doses of Super-Hygliceron B and other sources of Vitamin D-3 which is necessary for the absorption of calcium. The effectiveness of this treatment was apparent when, after four anxiety-filled days, the second egg was expelled. Thereafter, as is usual with conures, eggs were laid on alternate days. In all, a total of six eggs were laid.

The hen alone sat tightly during an uneventful incubation period of approximately twenty-six days. The male was not seen to enter the box or feed the hen. The only interruption of incubation occurred when I candled the eggs after two weeks which determined that three of the eggs were fertile and the remainder were clear. Following the return of the eggs to the nest box, the parents resumed incubation without hesitation.

On the morning of May 4th the first chick was found to have hatched in the box. The two remaining eggs hatched on alternate days. The amounts of soft food, particularly fresh yellow corn and bread mixture, were increased as the parents relied heavily on these foods for feeding the young birds. The Australs were con-
Austral conure

Austral conure showing the maroon on the thigh and abdomen.

scientious parents, always feeding the chicks adequately.

When the youngest chick was three weeks old, all three babies were removed from the nest for hand-feeding. This was done to encourage the parents to produce another clutch during that breeding season. The young Australs thrived on the formula that I use for hand-feeding all my psittacine birds. This formula is the one described by Velma Hart in Parrots and Related Birds by Bates and Busenbark. To this formula I add Science Diet brand Primate Dry (monkey chow).

Three weeks after the chicks were removed, the Austral hen began laying a second clutch of five eggs. Unfortunately, this entire clutch was found to be infertile. The birds had not been observed mating during this period, and I feel certain that the male was not in peak condition as he was in a heavy moult.

Recently, the two baby Australs from last year’s breeding which are still in my possession were laparascoped and found to be a pair.

POSTSCRIPT: May 4, 1981, the hen laid her first egg of this season, and we are hoping for success this year.
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NOTICE

For a more centralized and convenient administration, the A.F.A. is consolidating its various functions under one roof in a new home office. The office will be run by a well paid office manager who will be directly responsible to the A.F.A. president and executive committee.

Don't panic if you've mailed something to the old office address - P.O. Box 327, El Cajon, CA 92022. It will remain active for some time.

The new office is located in the greater Los Angeles area very convenient to the Los Angeles airport. The address is:

A.F.A. Home Office
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1981 HATCH, ROSELLAS, priced per bird: Golden Mantie $100, Pennant $300, Mealy $175, 1980 Meals $400 per pair; also pheasants and quail. Ed Benhardt, Reardon, Washington 99029. Phone (509) 790-5001.


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