Raising Hawk-headed Parrots: More Questions than Answers
by Sherry Rind
Redmond, Washington

When Anna Colbeck purchased a young pair of Hawk-headed Parrots nearly ten years ago, she thought to herself, “This pair is going to breed.” Not long out of quarantine, they were wild but not frightened of people, having been partially hand fed but not socialized as pets. Due to their mostly brown foreheads streaked with white, they are possibly of the subspecies Deroptyus accipitrinus fuscifrons (according to the description in Forshaw’s Parrots of the World).

She named them Maggie and Jiggs and, not having a cage ready at the time, released them into an 80 by 30 foot greenhouse where they have remained ever since. Their “L” shaped nest box, about 18” by 24” deep, hangs from the ceiling. They make a game of dive-bombing any strangers who enter the greenhouse, coming close enough to touch the people with their wingtips, making them duck. When Anna comes in with the food buckets, they come down to investigate what’s for dinner; otherwise they keep to themselves.

When Anna attempted to put another pair in a cage in the same building, Maggie and Jiggs flew at the cage, harrassing the new birds. The second pair, nervous birds that were wild but not frightened of people, having been partially hand fed, was too stressful. It died at 65 days of age.

Handfed Hawk-headed Parrots can be quite tame, often showing their colorful crown. This youngster is three months of age.

Hawk-headed Parrot babies do not show color in their feathers at three weeks of age.

Weight Charts for Hawk-heads Hatched 1991
(given at intervals although birds were weighed daily)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Age in Days</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>9/5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>9/25</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/30</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/8</td>
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Died—calcium in kidneys

Hatched 1991

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<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
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Second Clutch

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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Weight now measured in grams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Weight</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>17</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>235</td>
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</table>

Handfed Hawk-headed Parrots can be quite tame, often showing their colorful crown. This youngster is three months of age.

“As soon as they went in, they threw their bonnets up and made happy noises.” She has doubts, however, as to whether this pair will ever breed due to their extreme nervousness.

She fed her Hawkheads the same diet as she gives all her hookbills: a mix of several kinds of seeds and pellets and fresh fruits and vegetables daily. As with Amazons, their favorites are grapes, corn on the cob, and apples. They never chewed much on their nest box but, when coming into breeding condition, they begin to devour the succulent plants in the greenhouse, such as aloe and Christmas cactus.

Anna has never seen them mate but the sound they make is unmistakable, a certain high-pitched squeal they make at no other time, totally different from the sounds her other birds make.

Maggie and Jiggs laid their first eggs at about age eight in 1989. The three eggs were unfertile but the birds double-clutched after she removed the eggs and, of this clutch, one was fertile. Since this was their first venture at being parents, she left the chick with them. They apparently decided the diet she offered was not good enough and got into a part of the greenhouse where a foam spa cover was kept. Feeding the baby bits of foam, they killed it.

The following year, 1990, they laid again in the dry summer months (July-August in the Pacific Northwest). This time, of two eggs, one was fertile. Taking no chances, Anna pulled the baby and fed it Lake’s handfeeding formula, her formula of choice for her many varieties of hookbills. The frustration still sounds in Anna’s voice as she said, “It didn’t open its eyes until it was 30 days old. There were no pinfeathers until 40 days. I took it to the vet but the tests were too stressful. It died at 65 days of malnutrition.”

An aviculturalist who handfeeds hundreds of babies, Anna is accustomed to the inevitable losses that occur; but this was the first loss to malnutrition.

What was it these Hawkheads needed that others did not? Anna read and re-read everything she could find about them but there was not—and still isn’t—much material. It was not until Dr. Imelda J. Santos’ article appeared in the Aug./Sept. 1991 Watchbird that Anna found the nutritional information she needed. While a high percentage of protein in a handfeeding formula will cause problems in other species, it is a necessity
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<td>Robin Haeltner-Matos (808) 672-9966 Redwood Exotic Bird Club Western Bird Breeders Society</td>
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