

Breeding the Indian Ring-necked Parakeets as a Hobby

by Janet Nichols, Harmony, CA

Having had a great interest in breeding Cockatiels for many years, I decided to branch into another parrot species. Six years ago I acquired some Indian Ring-necked Parakeets, not only for their colors but also for their personality. Being a hobbyist, I worked with green, lutino and blue birds, but with many of the new colors appearing I have recently decided to work with some of the more unusual colors.

As with many breeders of Ring-necks, I will be working toward the dark factors, but I do know this will take some time. I am now working with some of the new colors such as the Isabelle that many breeders question. There is some controversy whether this mutation is correctly named. The Isabelle term is used commonly in the European aviculture community.

Another mutation that is unusual is the Lacewing. This is another mutation I will be working to develop as it must have the American Cinnamon mutation in its background and this latter mutation is one that I already have. Many of these types of mutations are only developed through other colors and this is what makes reproducing Indian Ring-necked Parakeets so exciting.

Since I am a hobbyist and have only a small collection of Ringnecks, I have made a point of hand rearing all my youngsters. Handfeeding is done not only for the pet trade but also for my own future breeding stock. Those birds with colors that I do not feel are needed to furthering my breeding program (or needed by other breeders) are sold into the pet trade. I feel that handfeeding Ringnecks for breeding stock also has its advantages for the hobbyist. Many parent reared Ringnecks can be extremely excitable and

spooky. They have a tendency of being easily frightened and will sometimes hit the aviary wall due to their flightiness. Adult Ringnecks that have been handfed as youngsters are much more calm in their aviaries. The handfeeding process has really calmed them down and they are not disturbed when approached by humans.

I also do not have the worry that a handfed ringneck will become too bonded to humans. My handfed Ringnecks reproduce very well and most people do know that if a handfed Ringneck is left alone it will soon turn wild. But even a handfed bird that has reverted back to its wildness is still a very calm aviary bird. I actually feel I have better success with breeders that have been handfed.

Since I do not have the space for long flights, my Ringneck breeding cages are from 5 ft. square to 2 x 4 x 6 ft. suspended cages. This is also one reason why I have handfed breeders in my Ringnecks program.

All of my Ringneck babies are left in the nest for the parents to feed until they around 7 to 10 days of age. I then remove them for handfeeding and they are always placed with other birds during the handfeeding process. Not only are Ringnecks of all kinds kept together but I also include young Cockatiels of similar size.

I feed Exact handfeeding formula to the babies and wean them on sprouted seeds, vegetables and dry seed. I am not afraid of feeding dry seeds to my Ringnecks as I know many excellent Ringneck breeders that "power" up their birds on sunflower seed and they are very successful.

Some female Ringnecks soon after being weaned, and especially at the onset of their first molt, can become very difficult and often are quite "bossy." The females are usually ahead of the males in their development and

can often give the males "fits" of trouble. Since Indian Ringnecks are not a strong bonding species, they can, as adults, easily be switched with new mates. One can, however, run into trouble when placing a mature female Ringneck with a young male and often one will have to temporarily clip the wings of the female during that first breeding season or she can possibly harm or even kill him.

During the breeding season the females are diligent in their nesting activities but as soon as the breeding season is over many of the females begin to "talk" again and will often sit on one's hand during the offbreeding season. From an aviculturist's point of view this is also a wonderful attribute to have in your breeders. This, again, is a benefit of having Ringnecks that have been handfed as youngsters.

Any ringneck that is destined for the pet trade is usually isolated from other birds during the handfeeding process and considerable love and attention is given to it. This is mandatory for Ringnecks that are to become pets. They need constant attention or they do not retain their tame qualities. They will often revert back to being more wild.

Not only might one graduate from Cockatiels to the Indian Ring-necked Parakeet because they are a larger parrot, the aviculturist will also graduate to a new level of genetics. With Cockatiels one can work with two colors of pigmentation—melanin, the darker pigments of gray, cinnamon, etc. and carotenoids (reds, oranges and yellows known as lipochromes).

With Indian Ringnecks the number of colors and combinations greatly increase. Indian Ringnecks can acquire dark factors and other separate color lines. There are many expert aviculturists doing wonders with the Indian Ringnecks but even the hobbyist can enjoy these wonderful birds. ➤