

# First Breeding of the Choco Toucan

(*Ramphastos brevis*)

by Jerry Jennings  
Fallbrook, California

The Choco Toucan (*Ramphastos brevis*) is a large, black toucan of the genus *Ramphastos*, whose main identifying characteristics are its bright, lemon yellow breast patch and its large, flamboyant bill, which is generally yellow on the upper mandible and black on the lower. The yellow and black colors meet each other diagonally.

The Choco Toucan is routinely confused with and misidentified as the Black-mandibled Toucan (*R. ambiguus*), to which it is remarkably similar in appearance. The Choco is also similar to the Swainson's Toucan (*R. ambiguus swainsonii*), except in the latter form the black is replaced by chestnut brown in the lower mandible.

The Choco Toucan is noticeably smaller in size than both the Black-mandibled and Swainson's Toucans, and belongs to the channel-keel billed group of toucans. The Black-mandibled and Swainson's, on the other hand, are members of the smooth billed group of toucans. The Choco's bill is definitely keeled in shape and is very similar in form and size to the Keel-billed Toucan's beak (*R. sulphuratus*).

Since Black-mandibled Toucans do not currently exist in captivity in the United States, size comparisons between it and the Choco are not possible. The only positive means, therefore, of properly identifying the Choco Toucan is by its call. The Choco utilizes a series of croaks nearly identical in sound to the call of the Keel-billed Toucan. The Black-mandibled Toucan's call is composed of two or three high-pitched yelps reminiscent of the Swainson, Couvier, and Red-billed Toucan calls. The distinct difference in vocalizations is marked.

The geographic distribution of the Choco Toucan is the smallest of the large, black toucans. It is restricted to the Choco region of northern Colombia and the Pacific lowlands south to northwestern Ecuador. As such, the Choco is the only toucan found on the Pacific coast of South America, whose coast is characterized by increasingly dry desert conditions.

Choco Toucans were first imported into the United States in the early 1980s, and only in small numbers. Very few of these found their way to private or institutional collections,

Photo by George D. Dodge/Dale R. Thompson, Canyon Country, CA



The male Choco Toucan of the breeding pair.

Photo by Jerry Jennings



Photo taken in author's aviary of the Choco Toucan family. Female at left, their first youngster, center, and male.



**VAC-PAC™**

# **L/M's Fresh Treats**



**L/M Animal Farms**  
Pleasant Plain, Ohio 45162  
*Trust L/M Quality*



**VACUUM PACKED • VALUE PACKED • VARIETY PACKED**

VAC-PAC™ means extended shelf life. Two large sticks mean added value. Available in 20 varieties including honey, fruit, nut, egg and vegetable sticks that provide a nutritious well balanced dietary food supplement for all caged birds and small animals.





# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE

Dedicated to conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public.

## 1990 - 1991 OFFICERS

JACK CLINTON-EITNIEAR, *President* (512) 828-5306  
CHUCK SAFFELL, *1st Vice President* (813) 722-0997 JERI WRIGHT, *2nd Vice President* (206) 838-9802  
VICKI FLETCHER, *Chief Financial Officer* (206) 841-2705 LINDA SUN, *Executive Secretary* (714) 688-4907

## LEGAL COUNSEL VICE PRESIDENT • LEGISLATIVE

AFA office, P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218  
(602) 484-0931 / FAX (602) 484-0109

## MEMBER NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

African Love Bird Society • Amazona Society • American Cockatiel Society, Inc. • American Budgerigar Society, Inc. • Avian Insights Bird Club  
Avicultural Society of America • Budgerigar Research Association • The Golden Triangle Parrot Club • International Aviculturists Society  
International Dove Society • International Loridae Society • International Softbill Society • National Cockatiel Society  
National Finch & Softbill Society • National Parrot Association • Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors

## MEMBER CLUBS

### Northeastern Region

Paul Gildersleeve, *regional v. p.*  
(516) 922-1169

#### CONNECTICUT

State coordinator:  
Gustave Seehorst (203) 745-3697  
Connecticut Association for  
Aviculture, Inc.  
New England Finch Fanciers

#### MAINE

State coordinator:  
Sheryl L. Adams (207) 727-5633  
Maine State Caged Bird Society

#### MASSACHUSETTS

State coordinator:  
Dennise Cabral (508) 586-3293  
Berkshire Cage Bird Friends  
Unlimited  
Boston Cockatiel Society, Inc.  
Boston Society for Aviculture, Inc.  
Exotic Cage Bird Society of  
New England  
Massachusetts Cage Bird  
Association, Inc.

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE

State coordinator:  
\*  
Birds of a Feather Avicultural Society  
New Hampshire Avicultural Society  
Northeastern Avicultural Society

#### NEW YORK

State coordinator:  
Barbara Heck (518) 766-2778  
Broome County Bird Club  
Buffalo Hookbill Association  
Finger Lakes Cage Bird Association  
Greater Rochester Hookbill  
Association

#### RHODE ISLAND

State coordinator:  
\*

#### VERMONT

State coordinator:  
Peter Lowry (802) 754-6494

### Mid-Atlantic Region

Dick Ivy, *regional vice pres.*  
(804) 898-5090

#### DELAWARE

State coordinator:  
Nancy Selz (302) 798-8625

#### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

State coordinator:  
Thomas Marshall (703) 759-5978  
National Capitol Bird Club

#### MARYLAND

State coordinator:  
Orva Clubb (301) 248-3818  
Baltimore Bird Fanciers, Inc.  
Del-Mar-Va Cage Bird Club  
Maryland Cage Bird Society, Inc.

### NEW JERSEY

State coordinator:  
Vicki Clark (609) 395-7208  
South Jersey Bird Club  
The Real Macaw

### PENNSYLVANIA

State coordinator:  
Kristine Kroner (215) 628-4143  
Anthracite Bird Club  
Central Pennsylvania Cage Bird Club  
Chester County Bird Breeders  
Delaware Valley Bird Club  
Erie Cage Bird Club  
Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society  
Philadelphia Avicultural Society

### VIRGINIA

State coordinator:  
Dawn Kopf (703) 368-1660  
Commonwealth Aviculture Society  
Parrot Breeders Association  
Peninsula Caged Bird Society  
Tri-State Bird Club & Foundation

### WEST VIRGINIA

State coordinator:  
\*

### Southeastern Region

Willford Pace, *regional vice pres.*  
(601) 781-2364

### ALABAMA

State coordinator:  
Charles Reaves (205) 892-0015  
Alabama Budgerigar and Cockatiel  
Bird Club of Greater Birmingham  
Bi-state Avicultural Association  
Central Alabama Aviculture Society  
Southeastern Aviculturist  
Association

### FLORIDA (NORTH)

State coordinator:  
Cal Kimura (407) 892-7661  
Central Florida Bird Breeders  
Association

Exotic Bird Club of Florida  
Gainesville Bird Fanciers  
Gulf Coast Bird Club  
Imperial Bird Club  
Panhandle Aviculture Society  
Southwest Florida Bird Club  
Sunshine State Cage Bird  
Society, Inc.

West Florida Avian Society, Inc.

### FLORIDA (SOUTH)

State coordinator:  
Tom Ireland (407) 968-4214  
Aviary & Cage Bird Society of  
South Florida  
Gold Coast Exotic Bird Club  
Greater Brandon Avian Society  
Lemon Bay Bird Club  
Miami Parrot Club, Inc.  
Suncoast Avian Society  
Tropical Cockatiel Club

### GEORGIA

State coordinator:  
Mimi Shepherd, DVM  
(404) 248-8977

### KENTUCKY

State coordinator:  
Thomas B. Angel, Jr., DVM \*\*  
(606) 371-4929  
Kentuckiana Bird Society

### MISSISSIPPI

State coordinator:  
Jerry Pace (601) 781-2364

### NORTH CAROLINA

State coordinator:  
Bob Beech (919) 855-8292  
Charlotte Metrolina Cage Bird  
Society

Raleigh-Durham Caged Bird Society  
Smoky Mountain Cage Bird Society  
Triad Exotic Bird Club

### PUERTO RICO

Coordinator:  
David Negron (809) 251-1153

### SOUTH CAROLINA

State coordinator:  
Ted Stephens (803) 279-3374  
South Carolina Bird Buddies

### TENNESSEE

State coordinator:  
Richard Porter, MD (901) 386-1625  
Greater Memphis Bird Club  
Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club  
Tennessee Valley Caged Bird Club

### VIRGIN ISLANDS

State coordinator:  
\*

### Mid-Eastern Region

Bob Smith, *regional v. p.*  
(517) 764-5170

### ILLINOIS

State coordinator:  
Bonnie Doane (708) 223-2117  
Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club  
Illini Bird Fanciers  
Northern Illinois Parrot Society  
Springfield Pet Bird Club

### INDIANA

State coordinator:  
Nicole Vander Heyden, DVM  
(317) 786-1826  
Central Indiana Cage Bird

### MICHIGAN

State coordinator:  
Jane Stuart (313) 453-3465  
Ann Arbor Cage Bird Club  
Great Lakes Avicultural Society  
Lansing Caged Bird Club  
Mid-Michigan Bird Club  
Motor City Bird Breeders, Inc.  
Town & Country Feathered Friends

### OHIO

State coordinator:  
John Wathen (614) 965-2667  
Avicultural Society of  
Greater Cincinnati  
Cleveland Cage Bird Society  
Golden Crescent Cage Bird Club  
Mid-American Exotic Bird  
Society, Inc.  
Northwest Ohio Exotic Bird Club

### WISCONSIN

State coordinator:  
David Bluma (414) 554-8432  
Kenosha Exotic Bird Club  
Milwaukee Bird Society, Ltd.  
Wisconsin Cage Bird Club, Inc.

### North Central Region

James McCabe, *regional vice pres.*  
(612) 753-5241

### IOWA

State coordinator:  
Randy Karg (712) 542-4190  
Mid-America Cage Bird Society

### MINNESOTA

State coordinator:  
\*  
Minnesota Companion Bird  
Association

### NEBRASKA

State coordinator:  
Father John Graves (402) 729-2058  
Greater Omaha Cage Bird Society

### NORTH DAKOTA

State coordinator:  
Christine Bjerke (701) 241-9742

### SOUTH DAKOTA

State coordinator:  
Royce King (605) 393-1720  
Black Hills Cage Bird Club

### South Central Region

Paddy Lambert, *regional vice pres.*  
(314) 962-8186

### ARKANSAS

State coordinator:  
Carol Hoerres (501) 839-2948

### KANSAS

State coordinator:  
Hal Prester (316) 788-4505 \*\*  
Kansas Avicultural Society, Inc.

### LOUISIANA

State coordinator:  
Gene Broussard (318) 233-9993  
Gulf South Bird Club, Inc.  
Southwest Louisiana Bird Club

### MISSOURI

State coordinator:  
Walter C. Crawford (314) 938-6193  
Gateway Parrot Club  
Greater Kansas City Avicultural  
Society  
Missouri Cage Bird Association

### OKLAHOMA

State coordinator:  
Richard Bewley, (918) 369-2580  
Bird Fanciers of Oklahoma  
Oklahoma Cage Bird Society

### TEXAS (NORTH)

State coordinator:  
Tom Squyres (817) 244-4126  
Dallas Cage Bird Society  
Fort Worth Bird Club  
Plano Exotic Birds

### TEXAS (SOUTH)

State coordinator:  
Daniel Gonzalez (512) 399-6464  
Alamo Exhibition Bird Club  
Avicultural Council of Texas  
Parrot People

### Northwestern Region

Ron Sweere, *regional vice pres.*  
(503) 324-2473

### ALASKA

State coordinator:  
Jim Bauman (907) 344-0623 \*\*

### IDAHO

State coordinator:  
Arnold Davis (208) 775-3609

### MONTANA

State coordinator:  
Fred Frey (406) 549-0530

### OREGON

State coordinator:  
\*  
Cascade Canary Breeders Assoc.  
Emerald Exotic Bird Club  
Northwest Bird Club  
Rose City Exotic Bird Club

Washington Budgerigar Society, Inc.

### WASHINGTON

State coordinator:  
Natalie Weiss (206) 927-6983  
Jeri Wright, *legislative liaison*  
(206) 838-9802  
Avicultural Society of Puget Sound  
Cascade Canary Breeders  
Association  
Fine Feathered Friends  
Greater Spokane Avicultural Society  
Northwest Exotic Bird Society  
South Sound Exotic Bird Society  
Washington Budgerigar Society, Inc.

## Western Region

Gary Clifton, regional vice pres.  
(602) 946-1304

### ARIZONA

State coordinator:  
Steve McNabb (602) 992-4483  
Arizona Avian Breeders Assoc.  
Arizona Aviculture Society  
Arizona Budgerigar Society  
Arizona Seed Crackers Society  
Avicultural Society of Tucson  
L.O.O.N.Y. Central  
Turkey Flats L.O.O.N.Y.  
Yuma Imperial Exotic Bird Club

### COLORADO

State coordinator:  
Jolynn Chappell (303) 223-7280  
Colorado Cage Bird Association  
Front Range Avian Society  
Rocky Mountain Society of  
Aviculture, Inc.

### NEVADA

State coordinator:  
Robert Gibson (702) 645-7608  
Las Vegas Avicultural Society

### NEW MEXICO

State coordinator:  
Steven Schwartz (505) 298-8065  
New Mexico Bird Club

### UTAH

State coordinator:  
Rex Kennedy (801) 571-6183  
Avicultural Society of Utah  
Utah Pheasant Society

### WYOMING

State coordinator:  
\*

## Northern California Region

Dick Dickinson, regional v.p.  
(408) 248-1641

### CALIFORNIA (NORTH)

State coordinator:  
Joanne Abramson  
(707) 964-4380  
Antelope Valley Bird Society  
Aviary Association of Kern  
Avicultural Association of  
San Francisco  
Butte County Bird Club  
Capitol City Bird Society  
Central Coast Avicultural Society  
Coastal Avian Society  
Contra Costa Avian Society  
Foothill Bird Fanciers  
Golden Gate Avian Society  
Redwood Exotic Bird Society  
Santa Clara Valley Canary &  
Exotic Bird Club  
Western Bird Breeders Society

### HAWAII

State coordinator:  
\*

## Southern California Region

Aletta M. Long, regional v.p.  
(213) 596-7429

### CALIFORNIA (SOUTHERN) SAN DIEGO AREA:

State coordinator:  
Mike Morrison (619) 466-4999  
Finch Society of San Diego County  
Hookbill Hobbyists of Southern  
California  
North County Aviculturists  
San Diego County Bird Breeders  
Association  
San Diego County Canary Club

### CALIFORNIA (SOUTHERN) LOS ANGELES AREA:

State coordinator:  
Jami Kennedy (805) 296-4451  
California Game Breeders  
Association  
Golden West Game Breeders and  
Bird Club  
Hi Desert Bird Club  
Long Beach Bird Breeders  
Norco Valley Bird Breeders  
Orange County Bird Breeders  
Valley of Paradise Bird Club  
West Valley Bird Society

\* Position open — contact regional vice president if interested  
\*\* Indicates 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party  
comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in  
position.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs,  
please call that club's state coordinator.

## SCHEDULE FOR AFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Mark these dates and plan to attend!

### WINTER REGIONAL MEETING

February 8, 9, 10, 1991  
Albuquerque Hilton Hotel  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

### SPRING BOARD MEETING

May 17, 18, 19, 1991  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

### SUMMER ANNUAL CONVENTION

"The Magic of Birds"  
August 6 - 12, 1991  
Red Lion Hotel

San Diego, California  
Plan your summer vacation here!  
Visit the San Diego Zoo and Sea World.

and there are probably less than two dozen pairs in the country at the present time.

Originally, eight birds were acquired at Walnut Acres Aviaries.\* These were sexed as two males, one of which was lame, and six hens. The one good male was set up with a hen, two birds were transferred to other collections, and the remaining kept together in a holding flight. After several years and the suspicion that the "hens" had been missexed, some were resubmitted for surgical sexing. Of three birds, two were determined to be males and one female. A female was acquired from Sea World of Ohio, and the two pairs were set up in large outdoor flights measuring 12 by 13 feet, eight feet high.

In early July 1989, a pair, the female of which came from Ohio, was observed investigating their nest, a palm log four feet in length, which had been hollowed out to a depth of two feet. The pair began working at further hollowing out their nest, a necessary ingredient to pair bonding and the precursor to the onset of egg laying.

On July 14, 1989, two eggs had been laid, only one of which was to hatch on July 31. During the incubation period, the nest was only checked once and during the nestling period, checks were limited to every four to six days in order to minimize the disturbance to the parent birds. Nest disturbance may be a cause of nest abandonment and/or cannibalization of offspring, a not infrequent occurrence among the large, black toucans.

As the chick progressed, its begging vocalizations increased in volume, such that the chick could be monitored indirectly from outside the flight. However, had there been more than two chicks, monitoring progress in that indirect fashion would prove less than effective in keeping informed of the number of live chicks in the nest.

On September 18, 1989, the lone chick appeared at the nest entrance. For the next two days, the chick sat in the entrance and immediately retreated into the nest as soon as it observed an approaching human. By the 20th, he appeared more secure, and on the 21st it left the nest for its first flight. In the days following the fledging, the young Choco remained calm and did not panic fly even when people entered the flight to service the food and water.

The emerging Choco Toucan appeared very similar to the adult birds. Feather coloration was an exact replica. Only the eyeskin and beak showed juvenile characteristics. The eyeskin was quite pale and the yellow of the upper mandible was much paler as well. Further, the diagonal demarcation between the colors of the upper and lower mandible was not well defined as in adult birds. The young bird was approximately 20% smaller in body size, though no attempts to weigh the bird were made.

Throughout the nesting cycle, the Chocos' flight was serviced on a daily basis. Prior to the commencement of egg laying, and up to the date of hatching, the adult birds were offered a daily regimen of dry dog kibble (Science Diet Canine Maintenance), diced apples, canteloupe, papayas, and destemmed grapes. Live crickets were also offered during this time and, in fact, had been offered to the adults for several weeks prior to the onset of nesting activity as an enticement to breed. It is unknown whether the enticement worked or was merely coincidental to the reproductive activity.

Once the young Choco hatched, the diet was only slightly modified in that the dog kibble was offered soaked, fresh each day. The live crickets were continued and were readily consumed by the parents. Naturally, fresh water was available daily, and Vionate Vitamins were added to the fruit mix.

The entire nesting cycle progressed without incident. The adults never exhibited any aggressive behavior towards their offspring, which has remained with them through the end of the year. No further nesting activity was attempted by the adults during 1989, which may be due to the presence of their first offspring. Occasionally, large, black toucans will recycle for a second round if the first nest fails early, or the fledged offspring are immediately removed and kept out of earshot and eyesight. Chick removal was not effected with the Chocos in order to gather as much data as possible on their behavior both during and subsequent to the cycle. If all Chocos behave similarly, they may prove to be one of the more easily bred large Ramphastids.

\* Walnut Acres Aviaries was located in Woodland Hills, California. As of early 1990, it was moved to Fallbrook, California and renamed Emerald Forest Bird Gardens. ●