



Female Spangled Cotinga
(*Cotinga cayana*)
Photo by Myles Lamont

COTINGAS IN AVICULTURE

Part II

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Part I, published in the Watchbird XXXIV Number 2, included a history of cotingas in aviculture, and an overview of their diets in captivity. Accounts of cotingas now present in American public or private collections follow, with four species discussed here.

Screaming Piha **(*Lipaugus vociferans*)**

Of cotingas currently in aviculture, this species stands out for its superficially "ordinary" appearance. From pictures, it appears "gray and thrush-like". In life, it is more reminiscent of a New World Flycatcher (to which cotingas are, after all, closely related).

Its large dark eyes are an immediately attractive feature. On the other hand, what is not at all ordinary is its very loud, three-note whistle (scarcely a "scream"), performed in a lekking display, one of the typical "jungle noises" across its enormous South American range. It occurs east of the Andes, including eastern Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, as well as the Guianas, Venezuela, Brazil, and Bolivia.

Specimens in aviculture originate from Suriname, from where softbills continue to be commercially exported. I am unaware of any arriving in Europe or the U.S. before the 1990's. As of May, 2006, the International Species Information System (ISIS) listed three specimens distributed between two European zoos. Aside from a male at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the U.S. zoo population was concentrated around the Great Lakes. A pair was exhibited at the National Aviary at Pittsburgh, while single birds were kept at Toledo, Madison, and the

Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago. As of late 2007, ISIS lists a male and an unsexed bird at the National Aquarium, and single birds at the National Aviary, Toledo and Madison. In 2007 The Dallas World Aquarium received four birds from Suriname.

So far as I know, nothing has been written about this species in captivity. I am therefore most grateful to Lori Smith, Senior Aviculturist at the National Aquarium in Baltimore for providing data about the pihases there. A single pair maintained in the Aquarium's rain forest hatched one chick each year from 2000 through 2003, with a fifth hatched in 2005. To my knowledge, this is the only captive propagation to have occurred. The chick hatched 22 October 2000 drowned immediately after fledging, on 22 November. The same fate overtook the bird hatched 14 May 2001, which died 4 June. The chick hatched 29 October 2002 disappeared the day it hatched, while the chick hatched 14 September 2005 disappeared after two days. The chick produced 31 August 2003 hatched in an incubator and was hand-reared, but died after three days, having difficulty passing feces.

The breeding female died in 2006.

The pair shared the 519,060 cubic foot rain forest with a free-ranging pair of Golden Lion Tamarins, a Two-toed

Sloth and seventeen other species of birds, including seven species of tanagers (four of which are *Tangaras*), Blue-headed Pionus, Sun Conures, Red-capped Cardinals, Saffron Finches, Blue-crowned Motmots, and White-tailed Trogons (which successfully bred here for the first time in captivity). While in general, compatibility problems have not been an issue, the male Piha proved intolerant of male Spangled Cotingas, actually repeatedly killing them before it was decided to no longer maintain Spangled Cotingas (which had bred there) in this exhibit.

I have found the birds at The Dallas World Aquarium remarkably tame, leading me to suspect they may have been collected from the wild as fledglings. They spend most of their time in the highest parts of their aviary, but when new diets are placed in the feeding station, they drop straight down in a swoop, again reminiscent of tyrant flycatchers, and commence eating, not minding at all if I stand inches away. The ones I work with avidly eat crickets, but seem uninterested in giant mealworms. Other preferred foods are blueberries and Mazuri ZuLiFe Soft-bill Diet pellets.

Spangled Cotinga (*Cotinga cayana*)

Although this species made its avicultural debut in 1929 when the department store magnate J. Speden Lewis donated a pair to the London Zoo (Seth-Smith, 1930), it was an extreme rarity in captivity until the 1980's, when Dutch dealers began exporting it from Suriname. It has remained commercially available, with specimens arriving in the U.S. directly from Suriname since 2006 (as a result of European import bans for fear of bird flu). While ISIS, in May 2006, indicated only three European zoos held it, eleven U.S. and one Canadian collection were listed, making it the most well represented Cotinga in North American zoos. (The ISIS listing of 33 specimens at the Dallas World Aquarium is an error, six pairs being actually present then). In late 2007, it was present in nine U.S. institutions, as well as one Canadian, one British, four Continental European, and one South African collection, along with the Jurong Bird Park in Singapore, according to ISIS.

Of the seven species in the genus *Cotinga*, this is the only one so far hatched in captivity. The International Zoo Yearbook (Zoological Society of London, 1960-1998) records that captive breeding did not commence until 1991, when one was hatched, but did not survive at Tierpark Berlin. Single birds hatched at Zoologischer Garten Zurich in 1992 and 1993 likewise failed to survive. Complete success was achieved in 1995, when one was reared out of three hatched at Zoologischer Garten Wuppertal, in Germany. One hatched but died at Wuppertal in 1996. The IZY also records two hatched and one reared at Burger's Zoo in Arnhem, the Netherlands, in 1996 (the final year for

IZY statistics). The first fully successful United Kingdom breeding for any cotinga was for this species at Amazon World on the Isle of Wight in 1999 (Coles, 2003). ISIS indicates one hatched at Zurich in 2003, and another in 2006. The only private aviculturist's success that has come to my attention is that achieved by John Francis, a British specialist in softbills. Chicks were hatched, but not raised, in 2003, and one successfully hand-reared in 2005. (Francis, 2006)



Spangled Cotingas. Photo by Myles Lamont.

Spangled Cotingas were not hatched in the U.S. until 2001, when the San Diego, Denver, and Milwaukee zoos achieved propagation within a few months of each other (Azua, 2002). I know little of the circumstances of the breeding at the San Diego Zoo, save that at least one male chick was fully hand-raised, then sent to the Milwaukee Zoo to be paired with a bird hatched there. San Diego's hand-rearing techniques for this and other species are presented in detail by Perretta (2003). Thawed bee larvae are an important part of San Diego's infant softbill diet. Denver and Milwaukee parent-raised their offspring. Denver's pair was housed by themselves in a one of a series of glass-fronted, planted aviaries in the entrance foyer of the Bird World building (Azua, 2002).

I am most grateful to Kim Smith, now Vice President for Animal Care for the Chicago Zoological Society, formerly Curator of Birds at the Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens, for making available an unpublished highly detailed account of Spangled Cotinga propagation there (Couch et al, 2003). Milwaukee's breeding pair were displayed in a planted exhibit, 20 ft in height, 14.5 ft in width, and 25 ft in length, with visitor viewing

extending only partway up the front of the aviary. As of 2003, the only cagemates were a pair of Double-striped Thick-knees (*Burhinus bistriatus*), though tanagers had been maintained in the past.

Respectively arriving from Suriname in 1997 and 1998, the female and male were introduced to each other in adjacent cages for twelve days in September, 1998, then maintained together off exhibit for a further two months before being placed on display. In the spring of 1999, nest sites were placed in various locations. While the female was observed placing material in one of these in March, this did not progress. A "howdy cage"

June 1999, though fertile, did not hatch. No eggs were laid in 2000. In March of 2001, a shower curtain was installed behind the "howdy", concealing the service area behind it. An egg was laid 7 April 2001. (As in Lipaugus, but in contrast to *Pipreola*, a clutch consists of one egg.) A chick hatched 1 May, fledging on 16 May. Shortly thereafter, this chick was caught in the aviary's "Zoo Mesh" several times (prompting a nail trimming), and caught its head in a palm frond. "Some weakness in [the] wing" was noted, and attributed to an overabundance of fruit in the diet. However, this bird developed into a healthy adult and was shipped to the Toledo Zoo and introduced to a Denver Zoo bred female. The second egg produced in Milwaukee in 2001 was laid 4 August. The chick hatched 22 August and fledged 16 September. Although again fledged with "some wing problems" and a crooked beak, it eventually developed normally as well. The third 2001 egg was laid 22 October. Keepers removed this egg 20 November. Its failure to hatch was attributed both to the presence of the previously hatched chick, as well as increased nest checking and photography by staff. At the end of November, the female was removed from its enclosure (Couch, et al. 2003).

The female was reintroduced to its exhibit in early February 2002. Although the male began displaying at once (flying back and forth between high perches), the first egg was not laid until 30 May, hatching 14 June. This chick fledged 12 July, and at seven months of age was paired with a San Diego hatched male, off-exhibit in Milwaukee. An egg laid 8 August was broken the same day. At this point the chick hatched in June was removed. Another egg was laid 28 August, hatching 11 September 2002. That chick was still present when the fourth 2002 egg was laid 24 October, and when it hatched 15 November, producing a chick which lived only six days. In late November the "howdy cage" (where all eggs were laid) was closed until February 2003, and all other nest baskets removed, but the breeding pair was allowed to remain together (with more than one food station provided) (Couch et al. 2003). (Kim Smith informed me the female constantly chased the male from food stations and kept it away from fledged chicks. On the other hand, the male appeared to guard the nest site, located at a height in the aviary that it did not normally frequent.) No eggs were laid in 2003. It was later concluded this was due to a female chick held off-exhibit, but within view of its female parent (Kim Smith, pers.com.).



Male Spangled Cotinga. Photo by Myles Lamont.

22 feet above the floor was opened and outfitted with perching plants and a "small cup nest". (Because this aviary was once part of an enormous free flight hall, an upper level service area runs behind it, and the "howdy cage" is accessed from there). An egg laid at this site 15

Ellen Saksefski, Aviary Area Supervisor at Milwaukee, informed me that the breeding hen was observed collecting waxworms and mealworms while rearing chicks. John Francis (2006) records that his hen only fed waxworms to its chicks. After the first chick died of "breathing problems" at 28 days, Francis injected the waxworms with "vitamins and minerals", but two subsequent chicks also died. A chick was success-

fully hand-raised from seven days with a diet composed of waxworms, crickets, sliced pinky mice, blueberries and papayas, all supplemented with Abidec, SA-37 intervet powder, and "parrot rearing formula". The feeding schedule and amounts of each food offered are presented in great detail by Francis (2006). Mealworms were added after two weeks.

Since Milwaukee's last hatching in 2002, the only subsequent U.S. propagation of which I am aware was achieved at the National Aquarium in Baltimore in 2004, when three were hatched. Lori Smith, the Aquarium's Senior Aviculturist informed me the first chick hatched 9 February in an incubator and was hand-reared. A female, it was sent to Biodome de Montreal when seven months old. The second chick hatched 23 May after parental incubation, and was pulled for hand-raising. It was euthanized at four months of age because of severe leg splaying. The final chick, hatched 17 July was parent-raised until its disappearance 3 August. The parents were maintained in the Aquarium's Rainforest, previously described during discussion of the Screaming Piha. As mentioned earlier, the male Spangled Cotinga was killed by the male Piha.

As this species is currently available from at least two U.S. importers, there has been considerable interest on the part of private aviculturists in working with it. They do well in planted aviaries and may be kept with a wide variety of non-aggressive birds. John Francis maintained his breeding pair in a "small tropical house" with year-round access (in England) to an outside flight. Cage-mates included Blue-winged Leafbirds, White-throated Bee-eaters, Rufus-bellied Niltavas, and Egyptian Plovers (Ellis, 2006). While most zoo indoor exhibits are maintained at fairly tropical temperatures, during winter, the indoor temperature of Francis' aviary was only maintained to 55-60F (Ellis, 2006)

While Spangled Cotingas at the Milwaukee Zoo were never observed entering a pool, they regularly bathed on wet leaves following the daily hosing of their enclosure. Misting and light hosing of the Milwaukee birds also alleviated the tendency for food to cake on their beaks and feet (Couch et al., 2003).

The Milwaukee Zoo staff warns that Spangled Cotingas appear to be easily stressed by capture and such procedures as nail clipping, and were found to tire quickly in capture attempts. This species also appears accident prone. Both Milwaukee's breeding female and a recently fledged chick were found with their heads "stuck in palm fronds" (with non-fatal results) (Couch, et al., 2003).

That said, it is to be hoped that American specialists in softbills will avail themselves of the opportunity to work with this species, a bird that has so far proved the most prolific cotinga in aviculture, with offspring produced in ten collections since 1991.



Purple-throated Fruit Crow. Photo by Myles Lamont.

Purple-breasted Cotinga (*Cotinga cotinga*)

As indicated by its scientific name, this is one of the first cotingas known to science, described by Linnaeus in 1766. However, despite its extensive range in North-eastern South America, very specimens have entered aviculture. The earliest captive specimens I know of are birds obtained by the Bronx Zoo in the 1980's. I am unaware of others arriving in the U.S. until 2006, when one male, initially in poor plumage, was received by The Dallas World Aquarium from a Surinamese exporter, who had shipped it as a Spangled Cotinga. However, several months later, this species was being offered on


American importer's pricelists, so the initial confusion on the part of trappers appears to have been resolved. While obviously closely related to the Spangled Cotinga, a male Purple-breasted Cotinga in good condition can be distinguished from all of the six other species in the Blue Cotinga genus *Cotinga* by an uninterrupted field of purple from belly to throat. The others all have purple plumage, but it is either confined to the throat, or separated into a throat patch and a lower field of purple. The Spangled Cotinga's purple is restricted to its throat, and its blue plumage is of a lighter, brighter, shade. The females of these two species are more similar to each other, both essentially being brown birds, but the female Purple-breasted Cotinga has brown speckling on its underparts, whereas in the Spangled female, there is more of a dappled effect. At any rate, there is no reason to suspect that this beautiful bird would be prove to be less adaptable to captivity than its Spangled relative.

Pompadour Cotinga **(*Xipholena punicea*)**

More than eighty years ago, the Bronx Zoo exhibited a Pompadour Cotinga collected by none other than William Beebe (Delacour, 1925), who was to later make a name for himself in deep sea exploration. However, like the Spangled Cotinga, it was thereafter almost nonexistent in aviculture until the late 1980's. Since then, some numbers have been commercially exported to Europe from Surinam, and some have reached U.S. collections.

This bird appears to be somewhat more delicate than the Spangled Cotinga. Although several U.S. institutions acquired Pompadour Cotingas in the '80's and '90's, as of November, 2006, the only U.S. zoo specimens listed by ISIS were single birds at Madison and Memphis, and a male and female at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh. As of late 2007, there was a pair at Madison, and five birds at The Dallas World Aquarium.

Some also entered private collections. I have spoken to an aviculturist in Florida, who as of mid-2006, had eggs from his pair, but no hatchings yet. To my knowledge, this is as close as anyone has gotten to propagating this species.

Lighting has a dramatic effect on the appearance of male Pompadour Cotingas. They often appear to be a dark plum color, but depending on the light, they may look almost black, or be a brilliant shade of almost bright red. The females are an interesting shade of slate gray, and share the male's startling yellow eye. 

The fruit crows, Capuchin birds, bellbirds and Cock-of-the-Rocks will be examined in Cotingas, Part III.

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