

Identifying Forpus Parrotlets

by Sandee and Robert Molenda
Santa Cruz, California

Forpus parrotlets comprise one of the world's smallest genera of parrots. Often confused with species from the genus *Brotogeris*, they are more closely related to the genus *Amazona*. There are seven species of these parrotlets: Green-rumped, Pacific, Blue-winged, Spectacled, Mexican, Sclater's (Dusky-billed) and Yellow-faced. Many of these have more than one subspecies. They are primarily found in Columbia, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Guyana and various Caribbean islands. The Mexican Parrotlet is the only species not found in South America but is native to northwestern Mexico and the Tres Marias Islands.

All species of parrotlets are sexually dimorphic. Females are generally green with various shades of yellow whereas males have beautiful blue coloring on their wings, rumps and heads. Identification of the male of a species is based upon the particular shade of blue he possesses. The females are more difficult to identify so attention must be paid to small details such as subtle changes in the shades of yellow and green feathers.

Identification of parrotlet species is simplified by the process of elimination. Pacific, Green-rumped and Spectacled Parrotlets all have horn-colored beaks and legs. Yellow-faced also have horn-colored beaks and legs, but their beaks contain a thin black line which runs the length of the beak from cere to tip. Mexican and Blue-winged Parrotlets have gray beaks and legs, but Mexican hens' beaks do not turn gray until they are in breeding condition. The upper beak is gray in Sclater's, the lower is horn-colored and their legs are gray.

The Pacific or Celestial Parrotlet *Forpus coelestis* is the most well-known and popular species of parrotlet in aviculture. They are approximately five inches in length and weigh around 30 grams. In the wild, they are found from western Ecuador to north-

western Peru. The males have a cobalt-blue streak of feathers extending backward from the eye as well as cobalt-blue on the rump and wings. Many females also have an eye streak but it is light turquoise or emerald green. They also have dark green backs and wings with light green feathers on the face. Occasionally, Pacific hens will have a blue rump but normally it is emerald green. Interestingly, the rump color is not cobalt-blue as in the males but deep turquoise. These hens often pass this trait on to their daughters. While there are no known subspecies of Pacific Parrotlets, many breeders believe these birds could be an unrecognized subspecies.

Pacific Parrotlets are certainly the most fearless as well as curious of the *Forpus* species. They are also extremely territorial, especially the females. They should be kept either alone or not more than one pair to a cage. If given a chance, they will also attack much larger birds. Handfed babies make wonderful pets if placed in a home right after weaning and handled regularly. Being highly intelligent, they can be taught to do tricks. Both males and females can learn to talk, however, they will never have the vocal abilities of their larger Amazon cousins. Female Pacifics tend to be more dominant than the males. As with most parrots, domestically-raised pairs are much easier to breed than imports. Indeed, it is not unusual for a pair to begin setting up house-keeping at six or seven months but they should not be allowed to breed until one year of age.

Another common species, Green-rumped Parrotlets *Forpus passerinus* are the smallest, weighing around 22 grams. They are native to Guyana and have a delicate, streamlined body with a small beak in proportion to their heads. Predominantly apple-green, the females have a patch of yellow feathers between their eyes, above their nostrils. The males have bright,

cobalt-blue on their primary wing feathers while the secondaries are turquoise. They are the only species of parrotlet which lacks blue on the rump. They are sweet, gentle birds which make exceptional pets. There are four subspecies of Green-rumped.

Forpus passerinus viridissimus is found on the islands of Trinidad and Jamaica as well as northern Venezuela to northern Columbia. The males are darker forest green and have a deeper shade of blue than the nominate species. There is no difference between the females. While not as aggressive as Pacifics, this subspecies is much more bold than the species found in Guyana. This subspecies is rather common in aviculture.

Forpus passerinus cyanophanes, native to northern Columbia, has more dark blue feathers on the upper wing which forms a patch of color that can be seen when the wing is folded. The female is indistinguishable from *p. passerinus*.

Forpus passerinus cyanochlorus is found only near the upper Branco River in northern Brazil. In this subspecies, the male is very similar to the nominate. It is the females who differ in their overall plumage which is much more yellow especially on the rump and underparts.

Forpus passerinus deliciosus is native to northern Brazil along the banks of the Amazon. The males are the only subspecies of Green-rumped to have their rump feathers tinged with light blue. Females have more yellow feathers between the eyes than *p. passerinus*. This is another subspecies which may be found in aviculture although not as frequently as the nominate species or *viridissimus*.

Mexican Parrotlets *Forpus xanthopterygius* are found in northwestern Mexico. They are one of the larger species of parrotlet with an average weight of 40 grams. The males have brilliant bright turquoise on the rump and wings. Females have dark green heads, backs and wings with yellow-green on the wings, face and underparts. These birds are different from other parrotlets in a variety of ways. Most parrotlets are energetic and playful and constantly engaged in activity. Mexican Parrotlets, on the other hand, lead a sedentary life that could almost be termed lethargic. Picky eaters, they often ignore soft foods, preferring sunflower and hemp seed. Other par-



Year Round, Nationwide Shipping
Guaranteed Live Delivery
(800) 735-8537



THE GATEWAY PARROT CLUB, INC.
PROUDLY PRESENTS

THE GATEWAY ALL-AMERICAN HOOKBILL SHOW

AUGUST 27th & 28th, 1994

FEATURING*

- * LARGE BIRD SALE ROOM
- * BIG BIRD RAFFLE
- * COMMERCIAL EXHIBITORS

SEMINARS*

- * LINDA GREESON
- * DR. PETER SAKAS, D.V.M.

• CASH • RIBBONS • TROPHIES •

MEET US AT THE ST. CHARLES EXHIBITION HALL,
LOCATED IN THE MARK TWAIN MALL, ST. CHARLES, MO

STAY AT THE BEAUTIFUL BUDGETEL INN.
FOR RESERVATIONS CALL: 314-946-6936.

* TO RESERVE COMMERCIAL SPACE
CALL GLENNA JONES 314-389-4766
OR CAROL FIELD 314-385-0323

SPONSORED BY:



rotlets have voracious appetites while Mexicans eat very little. They are difficult and frustrating to breed. Unlike other species, they will not double-clutch and often only produce a clutch every other year. Even the incubation period is longer in Mexicans — 24 days instead of 20.

Most Mexicans will only breed in a colony situation of more than three pairs. They are the only parrotlets that can be kept in a colony. They have the sweetest, most gentle personality of all the parrotlets. Many handfed babies, who are now breeders, continue to allow handling years after being paired. If treated gently, even the untamed ones rarely bite. Due to their limited numbers and low rate of breeding success, these birds should not be sold into the pet trade but only to other breeders. The International Parrotlet Society is gathering information to begin a studbook for Mexican Parrotlets. There are two subspecies of these birds.

Forpus cyanopygius pallidus ranges from southeastern Sonora to northwestern Mexico. In both males and females the plumage is lighter green with a gray tinge and the underparts more yellow than in the nominate.

Forpus cyanopygius insularis is found only on the Tres Marias Islands off the coast of western Mexico. They are considered rare and have only been sighted on two of the four islands. A recent expedition to Maria Madre produced several encounters with these parrotlets, including a flock of 20. They were last reported on this island in 1925. This subspecies has a dark green head, back and wings as well as blue-green underparts. The face is yellow-green and the males' rumps and wings are darker blue than in the nominate species.

Another large species, the Blue-winged Parrotlet *Forpus xanthopterygius* is often confused with Mexican Parrotlets. Blue-wingeds are sleek, streamlined birds, while Mexicans are stocky and round. They range from Paraguay and northeastern Argentina through eastern Brazil. Males have dark violet-blue on the rump and wings. Females have green-yellow feathers on the face between the eyes and yellow underparts. Blue-wingeds tend to be nervous birds and even handfed babies are easily disturbed once they are weaned. They would not make good pets, which is fortun-



Pacific Parrotlets (*Forpus coelestis*) are the most common found in the U.S. Here the male (right) and female sit in the nest box with a newly hatched baby.



Male Pacific Parrotlets have a cobalt-blue streak extending back from the eye as well as cobalt-blue on the rump and wings.



Parrotlets are sexually dimorphic. The female is usually all green as in this Pacific Parrotlet hen.



Male Spectacled Parrotlets (*Forpus conspicillatus*) are perhaps the most brilliantly colored with bright blue-violet on the wings, rump and encircling the eyes.



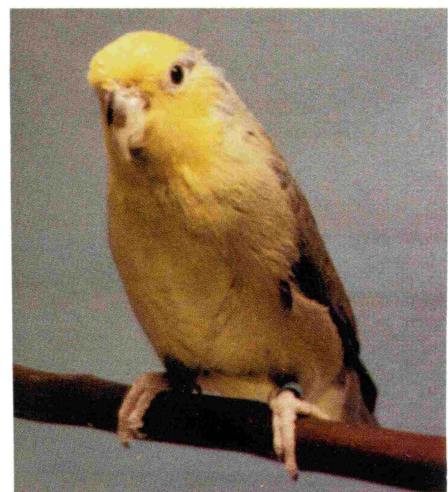
Blue-winged Parrotlets (*Forpus xanthoptergius*) are sleek, streamlined birds. The males have a deep blue rump patch and turquoise on the wings.



Green-rumped Parrotlet (*Forpus passerinus viridissimus*) males lack the blue coloring as on the rump of other male parrotlets. Their primary wing feathers are cobalt-blue while the secondaries are turquoise.



One of the larger parrotlet species, Mexican Parrotlet (*Forpus cyanopygius*) males have bright turquoise feathering on the rump and wings.



The rarest and largest parrotlets are the Yellow-faced (*Forpus xanthops*). Males have deep cobalt-blue wings, rump and eye streak similar to Pacific Parrotlets.

Photos by Sandee and Robert Molenda

Avian Trade Shows & Seminars

Macaw Landing Foundation
Public Viewing Aviary
Third Thursday of each month
 Jantzen Beach Center, exit 308 off I-5
 1919 N. Jantzen, Portland, Oregon
 Mon. - Fri. 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
 Sat. & Sun. 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
 Bird care seminar: Speaker Pat Huff, D.V.M.
 Macaw Landing 7:30 p.m.
 For information call: (503) 286-0882

Central New York Caged Bird Club
Spring Sale and Exhibition
May 21, 1994
 Great Northern Mall
 Route 31, Clay, NY
 For information contact:
 Dave Dixon (?) 598-5927
 or Debbie Johnson (?) 598-5024

3rd Annual Upper Midwest Bird Mart
May 21, 1994
 Minnesota State Fairgrounds
 Empire Commons Building
 St. Paul, Minnesota
 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 Admission \$3, and under 12 \$2
 For information contact:
 P.O. Box 20601, Bloomington, MN 55420
 Call Nellie (612) 854-6439
 or Dallas (612) 427-1046

Central Mississippi Bird Club
 presents their
2nd Annual Bird Fair
May 21-22, 1994
 Miss. State Fairgrounds
 Jackson, Mississippi
 For information contact:
 W. Nations (601) 825-7809
 Mary Moore (601) 924-1180
 Candy Lott (601) 924-3893

Central Pennsylvania Cage Bird Club
Bird Mart & Pet Bird Show
May 22, 1994
 Holiday Inn, Grantville, PA
 located at the Hershey-Harrisburg Exit #28,
 off I-81 at Route 743
 For information call:
 Janet Landvater, bird mart mgr.
 RD #1, Box 135-K, Hershey, PA 17033
 Phone (717) 533-4251

Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club
 presents its
Bird Fair
May 28, 29, 1994
 at the Middle Tennessee State University Campus
 Agriculture Pavilion-Livestock Center
 Murfreesboro, TN
 Contact Fair Chairman: Larry Crawford
 1447 Twin Oak Dr., Murfreesboro, TN 37130
 Phone (615) 890-6906

Greater Rochester Hookbill Association
Sale and Auction
June 4, 1994
 10:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.
 Admission free
 Genesee Conservation League
 1570 Penfield Rd., Penfield, NY 14526
 For information write:
 GRHA, P.O. Box 427, Penfield, NY 14526-0427
 or phone: Gloria Giraolo (716) 342-9529 or
 Linda Matteson (315) 597-4836

Gold Country Avicultural Society
 presents its
3rd Annual Exotic Bird Mart
June 12, 1994
 Mother Lode Fairgrounds, Sonora, CA
 For vendor information, write:
 Gold Country Avicultural Society
 P.O. Box 3692, Sonora, CA 95370-3692
 Attn: Rodney P. Silva
 or call (209) 533-3496

Erie Cage Bird Club's
4th Annual Bird Fair
June 18, 1994
 Perry Hiway Hose Co.
 Route 19, Erie, PA
 Public welcome, no admission charge
 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 Info: Sue Turner (814) 838-1858
 or Debbie Foote (814) 967-2866

American Federation of Aviculturists
20th Annual Convention
August 4-6, 1994
 Knoxville, Tennessee
 Hosted by Tennessee Valley
 Exotic Bird Club
 Holiday Inn/Convention Center,
 Worlds Fair Park
 Seminar topics:
 "Out of African and Down Under"
 Speakers from Africa, Australia, Canada and the United States.
 The Convention will take place on Friday and Saturday and have
 exhibitors from all over the United States. Don't miss this once-in-a-
 lifetime opportunity to meet with some of the world's top aviculturists.
 For more information:
 Cindy Aident (615) 690-7252 or
 Gary Reid (615) 690-0613

Mid-South Budgie Club
 will host a
Budgie Bird Show
August 20, 1994
 Quality Inn-Executive Plaza
 823 Murfreesboro Road, Nashville, TN
 For additional information:
 Candice Patrick, Apt. B3-7,
 400 Forrest Park Road, Madison, TN 37115
 Phone (615) 868-8840 or
 Carol Dunn, 115 Chippendale Drive,
 Hendersonville, TN 37075
 Phone (615) 324-8642

Mid-South Budgie Club
 will host a
Bird Fair
August 21, 1994
 Quality Inn-Executive Plaza
 823 Murfreesboro Road, Nashville, TN
 For information contact:
 Mary Russell
 416 West Cherry St., Glasgow, KY 42141
 Phone: (502) 651-8150

Central Alabama Avicultural Society
 presents its
Annual Show & Fair
September 3 - 4, 1994
 Howard Johnson Governors House Hotel
 2705 E. South Blvd., Montgomery, AL
 Hotel reservations: 1-800-334-8459
 For information call:
 (205) 857-3817, (205) 892-2204, or (205) 279-6829

Chester County Bird Breeders
 and **Keystone Cockatle Club**
Annual All-Bird Show
September 10, 1994
 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 Sheraton Valley Forge
 Convention Center, Plaza Entrance
 Valley Forge, PA
 For information contact:
 Doris Rickards (215) 647-4632
 For directions call:
 Sheraton Hotel (215) 337-2000

Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club
Spring Bird Fair
September 17, 1994
 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 Hattendorf Center
 225 E. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL
 (1/2 mile east of Arlington Heights Road)
 Semi-annual event, open to the public.
 Features a wide variety of birds, cages, toys, seed, treats, and
 equipment for sale.
 For everyone from single pet owners to serious breeder/hobbyists.
 General information: (708) 705-6260

Erie Cage Bird Club's Annual Auction
September 18, 1994
 2306 Norcross Rd., Erie, PA
 Public welcome, no admission charge
 Starting at 1:00 p.m.
 For info.: Diane Holtz (814) 898-2675

Coastal Bend Cage Bird Club's
5th Annual Bird Fair
September 25, 1994
 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
 Moose Lodge, 8001 S. Padre Island Dr.
 Corpus Christi, Texas
 For more info:
 Linda Young (512) 991-2704

South Jersey Bird Club
Bird Show
October 1, 1994
 Garden State Park Racetrack
 Cherry Hill, New Jersey
 Open to the public: 10 - 6
 Judging, educational seminars, vendors, DNA sexing, bird sale room,
 and more.
 For more information, contact:
 Bob Hence, show manager (609) 753-8949

Avicultural Society of Tucson (Arizona)
Ninth Annual Bird Fair
October 16, 1994
 Tucson Exposition Center,
 Marketplace, USA, Irvington Road
 9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
 Demonstrations, lectures, raffles
 (hand-fed bird grand prize).
 Contact Su Egen, P.O. Box 41501,
 Tucson, AZ 85717-1501
 Phone & fax: (602) 325-0009

Connecticut Association for Aviculture
 presents its
18th Annual Exotic Bird Show
October 22, 1994
 "Tails-U-Win" Hall
 175 Adams Street, Manchester, CT 06040
 For information call:
 Show Secretary Chris Voronovitch
 at (203) 649-8220

**Exotic Bird Club of Florida
Bird Show**

October 29, 1994

Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Resort
1300 N. Atlantic Ave.,
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931
Reservations: (407) 783-2271
For information contact:
Maureen O'Steen
613 Dianne Dr., Melbourne, FL 32935

**Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club
hosts its annual**

**Fall Show/Fair Extravaganza
October 29-30, 1994**

Nashville, Tennessee State Fairgrounds
Creative Arts Building
One day judged show - Sat., Oct. 29
Show chairman Bill Hite (615) 643-2617
runs simultaneously with a
two day sale/fair Oct. 29-30.
Fair chairmen:
Wilma Crawford (615) 890-6906 or
Joy Johnson (615) 895-3386

**Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club
62nd Annual Cage Bird Show
November 5, 1994**

12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Rolling Meadows Holiday Inn
3405 Algonquin Rd.,
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
Phone (708) 259-5000

Judges:

Type Canaries - Harold Sodamann
Hartz Canaries - Harold Sodamann
American Singer Canaries - Mike Bacon
Colorbred Canaries - Ignacio Perea
Finches & Softbills - Brian Binns (England)
Lovebirds - Lee Horton
Hookbills - Ray Johnson
Budgerigars - Don Langell
American Cockatiel Society - Carl Helton
National Cockatiel Society - Lee Horton
Juniors - to be announced

National Finch & Softbill Society Regional Show and the Border
Breeders of Chicago All Border Show will be held in conjunction with
our show this year.

General information: (708) 705-6260

**Way Out West Bird Expo,
Arizona's Biggest Bird Mart
November 13, 1994**

State Fairgrounds

9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Everything from finches to macaws,
cages, feed, bird toys and more.

\$3.50 adults / \$2.50 seniors

\$1.50 children 5-12

For vendor info: (602) 973-9282

Alamo City Bird Mart

**"Biggest Little Bird Mart in Texas!"
December 10, 1994**

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Live Oak Civic Center

8101 Pat Booker Rd., off Loop 1604
24,000 sq. ft. of breeders cages and supplies,
seminars, microchipping clinic, raffle.
For vendor info call: (210) 648-0788

or send for space application:

2611 Tucker, San Antonio, TX 78222

ate since there are so few of them in the United States. Blue-wingeds have five subspecies.

Forpus xanthopterygius flavissimus is native to northeastern Brazil. The general plumage is paler green and the underparts are more yellow than the nominate. The blue in the males is also paler and they have bright yellow on the face and throat. The females also have more yellow on the face, throat and underparts. This subspecies is being bred successfully in Europe.

Forpus xanthopterygius crassirostris ranges from northeastern Peru and southeastern Columbia east along the Amazon to northeastern Brazil. The blue of the males is paler than in the nominate. The primary coverts are gray-violet blue and the secondaries are darker violet blue. The upper beak is compressed laterally in the middle. The females are more green than the nominate and they are smaller birds.

Forpus xanthopterygius ollallae is only found in two locations along the Amazon River in northeastern Brazil. Both males and females are darker green than *crassirostris* and the males have darker blue on the wings and rump.

Forpus xanthopterygius spengeli occurs along the coastal region of northern Columbia. The males differ from the nominate in that the color on the rump is more dark turquoise-blue. The primary coverts are violet-blue with the remaining being dark turquoise. Females are similar to the nominate but have more yellow on the forehead.

Forpus xanthopterygius flavescens is found in eastern Bolivia and central Peru. The general plumage of this subspecies is paler and more yellow than in the nominate in both males and females. The blue is paler in the males and the females have more yellow on the forehead and face.

The most striking species of parrotlet is the Spectacled *Forpus conspicillatus*. They are recent imports to the United States which were obtained from captive-bred birds in Belgium. In the wild, they are found in Panama and Columbia. These gorgeous little parrots weigh approximately 25 grams. Males are a deep, rich evergreen with bright violet-blue on the wings, rump and completely encircling the eye. Females are bright green with emerald feathers encircling

the eye and yellow-green faces. These birds are very rare and are only being traded with participants in the stud-book sponsored by the International Parrotlet Society. Since the birds are prolific in captivity, it is hoped with careful management their numbers will increase substantially. There are two subspecies of Spectacled Parrotlets.

Forpus conspicillatus metae ranges from central Columbia to western Venezuela. On males, the head is bright green with yellow-green face and throat. The eye ring is reduced to a thin partial line of blue feathers. The female's plumage is more yellow.

Forpus conspicillatus caucuae, which is found in southwestern Columbia, can be distinguished by its large, heavy beak. The blue plumage of the male is lighter and less violet than the nominate.

The rarest species of parrotlet is the Yellow-faced *Forpus xanthops*. Weighing close to 50 grams, it is also the largest. They are found only in one remote valley in northwestern Peru. Males have deep cobalt-blue wings, rump and eye streak similar to male Pacifics. Both males and females have bright yellow on the forehead, face and throat. Regularly bred in Europe, they have all but disappeared from American aviculture. Also, as in Pacifics, there are no subspecies of Yellow-faced Parrotlets.

Sclater's Parrotlets *Forpus sclateri* have never been imported into this country and are rare even among European aviculturists. They are found in northern Brazil, southeastern Columbia, northeastern Ecuador, eastern Peru and northern Bolivia. They are approximately five and one-half inches in length. The males' general plumage is dark green, darker than any other species. They also have emerald green on the forehead and cheeks. The lower back and rump are a deep violet-blue which is also darker than any other parrotlet. The females are lighter than the males with yellow underparts as well as yellow-green foreheads and cheeks. The Slater's Parrotlet has one subspecies.

Forpus sclateri eidos are native to western Guyana, Venezuela, Brazil and Columbia. The males have lighter green and blue plumage than the nominate. The females are also lighter green with more yellow, particularly on the breast. ●