

and early 1900s attributed to the ebb, or, like *chloroptera* on Hispaniola, it had difficulty adapting to living commensally with man.

Sadly, nothing can now be done to relieve this species, but the future of *chloroptera* need not necessarily follow the path of *maugei*.

On Hispaniola, the second largest island in the Greater Antilles and which is composed of Haiti to the west and the Dominican Republic to the east, the Hispaniolan conure is found from sea level to 3,000 meters (9,842 ft.). Its habitat there is varied, ranging from arid scrub to lush forest in the mountains, where it is most numerous. Seasonally it is present on the islands of Beata and Soana, off the coast of the Dominican Republic, but even then it is not plentiful. Its status on the mainland seems to vary considerably from area to area.

Haiti has been largely deforested and there the conure is very rare, possibly even nearing extinction. This is a clear indication of the ebb, because Danforth (1929, *Auk*, 46:366) encountered thousands daily in early July in the region between Mirebalais, Haiti, and San Juan in the Dominican Republic.

In the Dominican Republic it has traditionally been more plentiful, although several devastating hurricanes, loss of habitat and shooting when it raids corn crops have had a negative impact. Further, a dam was constructed earlier this decade in the region of San Juan de la Maguana, where it was particularly plentiful; its effects on the population are as yet unknown (Annabelle Dod, *in litt.*, 1980).

Given the likeliness that man will continue to make inroads into its habitat, one can expect the decline to continue, perhaps at an accelerated pace. To establish a foundation stock in captivity to safeguard the species would be a positive step in its preservation.

My interest in this species started in the mid-1970s, after I examined the last individual taken on Mona Island. A search then began that resulted in a singleton being obtained in June 1981. It was a hand-reared bird, with a slightly dropped wing which impeded long flight and had the tendency to pluck its breast, and had been obtained in 1975 by Van Saun Park Zoo in Paramus, New Jersey.

This particular bird showed aggression to other parrots but, for some unknown reason, especially so with

Petz's or half-moon conures (*Aratinga canicularis*). I conjectured that this behavior may have arisen after an injury was received, perhaps by a *canicularis*.

One afternoon in late 1984, the unexpected happened: a man called after having seen my mention of the species and offered me his six *chloroptera*, all having been imported from Haiti. Could this be another wrong lead? I wondered, after having followed several birds always to meet a white-eyed, but this opportunity was unique — the birds had come from Haiti and had been privately imported. When they finally arrived, I could not believe my eyes. They were genuine *chloroptera*! Luck was certainly on my side, for surgical sexing proved them to be three pairs.

One pair went to Greg Isaacs, this move taking place so that, should an unfortunate catastrophe strike, all would not be lost. They nested and in 1985 several young were reared.

The next year the pair and young were received back, after Greg decided to reduce his collection. By then my *chloroptera* had already nested and since this time a considerable number of young were reared. This year alone over 15 fledged.

Young *chloroptera* are much like their parents, except that the red on the underside of wings is mixed with green and the bill has greyish color near the base of the cutting edge. They wean by 12 weeks and attain sexual maturity by a year of age.

We have placed pairs with several aviculturists and hope to continue doing so in the future. If sufficient pairs are distributed, we will be able to see the establishment of this conure. The largest obstacle we encountered is the ratio of males to females produced; for every hen there are at least two available males. Another disappointment has been the lack of interest from aviculturists. Many appear only interested in breeding those species that will produce great monetary rewards; the gratitude of having helped establish an endangered species appears not to be sufficient reward.

The chance of establishing an endangered species in aviculture, especially one that appears willing to reproduce, is not one that will likely repeat itself. Seizing this opportunity will allow us to look back at some future point and remark that the 1980s was not a decade of lost opportunity. ●

Editors' Note: The Avy Award Committee is seeking information on the first breeding of the Hispaniolan Conure, *Aratinga chloroptera*. If any person can confirm Greg Isaac's success in 1985 (see Tony Silva's article), please write to Dale R. Thompson, Chairman Avy Awards Committee through the AFA Home Office.

Breeding the Hispaniolan Conure

(*Aratinga chloroptera*)

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The Hispaniolan Conure (*Aratinga chloroptera*) is a noisy, green conure from the island of Hispaniola (Haiti and Dominican Republic) and formerly Mona Island. While it lives in all habitats, most are found in the mountains. The plumage is overall green with red outermost underwing coverts, bend of wing, and edge of forewing. The greater underwing coverts are green marked with red, and some birds have a few red feathers on their heads. The underside of the tail and flight feathers is olive yellow. The Hispaniolan Conure also has a creamy white, naked periorbital ring, a yellow iris, and brownish legs.

As an avid collector of conures, having 30 species, I jumped at the chance to acquire a pair of Hispaniolan Conures. I was able to get them in the fall of 1989 from Tony Silva, before he became curator of Loro Parque in Spain. Their ages are



Photo by Mike Weems

unknown to me. After receipt, they were quarantined in a holding cage for three months before being moved to permanent quarters.

Since the climate in Georgia is relatively mild, my birds are kept in open barns. The barns are of pole construction with a ten foot tall shed-type tin roof. The sides are covered with 1/2 inch hardware cloth, to keep out predators, and the north side is also covered with plastic, to cut down on wind. The individual cages are hung from the rafters. They measure 4' tall x 2' wide x 6' long. The cages are made from 1" x 1" 14-gauge, galvanized steel screen. The seams and door hinges are fastened with "J" clips. This makes a very sturdy cage which requires no additional supporting structure. The bottom of the suspended cages is also wire, which helps with sanitation. The cages have hardwood branches (usually dogwood, which is quite indestructable) across the cages for perches. Obviously the barns are unheated. On the rare times that the temperature gets below 20 degrees (three to five times a year), I use Mr. Heaters. These radiant gas heaters are set up several feet from the cages so that each heater will warm the air in three cages.

All of my adult conures get fresh food and water each day. On even days of the month, they get 9 oz. of K.T. Safflower Select, four monkey biscuits, and an assortment of fruits and vegetables. These include apples,

oranges, kale, cabbage, collards, corn, and whatever else is in season. On odd days they get one to two slices of whole wheat bread, along with the monkey biscuits, fruits and vegetables. I give extra food to birds with nestlings. The adults are kept on this diet year round.

My Hispaniolan Conures are kept in a barn that includes 40 other birds: conures, macaws, and lorries. I do have another male Hispaniolan Conure which is housed in a separate barn, 40 feet away. He is out of sight but is within hearing range.

In mid-January, I gave the pair a 12" x 12" x 24" plywood nest box with pine shavings for nesting material. Wild Hispaniolan Conures use old woodpecker holes. During the breeding season, there are only two caretakers. No extra traffic is allowed in the barns, and the birds are never handled. No prophylactic methods or special breeding housings are used. I check the nest boxes each Monday and Friday. The weather during the breeding season was mild — highs in the 70s and lows in the 30s. No courtship displays were observed. The nest box was not used until the female was ready to lay. The female swells up in the liver and kidney area three weeks after breeding. The first time, I called my vet, Dr. Bran Ritchie, and he advised me not to move them because they were acting normal. The first egg was laid the next day, March 3, 1990. Both birds took part in brooding. Three eggs were laid but all proved to be infertile when they were candled two weeks later. A second clutch of three eggs was laid April 2 through 6, within ten days of the female swelling. They hatched on April 27 and 29 (approx. 25 days). The largest was pulled at three days, and the other at 12 days. A third clutch of three eggs was laid in early July with two fertile eggs. The infertile egg was measured. It is off-white and of the "short oval" form and measures 1.15" x .95" (29.21mm x 24.13mm).

After hatching, the nestings were housed in a human baby incubator at a temperature of 85 degrees. They were hand fed every four hours with a 12cc syringe. Their diet consisted of 50% Zu-Preem (primate dry animal food), 25% Topper (hand feeding formula) and 25% Gerber oatmeal mixed with water. When they started climbing out of their bowls, they were moved to a cage with a perch. Weaning was accomplished July 16, 1990. ●

A youngster not yet fully feathered shows the red coloration on the outermost wing coverts and the edge of the forewing. This is a distinct marking for the Hispaniolan Conure.



Photo by Jack Clinton-Eitniew

This photo was taken in a zoo in the Dominican Republic, the island where the Hispaniolan Conure is native. It is both rare in the wild and in captivity.