



The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)

(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)

PO Box 248, Panania NSW 2213, Australia

Major Mitchell Cockatoo (*Cacatua Leadbeateri*)

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By Ben Quist

I have one pair that I have bred six young from. They are in a covered aviary 3 1/2 feet wide and the covered in part is 7 feet long, and the flight is also 7 feet long. The log they use is 10-12 inches in diameter. I tried bigger logs with a larger diameter but it wasn't successful as the young were always dead after 3-4 days. A smaller log seems to be more favourable. So that I could breed six young in one season, I took the first three young out and hand reared them.

About 12 days later the hen went back to nest and laid another three eggs and then raised these three young themselves.

As far as feeding goes, I use a mixture of sunflower, white French millet and plain canary as well as some safflower. The main seed they seem to eat is the sunflower. I give them the seed as a mix and only change it once a week, because if I top it up every second day or so they will only eat the sunflower.

So I only give them enough seed for one week so that they will eat all the types of seed. I also give them apple every second day and spinach every second day and some chickweed, which they love, and some dock weed. They really like the dock when they are feeding their young.



Ben Quist being interviewed by Sid Gale
at the ASNSW Meeting

For a soaked seed I use sunflower. As well I use soaked canary when they are feeding young ones. They seem to thrive on this.

To hand raise the young; I use a mixture that I have developed myself over many years. I prefer to take the young from the nest at seven days of age, because I feel it is very important for the young to be fed by the parents for at least 6-7 days. Sometimes it happens that you have to take them earlier, for instance on the first day, if the pair doesn't look after them properly. To overcome this disadvantage, for the first three feedings, I give the young just plain yoghurt - natural yoghurt. After this I switch them over to my normal mixture.

I don't seem to have any problems with the pairs fighting as can be seen with some of the pairs of large cockatoos. However at the moment the cock is still trying to drive the hen to nest (at the beginning of March) which is a bit unfavourable because he chases her all the time. I think the main cause of this is the fact that the breeding season was pretty late this year because the first young ones that I pulled were at the end of December and the second round of eggs she laid were at the middle of January. Usually the Major Mitchells go down towards the end of August through to the beginning of September.

These young have to be hand reared for about 6-7 weeks. I do most of this myself, but if I have to go out my wife steps in and takes over. I would like to make a few comments about the feeding of yoghurt to the young. As you know the hen passes bacteria to the young when she regurgitates the feed to them. This gets their system working properly. I tried this in Europe years ago and it always worked in getting their digestive systems set. I find this is necessary to get the very young ready for hand feeding.

In conclusion I would like to say that it is a shame more people don't keep them, because they really are a delight and a special bird - in fact they are one of my favourite birds.

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