



## **The Crimson Wing Parrot** **Aprosmictus Erythropterus**

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**By Geoff Girvan**

A proven breeding pair of Crimson Wing parrots were purchased in February 1976. They were placed in a flight which faced an easterly direction of the following dimensions:

**Capacity:**

12 foot long, 7 foot average height, 4 foot width.

**Construction:**

6 foot shelter, 6 foot open.

**Shelter:**

Cement sheet walls, cement sheet roof insulation under corrugated iron.

**Open:**

Double wired 3/8" woven mesh painted black on the walls. Unpainted roof.

**Floor:**

Dirt/grass/sand.

No other birds were located in this flight. Two pairs of [polytelis](#) and [neophemas](#) occupied the adjacent flights in the aviary.

When the birds were first placed in the aviary they were flighty and took about two months to become used to their new surroundings and the daily visit for general aviary husbandry. Entry to their flight was via a door located midway along the length which gave the birds a choice to move away to either end from the person entering.

During July 1976 a log approximately 20 inches internal diameter, about 4 foot long and approximately 3 feet off the ground, was placed in the southwest corner of the shelter - the entrance hole facing about northeast. A mixture of about 50% sand and 50% sawdust (in a damp condition) about 3 inches deep was placed in the bottom of the log. A tapered side wedge, approximately 8 inches from the bottom, covered an inspection hole.

**April to the end of July:**

Drought conditions and severe frosts.



Crimson Wing Parrot (Cock)  
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**August:**

Snow on nearby hills and wet cold weather in the main.

**September:**

Warm weather with moderate rain and cold.

**October:**

Record rainfall plus cold windy days.

**November:**

Oscillation between snow on nearby ranges, rain, wind and cold to warm days.

**December:**

Warm with high gusty winds - some very cold nights with heavy dew.

Due to the tremendous variation in weather from month to month in the above period the breeding season was delayed by up to two months for many species in the area. The Crimson Wings however were one exception.

During late September the cock was continually displaying and a check on the 15th November revealed four eggs. Apart from early morning and late afternoon feeds the hen sat very tight. The cock bird fed the hen during her brief sojourns off the nest to feed. During the incubation period the cock bird continued to display.

One of the eggs was damaged - a longitudinal crease in the shell - and this egg was found (about 8 foot from the log) about a week after the first inspection, removed by the hen no doubt.

The first chick was observed to have hatched on 5th November - all three within the next two days. They were quite striking in an ugly way in that they had a bulbous stomach with an extended pipe like neck and the usually grotesque head of the young parrots. Their build reminded me of flasks used in a chemistry set, with a head added. After about a week and a half, the body shape alters considerably and takes on a form similar to that of the adults. When compared at a similar stage with say the body formation of a Princess, the size of the body of the Crimson Wing was huge. At the end of three weeks when feathers were starting to develop the ovate shape of the body is approximately 6 inches long by 3 inches.

Two birds fledged on the 10th December, the third on the 12th December - the latter bird not being as forward in development as the first two. During the incubation period and subsequent to fledging, a couple of interesting observations were made:

- The hen sought assistance in feeding from the cock by begging in a noisy manner similar to that which occurred during the courtship - while the young birds remained in the nest. However once all three had fledged, the hen continued to feed them, apparently without assistance from the cock bird and without any noisy pleading from the young. She would feed, wait a while, then move to one of the young birds (and without the exaggerated regurgitation of the cock bird) quietly opened her beak and disgorge the food to an equally quiet fledgling.
- When observing the young in the nest they would nestle in together, facing into a common centre and entwine their extended necks in a spiral manner, particularly during the first two weeks until they filled out. It was also noticed that they nestled in the centre of the area available, perhaps to allow easier access for their mother as she descended.

- During the last week in the log, it was apparent that the large area of the log allowed the young to exercise their wings. They could often be heard ascending in the log in this period, using the flapping wings which no doubt accounted for the advanced and relatively smooth initial flights on the immediate departure from the nest. When one considers their natural habitat this may be an essential requirement to help avoid the relatively numerous predators normally abounding.
- On the fledging of the young, the cock and hen were much less approachable and uttered a warning screech if the young did not move when the aviary was being approached or entered; the cock usually from a distance whereas the hen would also tend to bump the young to a new position.

## Feeding

Due to the drought, followed by the extremely cold weather, green food was late in maturing. However seeding grasses, [wild oats](#) (when green) plus odd [milk thistles](#) and [silverbeet](#) (in small regular quantities) were provided.

Prior to the young hatching, half an apple was provided each day. This was increased to one apple once hatching occurred and was maintained after fledging.

The normal seed mix of 5% grey [sunflower](#), 45% [canary](#), 48% mix of [pannicum](#) and grey [millet](#) and 2% white French millet, was supplemented separately with additional grey sunflower in varying degrees, depending upon climatic conditions and the rate of the development of the chicks.

[Cuttlefish](#) and [shell grit](#) is always available. Until the first hatching a branch of fresh [gum leaves](#) was supplied on a weekly basis. This was discontinued only because of personal circumstances. [Ti-tree](#) is also provided but on an irregular basis.

The young birds at about one week after fledging were very quiet - perching about 18 inches from the end of the flight where they could be examined in detail. One bird has yellow edged tail feathers, a lot more red in the wing feathers and the head shape appears similar to the adult cock. The other two have the pink/yellow tinges on the edge of the tail feathers, have less red in the wings and the head shape more in keeping with the hen. Time alone will prove whether this can be taken as an early guide to sexing.

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