



Observations on Masked Lovebirds *Agapornis Personata*

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By Kees and Wik van der Neut

At the beginning of 1972 we became the proud owners of a cock masked, but could not get hold of a hen, so placed it with some peach-faced hens. The result was three nests of hybrids, totalling 11, for which we found a good market.

By sheer luck we were able to obtain a hen at the beginning of 1973 and placed the pair in an aviary on their own measuring 7' x 5' x 6'. After supplying the pair with two nest boxes, 12" x 6" x 7" with a 2" diameter hole at one side, they were observed to carry coarse grasses to the nest, sometimes soaking pieces in the water tray and carrying them in the rump feathers. One of the boxes was completely filled, leaving only a tunnel to the side opposite the entrance hole, where a hollow was made. In the meantime, plenty of mating was seen, including the feeding of the hen by the male, and sometimes baths were taken.



Peach-faced Lovebird
Courtesy of www.parrot-bird.com



Mask-faced Lovebird
Courtesy of www.parrot-bird.com

Feeding was of equal parts sunflower and plain canary seed. At the beginning of winter, the first four eggs were laid. During incubation, which lasted only 23 days, the cock bird was almost always in the nest box with the hen, only coming out to feed and drink. After the twenty-third day the first egg hatched and the other three eggs hatched at daily intervals after this period. Six to six and a half weeks later the young ones left the nest and were fed by both parents. At the first sign of danger they would fly back to the nest box, also staying there during the night.

During the first two weeks after leaving the nest, the cock bird started building a part nest in the second box and tried to direct the young ones to this box. In the meantime, there was also some rebuilding at the old nest and we notice mating and the cock feeding the hen again, after which, the young were not allowed to enter the old nest box. By the third week we found two eggs and therefore removed the young ones. During 1973 we had three nests totalling 13 young with the last ones leaving the nest at the beginning of December, after which we found no more eggs or interest by the birds for breeding, so we cleaned out the boxes and replaced them the same day.

From the thirteen young obtained we exchanged six to keep fresh blood and paired the birds into breeding cabinets for observation. During 1974 the old pair followed the same pattern as in 1973 and in late winter different couples of the young ones of 1973 started building. No mating was seen but there were plenty of eggs obtained, which were all clear.



Mask-faced Lovebird (chicks and eggs)
Courtesy of www.parrot-bird.com

By late 1974 it was decided to place all thirteen birds into the one aviary, and induce them to colony breed. Seven nest boxes were included. Building started very quickly, and some hens were soliciting the cocks to mate by sitting in a saddle position in front of the cocks. The males were trying - even sitting head to tail, but the result was still clear eggs. It was not until September 1975 that the first full egg was found, which subsequently hatched.

We conclude that hens appear to mature earlier than males and it is our opinion that while hens may be fully mature after only one year, cocks require at least two years. The old pair is consistently breeding with nests of four to five eggs and during 1975 we have thus far had nine young, and two of the last five eggs laid have just hatched.

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