

RARES: The Red-faced Love Bird

(A compilation of past articles)

As most of you know our Society has been around for over thirty years. The first copy of 'Agapornis World' was printed in October 1976. I have been the editor for all the issues with the exception of two. In the beginning we published a monthly Journal in which a lot of very interesting information was shared.

I still receive many inquiries about the "Rare" Love Birds. So I decided to review some of the information that I have been able to accumulate. For this issue I have chosen to share the information we have gathered on the Red-faced (*Agapornis pullaria*). So as not to be attacked by some of our elite members, yes, I am aware that the "powers that be" have changed the Latin name to *Agapornis pullarius*, but being somewhat old and stubborn I still prefer the names I have used for the last 40 years.

We have printed several articles on the Red-faced and I will use them here in a chronological order. First I will begin with a description and sketch of the bird. The sketch I am using for this bird was produced for ALBS by Jean Hessler from Costa Mesa, California. She was also the designer of our logo. Before I begin it is interesting to note that the Red-faced is the one species of Love Bird that has been kept in captivity longer than any other. It is quoted both in the Duke of Bedford's book "Parrots and Parrot-like Birds" and in E.N.T. Vane's "Guide to Lovebirds and Parrotlets" that the Red-faced can be traced back as a pet to the sixteenth century. There is a portrait of an English Lady with a Red-faced as her

pet. Even with this time in captivity it is still considered one of the most difficult Love Birds to breed.

The Basic Description of the Red-faced according to E.N.T. Vane:



Distribution: Western and Equatorial Africa

Adult male: Bright green, paler on the breast. Tail feathers green marked with black and scarlet. Face scarlet; upper rump brilliant blue; under wing coverts black. Bill bright red. Total length 6 inches.

Adult female: Differs from the male in having the under wing coverts green and the red area of the face a more orange hue and usually smaller. Less blue on the rump.

Immature: Green with a little blue on the rump and a very little yellow on the forehead and around the beak and on the throat.

Species: *Agapornis pullaria pullaria* – West Abyssinia (near the Omo River), Uganda and Ruanda region between 1,500 and 4,500 feet as the higher altitude west of the Lakes Albert, Edward and Kivu. *Agapornis pullaria guineensis* – West Africa from Sierra Leone, south to North Angola, right across Central Africa as far as Lake Albert.

BREEDING THE RED-FACED LOVEBIRD [AGAPORNIS PULLARIA] IN SOUTH AFRICA

Bred by David Dale and written and illustrated by John Perry.
(Pinelands, Nr. Cape Town, S. Africa)

The January/February, 1957 issue of the Avicultural Magazine gives a very interesting and good account of the breeding of *Agapornis pullaria* by Mr. A. A. Prestwich, of Southgate, England. The article is accompanied by an extremely good coloured plate of this fascinating lovebird painted by Dr. D.M. Reid-Henry.

This present article is a follow-up in recording a second success with this difficult species in South Africa. During 1956 I was fortunate in obtaining a pair of these birds from a friend who in turn had obtained them from a sailor on a visiting ship. It is probably not known in England that the importation of foreign birds into South Africa is a very difficult and costly process.

However, I was extremely anxious to try breeding from this pair and having consulted several ornithological treatises on the subject, came to the conclusion that the provision of a nesting site similar to that used by the birds in a natural state would lead to success. The pair was liberated in an aviary approximately 24 ft. long by 12ft. wide by 7 ft. high in company with a mixed collection of seed eaters and waxbills.

Here in Cape Town most aviculturists provide live food for their birds, when breeding, by supplying a termite which builds mounds of black earth. These

are common in parts of the Peninsula and prove an effective means of supplying the necessary feeding material during the breeding season.

It was with the information gained from Cave and Macdonald's *Birds of the Sudan* that I decided to use several of these termites' nests fixed strategically in the aviary as possible nesting sites. At first the pair took no notice whatsoever of these ant hills but, after about a fortnight, I noticed that as certain amount of burrowing had been undertaken. The burrowing went on until eventually the pair succeeded in making a tunnel right through the ant mound! This happened in each case and owing to the fact that the weather was rather dry and warm (it being November) the nests soon crumbled and disintegrated altogether.


I was about to try again when by force of circumstance I was compelled to remove my aviary and to dispose of my birds. In January, 1958, my neighbour, David Dale, took this pair over and liberated them in an aviary some 30 ft. by 12 ft. by 10 ft. high with a shelter 12 ft. by 6 ft. by 10 ft. at the southern end, and containing a mixed collection of finches and waxbills and including some Barbary Doves. Knowing of my failure in the use of ants' nests he decided to experiment with cork cubes. Two separate pieces of cork measuring 12 in. by 10 in. by 3 in. each were fastened together, mak-

ing an overall size of 12 in. by 10 in. by 6 in. This solid material was then surrounded by 3/8 in. planking on five sides and hung up in the aviary at the north end, completely in the open. Nothing happened until March, when it was noticed that the female was busy excavating into the cork slab. This went on for a few days until a deep tunnel had been made and the hen eventually disappeared altogether. My friend was very perturbed when the hen disappeared completely for about four weeks. He felt sure she must have died in the nest so he broke the golden

avicultural rule by taking down the nestbox and peering cautiously inside. To his amazement the hen shot out and To his dismay discovered two young unfledged in the nest both dead!


It should be noted that the year 1958 proved to be exceptionally dry for the Cape Province. In fact we enjoyed along period of warm, sunny days almost throughout the winter, so the nest box remained dry and unaffected by moisture.

Incidentally, the nest in this instance



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consisted of a tunnel which ran right through the cork until the wooden back of the box was reached and then turned to one side where a small oval chamber was constructed.

This year Mr. Dale made another attempt by placing an entirely new cork nest site in a similar position and of the same external construction. In early February the pair settled down again to burrowing and formed an opening approximately 1 1/2 in. in diameter. This extended, as before, right through the cork to the back of the covering box. This time, however, the tunnel rose vertically and over towards the front where the breeding chamber was constructed. Another interesting feature of their behaviour this time was the fact that the hen did not hide away in her nest as previously, but was seen to leave the nest twice

a day to be fed by the cock. The male was also noticed carrying to the nest small pieces of the leaves of a creeper (commonly known as the Morning Glory) under its mantle.

By the first week in March it was fairly certain that breeding operations had commenced in earnest. At the beginning of April the hen left the nest more frequently and stayed out for longer periods. She also commenced feeding herself. Both male and female paid regular visits to the nest and both slept in the nest at night. On 30th May the first young bird, hilly fledged, left the nest although no sound of young had been heard. This youngster was strong in flight and had a somewhat deeper green body-colour than the parents. The head was orange and the bill pale orange tipped with black. On 3rd June a second baby left the nest, this speci-



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men having a deep red head with traces of black on the under-wing, so it is fairly certain that it is a male. I should mention at this stage that this year we have experienced one of the wettest periods for years, so that the nest was exposed to a continuous downpour for days on end. Mr. Dale fully expected the young to be drowned in the nest- On 6th June a third chick left the nest and on 11th June a fourth. It was thought that this

might be the full nest of young, but to Mr. Dale's surprise a fifth baby has now appeared (14th June) and is being fed by the parents at the nest entrance.

The birds were fed on a seed mixture consisting of yellow manna, Japanese manna, Canary seed and golden millet.

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SUCCESSFUL BREEDING IN EUROPE OF THE RED-FACED LOVEBIRD [A.P. PULLARIA] IN 1976/77

[EDITOR'S NOTE: As a follow-up to the other article previously printed in this Journal of a successful breeding of Red Faced in South Africa, Dr. Baer sent me this article which appeared in the Journal of the "Parrot Society" of England, May, 1977.]

It is hoped that this report will give the required information to finally establish the Red-faced as an aviary bred bird in Southern Europe, in California and in most other Countries. A few young birds were bred in Lisbon, Portugal during this '76/77 breeding season in the aviaries belonging to my brother and myself. We are thus disclosing the basic principle for the successful breeding as we would be happy to help parrot breeders to firmly establish this species in Aviculture.

At the time of writing Part I of this report, (Feb. 77) the birds are still breeding. Part II will give individual breeding performances of each pair including the size and shape of each nest.

Soon new colour mutations will be available as they have been seen on two occasions and there is a high frequency of colour differentiation in this subspecies.

The really important success factor is the NEST (size, shape, materials used, construction method).

Some details discussed in this report may also be essential to some breeders.

Breeding season - The normal breed-

ing season in Europe starts at the end of summer. During all that time the big nest becomes more than just a nest. It is really a dormitory and a hiding place. During the night the males roost inside the nest with the females and young. When disturbed all the birds including the males will hide inside the nest. Also during cold weather the birds stay most of the daytime inside the nest.

Local conditions are as follows: Each pair have an aviary covered on top at both ends. At one end is the nest, at the other is the food and the aviary corridor. The climate was not very cold, rainy with temperatures never below 4 degrees Centigrade with an average of 9 degrees C at night and 13 degrees C during the day.

A few extra males are together in an outside aviary next to the breeding pairs without roosting nest, so resistance to cold was well acquired.

Availability of Parent Stock

The Red-faced lovebird was my first bird some 30 years ago. Since then I have always been attracted to lovebirds but I have not kept this bird, due to the breeding practical impossibility. Unexpectedly in January 1975, I received a phone call asking if I was prepared to have two hundred Red-faced "Imported" from Portuguese African Territories. I was quite surprised, and that importation turned out to be the biggest and last I heard of. A special acclimatisation room was prepared and the birds received every attention and were kept in strict quar-

antine. They were in poor condition having had the flight feathers cut off on one wing.

I was told that I should expect 50% to 75% mortality rate. I tried everything I knew to keep the birds alive and I was lucky only 25% died, mostly adult birds.

Early that summer I moved all the birds to several outside aviaries. By that time I had separated the very young birds, about 40. They had very little orange on the forehead. Some of them were being fed by a few adult cocks at the time of importation.

I realised I was given probably the last chance to do breeding experiments and testing all possible nest materials, having 40 young birds to start with, plus a mild climate.

The young were not wild compared with the adult birds. When handling the cock birds they would not bite your hand if you didn't hold them too tight. When they do bite it does not hurt at all but the females have a stronger beak.

Besides the young ones, I also selected for myself a few outstanding adult birds including a darker green male and another one having a yellow and red forehead. They paired in an outside aviary with young females.

I sent a quantity of birds to Japan, later let the remaining birds pair themselves and sent several true pairs to Denmark, England, Spain, Brazil and of course to others in Portugal.

Bird Description-I have to add the following to Forshaw's description: The

females have the forehead and facial area orange but on a smaller area than the red on the male. The intensity of the orange varies quite a lot, some are red-orange while others are green or yellow-orange. Only one female has the red colour of the male.

Food Sweet apple is the most important food, it should be available all the time. It is interesting to note that it is necessary to take off the skin at a few spots, otherwise the birds will not start eating the apple.

Green food such as New Zealand spinach stems and wild grasses are also given every three days.

The important thing is to hang the green food and apples on the side wire as this species do not eat easily from the aviary floor. In fact I have never seen the birds on the floor.

Sunflower is also very important during cold weather and for rearing the young. Canary seed and millets are also required. Bread and milk should be important but my birds do not take much or any. Besides milk, some animal protein may be important because I suspect the hen during the excavation of the nest may eat a few termite eggs pupae. Some like to nibble at pelleted feed for chickens.

Size of Aviary and Positioning of the Nest - Size of aviary is not an important factor. The nest must be hung under shade 5 to 10 inches from the top and as far away from people as possible.

I have a quite tame pair that have the nest placed, 3 foot away from the corridor. If the nest is against the end

wire, the entrance hole must face the aviary door as that seems to give a sense of security to the birds. For the same reason I used a 2 x 24 inches piece of plywood hanging 3 feet away from the nest to cover the nest hole from people. The birds use this as a balancing perch.

75 / 76 Breeding Season Results

1st - Colony breeding is quite impossible as females that have been together for one year will kill each other when the nest is presented and the breeding season starts. Three good females were lost during this season before I reached this conclusion.

2nd - Peat or compressed turf as nest material is too dusty when dry.

3rd - Rotten wood logs have poor insulating qualities.

4th - Ten nests with different shapes, sizes, and made of several materials, were not used by the birds because they were built having an entrance hole and a tunnel; we now think the female has to excavate the tunnel herself.

5th - The ideal nest size and shape was not found during that season.

6th - Breeding season starts at the end of Summer when the first rains start to fall and will go on through winter.

7th - One-year old birds are able to pair and probably they pair for life.

1976 Conclusions-At the end of this 75 /76 season very little positive conclusions were found. As I was sure if I had a first hand knowledge of the wild nest I would be able to duplicate it, I contacted several natives and finally found one that had some experience on catching wild Red-faced in the nest. For the first time I found that in the wild nest, the tunnel goes

straight in for a few inches and then turns up and finally ends on a big fist-size chamber not far from the top of the termite nest. The termite nest is quite hard and impermeable on the outside wall, but inside is not so hard.

The average size of the termite nest is 2 to 3 feet high.

For safety the birds like to use the highest trees that have termite nests on them and for the same reason they hang head down because in that position they are able to fly off at a far greater initial speed when disturbed.

Having all this information which I considered important, plus the 75/76 season conclusions, plus a few interesting clues in the articles that appeared in the April 76 issue of The Parrot Society Magazine, we started building 14 nests of different shapes and sizes made of cork to be used in the following season, September 76.

The native also told me an interesting story he heard in his village. They say the birds have a "formal agreement" with the termites: The termites let the birds use their house on condition the birds leave behind one egg and one young bird. This story shows that sometimes the parent birds leave behind the last young bird.

As at the moment only two young birds are out of the nests and I have not yet opened up any nest, in three or four months time I will write the second part of this article giving full details on size and shape of each nest with a cross-section of each tunnel, and the individual breeding results of each pair so that further conclusions are reached in time for the 77/78 breeding season.

SUCCESSFUL BREEDING IN EUROPE OF THE RED-FACED LOVEBIRD [*A.p. pullaria*] IN 1976/77

By A. Coelho, Portugal

Part II

1. *The beginning of the breeding season:* In part I of this article I wrote that the breeding season starts at the end of Summer. Last week on the 10th of July it was found that 2 or 3 females were laying. That was a pleasant surprise and it means that the birds are slowly correcting the breeding season from Winter to Spring or that they are just used to the old nest. In either case this gives great hopes for the establishment of the Red-faced as an aviary breeding species. This season we have 8 breeding pairs and 4 pairs have the same nest as last season.
2. *Young bird's description and behavior.* The young birds came out of the nest with full plumage. The beak is light brown, becoming yellow and red in a few weeks time. The forehead and facial area are yellow green on a small area. The area becomes larger quite quickly, and in 2 weeks time the yellow becomes orange. At about 4 or 5 months of age the young bird acquires adult plumage. The young bird will return to the nest when disturbed. They fly very slowly hovering like a sunbird for about one month.
3. *Size of aviary.* Size of aviary is not a very important factor. The actual

(EDITOR'S NOTE: As a follow-up to the October 1977 article previously printed in this Journal of the successful breeding of the Red-Faced, The following is part two of the article which appeared in the August 1977 issue of the "Parrot Society" Magazine from England.)

size of the aviaries of the successful breeding parents are: No. 1 - Length: 2, 5 m (8 1/2), height: 2 m (6' 1/2), width: 0, 75 m (2' 1/4). No. 2 - Length: 3 m (10') height: 2 m. (6' 1/2) width: 0, 90 m (2' 3/4). In one aviary I had to use double netting on the side wall to prevent the females from biting off the nails of each other.

4. *Nest material, dimensions and construction method.* The best material found is cork, because it is easily excavated by the female, and most important, it is a very good insulating material. The nest must be well insulated so that the warm air inside the nest chamber is not lost through the nest wall to the outside.

It is interesting to refer to the Parrot Society 76 issue, and now understand why Herr Blome was unsuccessful particularly when he says: "I was lucky in that the nest chamber was below the lid so enabling me to look inside it." Our nests have a central block of normal density cork 6" x 8" x 8" or 6" x 6" x 8". This central block is used by the female to do the tunnel and the chamber. This central block can be made of horizontal layers of 3" or 4" panels or be just one unit. The central block is then well covered on all six sides with 2" or 2

1/2" panels of high density cork (harder cork conglomerate). This last information is perhaps the secret for the successful breeding of the Red-faced. The insulating panels must fit well with one mother, preventing the hot air in the nest chamber from escaping to the outside. Elastic glue (patex type) is used to fill all gaps around the nest between each panel. If these harder cork panels are not available the central block may be completely covered with thin plywood and this covered again with a hard and very good insulating material having at least 2" thickness. One of the larger sides is chosen as the front and then a small hole is made at the bottom for the perch. Just above the perch several holes are drilled in the high density cork, making it easy for the female to excavate the entrance. If plywood is used it is necessary to make a 2" diameter hole in it as the nest entrance. Two wires can be tied around the nest and used to hang the nest.

5. *Shape of the nest tunnel.* The shape of the tunnel varies so much that it is not useful to show a cross-section of one of them. Most of the times the tunnel will go almost horizontal or up on a gentle slope until it reaches the harder surface of the high density cork, then it may turn up for about 4" or 5" and then turns to one side where the nest chamber is. In about 50% of the cases the tunnel will not go up. It just turns to the right or left.
6. *Final results of 76/77 breeding season.* Out of the 14 pairs, 13 started breeding at different dates. The first one early in October and

the last one in December '76. The first young came out of the nest on 25th December. That was about 90 days after the hen started excavating the nest. When the top of the nests were sawn off several dead and very young birds were discovered on the bottom of the chamber among the old eggs and the cork residue. When the nest chamber is made during the first year the cork residue is a problem as the eggs are easily buried in that light material. When the excavation has finished and before the female starts to lay, it would be good to take the nest down and turn it upside down in such a way the cork residues drop out. You may lose one or two eggs particularly if you do not time this operation well, but that is probably better than finding all 4 or 5 eggs intact but buried in the cork residue. I now think the females use the same nest chamber the following year with no further excavating. The nest must be removed without disturbing the birds. In our aviary we can let the birds fly to the corridor by opening the top aviary door. Using a flexible net we can guide the birds back in the aviary without disturbance. Great care is required as by that time the female will have a quite big egg inside her. One or two females have thrown out the old eggs but most females do not clean the nest chamber. During the season 3 young birds came out of the nest. The 2nd young came out not in full plumage (probably one week before it should) and so due to a strong rain it died one day after it left the nest. That particular aviary was not well covered. They were separated from the parents at

4 months of age and were put together in an aviary of their own.

7. *When to take away the nest.* All the year round the parents (and young) use the old nest as a dormitory. Breeders should then only take away the nest as soon as the weather is warm (April?). The nest should be opened up using a saw blade to cut off a 4" layer off the top. The nest chamber should then be easily cleaned, a mild insecticide should be sprayed in the chamber and tunnel and a few days later the chamber could be washed with warm water and soap. When completely dry (10 days?) the top 4" layer must be glued (patex type) and the entrance hole should be closed totally or partially with a small cylinder or cube of normal density cork. As the perch is placed

in the same place just below the entrance, the female will excavate exactly on the same place. The nest should be kept in the house and care must be taken that mice do not discover this ideal nesting place. In May or June the nest should then be placed in the aviary, and the female will start excavating at the entrance as soon as the breeding season starts, as early as June or as late as December.

We hope to give further details next Spring and we will be happy to answer all questions from breeders preferably through the Parrot Society •

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THE BREEDING OF AGAPORNIS PULLARIUS IN THE NETHERLANDS

By Henk Haasnoot

Description: the front and the face of the cock are red-orange; the rump is a clear blue and the rest of the body a bright grass green. The hen has an orange-yellowish facial mask. The under coverts of a cock are black; those of a hen are green. The subspecies *Agapornis pullarius ugandae* is recognized. It shows almost the same colors, but mainly differs in having a faded rump color. (Editor's Note: I am assuming that the subspecies is the same 'guineensis' already discussed above.)

The *pullarius* habitat is extensive: it ranges from Guinea and Sierra Leone to South-west Eritrea and North-west Angola. *Pullarius* lives on open grassy plains and breeding occurs in May and/or October.

The birds breed in termite mounds. They dig a 25-30 cm long tunnel at the end of which the actual nest is found. That nest is not much larger than a human fist.

I bought my first *pullarius* in 1986 - one pair from one importer and a second pair from a different importer. Pair one lived for approximately a fortnight, both birds of pair two died within two days. End of fun!

But once bitten

In 1992 I found them at an import station and once more I bought two pairs. Regrettably they too did not survive very long.

In 1994 I was able to buy two pairs from an acquaintance, who had

stopped with the bird breeding hobby. One pair had already produced 2 eggs without hatching - that was enough for me to hope for more. In October 1995 the first egg was laid and the full clutch amounted to six eggs. After the complete incubation period the eggs proved to be blanks and were removed. Three weeks later a second clutch of six eggs followed. To avoid any risk I pulled the eggs and transferred them to a breeding pair of *A. canus* (Madagascar Love Birds) sitting on infertile eggs. All six proved to be fertile! Regrettably I had overlooked the fact that *A. canus* incubates for a period of about 20 days, where *pullarius* needs 25 days. Results? The *canus* hen left the nest and the embryos died in the egg.

The parents were on New Years Eve probably frightened to death. I found them lifeless on New Years morning. The second pair never produced eggs and the cock died a few months later. End of exercise.

In February 1998, I heard that a dealer was offering *pullarius*. I immediately phoned him, hurried towards his shops and bought three pairs. I now believe these were still very young birds, they were not in full color yet. That only happened in 1999, one year later. One of the birds died rather quickly but keeping five birds alive already was marked as my first success!

The birds are housed in breeding cages - 1 meter long, 50 cm high and 40 cm deep. They are given a nest box of 14 x 14 x 14 cm. In front of the entrance hole is a spout filled with cork. The bottom of the box is doubled up, so a thermostatically controlled heating device can be put in when needed.

A first breeding in the Netherlands?

In July 1999, I had owned the birds for a year and a half. I noticed that one of the pair had been whittling at the cork. A week later all the cork has been removed and a few days later I am missing a hen. It took, however, till August 18th before the first egg was laid. This clutch increased until there were a total of five eggs. I left the birds very much to themselves and the hen seriously started to incubate. After 24 days (I had not seen the hen during that period.) I candled the eggs and alas they were infertile. I pulled the eggs and consoled myself "Better luck next year."

To my surprise on October 20th another egg was found and the increased once more to five. After 25 days I heard a faint noise inside the box, so there had to be a chick. I listened every day and after 12 days I found one youngster. It was promptly banded with a 4 mm band. A few days later I noticed that the hen spent most of her time outside the nest. Since there was one hatchling only it might be rather cold in the nest. I now switched on the heater and kept the inside temperature at about 25 degrees C. The chick continued to grow and the cock did most of the feeding. The hen never entered the nest during the day – only at night along with the male. All slept in the box at night.

After seven weeks exactly the chick fledged and it proved to be a hen. In the evening she reentered the box with her parents. The baby's upper bill was black and the facial mask was very small and a yellowish color. She was slightly smaller than the adult hen. In February I removed her and caged her

with an imported cock I had bought a few months before. They got along without the slightest problem.

The feed

I feed my pullarius a basic *Neophema* seed mixture supplemented with lots of spray millet, sprouted seeds, egg food, various vegetables, mealworms (normally not taken but when feeding the chick they did consume about 100 a day) and willow branches (they prefer the branches of the curly willow). Grit, granite and oyster shell is always available as is fresh water. In sharp contrast to my Tarantas (Abyssinians) I have never seen pullarius take a bath.

Maybe you can learn something from my experiences. I only hope that more breeders will specialize in this species and try to establish a viable stock of these living beauties.

NOTES ON THE RED-FACED LOVE BIRD

By Roland G. Dubuc

As I am certain each and every one of you read with great enthusiasm Lee's article last issue on the Black-cheeked and the Nyasa, I will not have to belabor the point of our African trade in 1974. Hopefully, you will remember the fact that the shipment also included eight Red-faced Love Birds. All eight arrived to our home on that great 2nd of January, just out of quarantine. Fortunately, we had four hens and four cocks. As you are aware having read the two previous articles the birds are dimorphic, which makes pairing the birds a much more simple task. All eight were placed in one of our standard flights, 6 feet wide, 15 feet long and 8 feet high. Heat lamps were provided, and the birds

seemed to settle in quite well. The next day we went out and we checked each of our new arrivals and all seemed in order. They had found their food dishes and all were eating the assortments of different seeds. That night I remember calling David West and suggesting that he get down here quickly if he wanted to see true pairs of Red-faced, if not you never knew what would happen.

One of the things I have learned over the years, is never talk about the health of a bird or they just may have the joy of making you out to be a liar. As luck would have it our evening temperatures continued to be unseasonably cold and that night all the cock birds died. Needless-to-say, shock set in the following morning when we walked in the flight to find four dead birds and even more shocked that they were of all the same sex.

As the months went on, Spring arrived and we were left with two beautiful hens. We were aware that to our knowledge these were the only Red-faced in the US., with the exception of a single male at the San Diego Zoo. This bird had been sold by Rainer Erhart to a young aviculturist in the San Pedro area of L.A. named Rick Smith. Rick had lived near us when we still lived in LA, so we contacted him. He had placed the bird at the Zoo in hopes that the Zoo would be able to find a mate, which they had not. Rick called K.C. Lint, the curator of birds, and requested that his bird be given to us. This occurred in May of 1974.

The new lone cock bird was placed in the flight with the two hens. All seemed to get along. We had given them every combination of nesting sight we could imagine. Boxes of every size and shape, some filled with material others empty, and one love-bird box we even filled with cork. This we had bought in sheets like the boards you would use for pinning up

announcements etc. Our only ingenious idea other than all the different sizes of boxes was to have in the flight the trunk of the Queen Palm. There was an area near us that had had these as street plantings but they had been neglected and we were able to get one of the dead logs. We cut the log to the eight foot size that would fit in the flight, drilled a few starter holes here and there on the log and decided to let the birds do their thing.

Both hens seemed to like the log and both started tunnels. Eventually we realized that they had to have gone deep into the log because the hens would disappear for hours on end. As luck would have it the broodier of the two hens decided that she was ready just as the weather turned cold again. I realized she was egg bound, but really didn't know what to do. Lee was out of town, and this was something that had never happened to any Love Bird we owned. In desperation I called Ethel Meyers in L.A. and she gave me all the necessary hints and I was able to extract the egg. The hen regained her health and eventually returned to the flight.

By late spring of 1975 one of the hens died. The remaining pair continued their work on the log. Two or three nests of eggs were laid in the log but nothing ever hatched. We were never able to examine the nest because of the intricacy of the tunnel. If we had realized what they would have done we could have cut the log into sections that could have been pulled out for examination prior to placing the log in the flight but hindsight is always a wonderful late afterthought. The hen eventually also died the next year, and the cock bird lived for several years longer. When the flight was dismantled after the death of the last hen, the log was cut open and we did find the last nest chamber with 5 perfectly formed eggs, and they were fertile.