



THE GOLDEN CONURE

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Queen of Bavaria's
Conure immature female

INTRODUCTION

'Absolutely stunning' is the comment most often evoked from visitors to Bimbimbi Birds when they see our Golden Conures. Also known as the Queen of Bavaria's Conure, this is a truly awesome looking bird. But you can't help questioning how evolution could create something so bright and colourful capable of surviving in its wild habitat?

COMING TO AUSTRALIA

The Golden Conure originated in the equatorial tropical rainforests in the northern region of Brazil, which run parallel to the southern banks of the Amazon River in South America.

A number of pairs of Queens (as we call them) were imported from a single major breeder in England during the mid-1990s. This breeder had spent many years establishing the species in UK aviaries and had bred stock many generations removed from the original wild birds, with numerous genetic blood lines.

The majority of pairs imported into Australia were acquired by a single aviculturist who invested considerably in the exercise, his ultimate goal being to establish them in Australian aviaries. In 2002, after a number of years with irregular and mixed breeding success, the whole collection was offered to us in an effort to keep it together and continue his goal. Some of the birds were original UK imports and some were their Australian-bred progeny, but we had enough to work with.

Despite being moved in mid-2002, one of the original UK pairs went to nest late in the year and we managed to rear three beautiful young—unfortunately all males. A few months later we were struck with bad luck and the mother unexpectedly died. Since then we've lost two more of the original UK birds, but have also been breeding a few and so have a reasonable breeding flock to go on with.



Aviaries have a service walkway from which feeding and nest inspection is conducted



The misting system provides relief during hot weather

HOUSING

Due to the irregular breeding results, we have tried a number of different housing arrangements and aviary sizes, even running the pairs not producing as a colony for a while. This proved worthwhile as it showed up that one of the original birds from UK had been incorrectly paired as a female and was in fact a male. This bird found a mate and went to nest in the colony producing a clutch of fertile eggs. This was an excellent result, but some of the other moves proved disasters.

We wasted two years when we housed all the pairs in open-sided suspended aviaries a cage apart, with Asiatic parrots in between. All they did was argue with each other and showed no signs of breeding whatsoever. We moved them again early in 2010 and they are now all housed in our main breeding complex among the *Pyrrhura* and *Aratinga* Conures.

These aviaries are suspended and measure 2.4m long x .9m wide x 1.2m high with solid panels in between. There is a double wired window measuring 60cm x 40cm in each of these so the birds in adjoining aviaries can interact with each other. This is closed off with a darker green solid panel when the breeding season comes around.



Perches are only fitted front and back and there is a 40cm length of 1.3cm (1/2 inch) galvanised chain hung from the roof for entertainment and therapy. Fresh eucalypt and fruit tree cuttings are also provided regularly to keep the birds occupied and active. The aviaries face a garden containing fruit trees and lilly pillies the length of the complex and the fruit from both is readily consumed by all our birds.

All watering in the complex is controlled by a computerised system that looks after the gardens, sprinklers on the aviaries and their daily fresh water. All feed is provided in stainless bowls that fit into a slide-out tray under the floor at the rear walkway.

FEEDING

Diet for our Queens consists of an equal mix of dry seed and Vetafarm™ South American mix pellets. The seed is in the proportions of 2 parts budgie diet, 2 parts canary seed, 2 parts white millet, 2 parts hulled oats, 2 parts grey sunflower and 1 part safflower (equivalent to a small parrot or lovebird mix).

Each morning a fruit, vegetable and soaked seed mix is fed. Frozen mixed vegetables—Heinz™ carrots, peas, beans and corn kernels—are thawed with hot water and fed, together with diced apple, celery, capsicum and a soaked seed mix. The soaked seed consists of 1 part pigeon mix, 1 part large parrot mix, 1 part lupins, 1 part whole maize and 1 part grey

sunflower seed. The required amount is put into a container at least twice the size of the amount to be soaked. Boiling water is poured over the mix to the top of the container and left to stand overnight. After rinsing thoroughly the next morning, the thawed frozen vegetables are added, then the diced apple, celery, and capsicum and everything is mixed together. The quantity fed is adjusted to how much can be consumed before the warmer part of the day. Corn on the cob—cut into slices then quarters—is also fed daily with the above. Other fruit and vegetables which are fed depending on seasonal availability include pear, orange, kiwi fruit, passionfruit, rockmelon, grapes, broccoli, cauliflower, silverbeet and pomegranate. Sprouted seed, consisting of the soaked seed mix with the addition of extra mung beans, may also be fed. Vetafarm™ D Nutrical Powder is sprinkled over the feed in the months leading up to and during the breeding season.

BREEDING

Nest boxes are constructed of 2cm thick solid pine board, measuring approximately 80cm deep x 30cm square and hung vertically on the outside rear with a face plate and landing platform on the inside. The 10cm entrance hole has a wire ladder on the inside to the base, covered in a substrate of washed coarse river sand and red gum mulch. Inspection holes are located on the back of the nest box and are covered with flat white Colorbond™. A fine whiteboard marker is used to record breeding information on these and can be wiped off after each season.

In the earlier years, nesting usually occurred around December–January, but more recently some pairs have laid in October. I believe this can be directly linked to the weather in the lead-up to the breeding season and whether it rains.



Developing Queen of Bavaria's Conure chicks





A clutch of Queen of Bavaria's juveniles reared with an Eclectus

A clutch can range from 3–6 eggs, but the norm is four, and they take approximately 30 days to hatch. During the earlier years we didn't allow any young to hatch in the aviary under the parents, due to the extreme rarity of the Queen of Bavaria's Conures and their lack of numbers in Australia, but in the past few years this has been allowed, and we have then taken the chicks and handreared them to weaning.

Unlike most other species, baby Queens are not easy to rear from day one, so the first few weeks after hatching are very stressful to all involved. However, once past those few weeks, they are adorable little guys and make wonderful companion birds. From hatch to weaning is usually about eight weeks and they are then housed outside in suspended holding aviaries.



Queen of Bavaria's Conure family

CONCLUSION

Over the years we've found the Queens to be a little frustrating. While beautiful birds, they do have a bad habit of wrecking their feathers during the adolescent stages of growth and their intermittent breeding is annoying. They're also very loud, but overall we're pleased to have them in our collection and look forward to establishing them further for Australian aviculture.



>> RESOURCES...

A Guide to Popular Conures as Pet & Aviary Birds, and the DVD A Selection of South American Parrots and various back issues of Australian BirdKeeper. (See Free Mail Order Card or www.birdkeeper.com.au.)