

HAHN'S MACAWS IN AUSTRALIA

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Origin

Our Hahn's Macaws *Diopsittaca nobilis* were imported from the UK and finally arrived home at our property in South Australia, late in 1995, but due to the authorities 'closed flock' requirement, could not be housed in their intended aviaries until some time later. The closed flock requirement meant that no imported birds could be housed in close proximity to the remainder of our collection for a period of time, this therefore constituting a further in-house form of quarantine.

All the birds arrived in good health, although there was some minor feather damage due to the confined spaces they had endured during the extended period of quarantine both in England and Australia.

Description

The Hahn's Macaw or Red-shouldered Macaw as it is also known, is the smallest of all macaws, measuring only 30cm in length. Although not vividly coloured like many of the other macaws, the Hahn's is quite attractive in its own way. Predominantly mid green over most of the body, the forehead and crown are mid to dark blue and the bend of the wing (shoulder) and underwing coverts are red. When seen out in the sunlight the green of the body and blue on the head almost take on an iridescent sheen, whereas the red on the shoulder is so vivid it has a 'flat' or 'pink' look. The skin on the face is white with minute black feathers, the feet are grey and the upper and lower mandibles are black. Both the cock and hen are coloured alike and the only sure way of determining their sex is either by surgical sexing or DNA blood/feather sexing.

There is a subspecies of the



Adult pair - UK imported cock and 20 month old hen, bred in our aviaries.

Hahn's Macaw being the Noble Macaw *Diopsittaca nobilis cumanensis*, which is marginally larger, of similar colour, with the major difference being the off-white coloured top mandible.

Distribution and Status

With a range covering almost half of South America and able to occupy a variety of habitats, this species appears fairly secure. From the Guianas and eastern Venezuela south to southern Brazil, south-eastern Peru and northern Bolivia (Forshaw 1989), the Hahn's Macaw is apparently fairly common throughout most of this range often seen feeding or flying in small flocks.

In captivity, this species is reasonably common in Europe and America, however, in Australia there are less than 100 individual birds, although we believe this number will increase

over the ensuing years, as some of the UK imported and Australian bred progeny mature and start to reproduce.

Housing

While in the closed flock situation, the Hahn's Macaws were housed in conventional aviaries measuring 2.7 metres long x 1.2 metres wide x 2.1 metres high. The sides were double wired, the floors concrete and the roof was double roofed to provide insulation during the wonderful hot summers we experience.

No two pairs were housed side by side to avoid interference and fighting, however, we have since found this species may be housed in a colony situation and will even breed quite well, given the right aviary size and conditions.

No attempt was made to breed during the closed flock period and

when this was over, we moved the pairs into their intended aviaries. These measured 3.6 metres long x 1.2 metres wide x 2.1 metres high, once again with double wire and concrete floors, but no double roof, as we considered that by now they should be acclimatised, after all, it was some 18 months since arriving from the UK.

Earlier in 1999, we housed a young Australian bred pair and a couple of odd young birds in small suspended aviaries and found them more than happy with their housing. These measured 1.8 metres long x 90cm wide x 90cm high and were situated 1.2 metres above a concrete floor. Both sides, front and back, were of wire mesh, half the roof was covered with iron and a nestbox was hung on the inside back wall for 'night camping'.

Disposition

We have found the Hahn's Macaw to be a nervous type of bird when housed in a conventional aviary and you 'invade their space' for feeding or maintenance. They will screech their alarm call constantly until you leave, unfortunately giving them a 'noisy' label, which we believe to be somewhat unfair. Our experience has shown the UK imported birds to be a little loud with strangers or when entering the aviary, however, the Australian bred progeny are somewhat quieter and when housed in a manner where you do not invade their space (like suspended or rear access conventional aviaries), they are no more noisy than many other species.

Having said they are nervous as an aviary subject, we believe them to be completely the opposite as a pet bird, as explained later in this article.

Feeding

Hahn's Macaws are good eaters and we have found there is not much they won't try. Dry seed is available at all times, consisting of equal parts canary, French white millet, hulled oats, Budgerigar mix and half parts of grey striped

sunflower, black sunflower and safflower seeds. Each morning soaked seed and fruit and vegetable mix is fed. The soaked seed consists of equal parts of large parrot mix, pigeon mix, whole maize, lupins and grey striped sunflower, all being placed in boiling water and soaked overnight. This also proves to be a good medium for feeding supplements, such as Calcivet™, Breeding Tonic™ and Tracemin™, each being used on separate days, twice a week, with nothing on the seventh day. The seed is drained and rinsed thoroughly, then frozen peas, corn kernels and mixed vegetables, thawed in warm water, are added together with diced apple and capsicum (when available), all being well mixed before feeding. In addition, corn on the cob and silverbeet are fed periodically. Pomegranates, when in season, are enjoyed, however, beware, although relished by the birds, they will cause alarm for you when the colour of their droppings is observed.

A grit mix, consisting of fine shell grit, ground charcoal and washed fine river sand is always available, as is clean, fresh water, both for drinking and bathing as they love to have a good bath and splash around.

Breeding

The nestbox supplied to our birds is constructed of 2cm thick solid pine board measuring 50cm high x 18cm square (inside dimensions). Over the entrance hole, measuring 8cm in diameter, we positioned a second panel with a smaller hole, measuring 7cm and rather than the normal perch protruding from the box, we placed a hard wood ledge 7cm below the entrance. Inside the box, 10cm up from the bottom, 2.5cm square pieces of pine were screwed to the side for the hen to chew while preparing the nest (this seems to have worked well).

We were reasonably confident the 1997 breeding season would see our first Hahn's Macaw bred, but alas, this was not to be until January 1998 when, to our surprise, one of the pairs began



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From the top:

1. One day old chick and two fertile eggs. Comparison with a 10 cent coin.
2. Three chicks roughly seven to ten days of age. All the chicks were very strong and healthy.
3. Three chicks, the eldest is 25 days and the youngest, 21 days. They grew very quickly and much faster than many other species.
4. 36 days of age and still growing. This photograph shows the body condition and how plump they are.
5. 41 days old and how cute we look. Hahn's Macaws were easy chicks to raise and relatively docile, compared to many other species.
6. 59 days old and out in the weaning shed. Now we look like regular little characters.

showing a lot of interest in their nestbox during the day. Not wishing to interfere, we did no nest inspections until early February, when the hen began sitting and we could not wait any longer. To our delight, we found three beautiful, solid white eggs, all fertile. These were subsequently removed for incubation on 16 February.

The first chick hatched on the 21st, the second on the 23rd and the third on the 25th, this indicating the hen must have begun incubation when the first egg was laid, and each egg was laid two days apart.

This pair went straight to nest and laid a second clutch of three eggs, again all proving fertile and removed for incubation on 19 March. All eggs hatched two days apart, on 30 March, 1 and 3 April.

On hatching, the chicks all appeared strong and healthy and were treated no differently to any other species that we have handreared. After the appropriate period of rehydration with electrolytes, the chicks were fed with our handrearing formula and never really looked back.

We were somewhat amazed at how plump and the rate at which the chicks developed, taking only eight weeks from hatching to being fully feathered and accepting weaning food. When they reached this stage, it became obvious that their nature and character would hold them in good stead as an endearing little pet.

They weaned off the spoon and onto feeding themselves a lot easier than the large macaws and once confident at flying, they were moved out into the larger aviaries.

We assumed that the Hahn's Macaw would reach sexual maturity at two to three years of age, however, at the time of writing (October 1999), one of the hens from the first clutch in February 1998, paired with a UK

imported mature cock, has just laid three eggs, two of which are fertile. This makes her only 20 months of age.

Mini Pets

If you are looking at a macaw for a pet and do not have the room or facilities for a large macaw (or even if you do), then we believe these 'little cuties' may be just what you need.

Those we have handraised



**Adult pair on their nestbox.
Note the double panel over the entrance hole
and the ledge rather than a perch.**

showed the same intelligence and inquisitiveness as the large macaws raised and although not common as pets in Australia at this stage, we feel that it is only a matter of time.

An English gentleman now residing in Australia has mentioned, on occasions, the pet Hahn's Macaw he had in the UK and the wonderful '3 C's', curious, confiding and comical nature that it displayed.

There is also an Australian aviculturist who had a couple of spare Hahn's Macaw cocks in small cages in his shed and while handrearing other birds and talking to them, the Hahn's learnt a number of words and began

repeating them without any additional attention.

Although only small, one should still consider where you intend to house your pet Hahn's Macaw and when choosing a cage, ensure that the door is large enough to allow your bird to perch on your hand while you remove it from the cage.

It is important that they have 'time out' from their cage to entertain that active and curious little brain and continue the bonding process with its owner. While in the cage (and also outside), ensure there are plenty of toys to keep them occupied. Suitable toys are becoming more available from the larger bird shops around the country.

Catering for the food requirements of a single bird will be somewhat easier than for a number of aviaries and, as mentioned earlier, they are good eaters and will accept a large variety of foods.

When providing water, bathing should be taken into consideration, therefore a shallow bowl inside the cage and also one outside is recommended.

To date we have had only a few enquiries regarding the Hahn's Macaw as a pet, but when those looking for a special pet bird that's different, cute, comical and easily managed are introduced to them, we believe the demand will be high.

Conclusion

We have found the Hahn's Macaw to be a great little aviary subject, not nearly as noisy as considered by some. In fact, our Australian bred birds seem to have quietened some of the imported birds. They are relatively easy to cater for, no matter what type of aviary you provide and, once settled, appear to breed quite freely.

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