



## Mindo Trip Report

By Russ Shade

On our first sojourn into the Mindo valley (See OFM, Issues 1 & 2), we found several large flocks of the Bronze-winged (*Pionus chalcopterus*), the Coral-billed (*Pionus sordidus mindoensis*), and the White-headed (*Pionus seniloides*) parrots. We recorded daily movements of all three species and found those movements to be regular and thus predictable. We observed long periods of flocking behavior, and we were able to describe a lack of dominance behaviors. Both through conversations with Mindo residents as well as directly observed feeding, we were able to compile a list of the plants and fruits normally eaten by these parrots. Finally, we found evidence suggesting that the Bronze-winged parrots also ate corn grubs and caterpillars.

The purposes of our trip in late January 2001 were (1) to make additional behavioral and feeding observations, and (2) to locate active nest sites within the valley. This trip, however, turned out to be far more troublesome and difficult than was our first effort.



Accompanying me in Mindo was Viviana Ruiz, a Costa Rican college student majoring in biology. Viviana has varied experience working with other research groups in Costa Rica and also served as a guide for visitors to Costa Rica's rich environment. My adult daughter, Julia also came along, and we were joined by Dr Jane Lyons and her husband Vinicio Perez – long

time Mindo residents and top experts on the ecology of the Mindo valley. Jane and Vinicio operate a small residence for birders and we stayed at their facility located in the town of Mindo. We chose the period January 28 through February 15<sup>th</sup> because we strongly suspected that the three species of Pionus parrots living in the valley began going to nest in early February. Since one of our goals was to observe what foods the birds were eating immediately before breeding, we carefully timed our presence in Mindo to coincide with our suspicions.

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## Winners Announced

Here's our list of winners in the PPRF Membership Giveaway. We're sorry that everyone couldn't win one of these great prizes, but you helped make every Pionus parrot a winner by participating! Special thanks go out to all of our sponsors who provided many of these great prizes. They agree with us that our members are special and their contributions prove it!

All winners should have received their prizes by now, but if you haven't, drop us a note at [fatparrots@geek.org](mailto:fatparrots@geek.org), or PO Box 34, Danielsville PA 18038 and we'll get the item right out to you.

- **Pat Robinson** of El Paso, TX won the Reliance Model WB 321 cage donated by the PPRF.
- **Rocky Cookus** of Portland, OR received the Avi-Health full spectrum lamp generously provided by Avitec Inc.
- **Crystal Davis** of Millville, MA won the infrared heat panel generously provided by Avitec Inc.
- **Charron DeVilliers** of Concord, CA won Mike Parr's Parrots of the World, provided by BullShirts.
- **Eulah Anderson** of Port Angeles, WA won Sally Blanchard's Companion Parrot Handbook provided by High Spirits Aviary.

More Winners on page 7

### About This Issue...

This is the second newsletter of the Pionus Parrot Research Foundation. It is distributed to members and potential members. The newsletter is also available in PDF format for members who prefer to save the PPRF printing and mailing costs. To switch to electronic distribution, just email us at [fatparrots@geek.com](mailto:fatparrots@geek.com).



## Pearson Memorial Project

by Russ Shade

We were saddened to learn that Chuck Pearson, husband of Bert Pearson - both long-time and highly respected Pionus breeders, passed away on Monday, January 8, 2001.

Chuck had been fighting cancer for several years. Bert and Chuck were personal friends of Janice and myself and are, in a very big way, responsible for our involvement with Pionus parrots. Chuck was active in several bird clubs in and around the Chesapeake, VA area as well as the Bird Clubs of Virginia organization. I will miss his generosity, his sense of humor, and his down-to-earth nature greatly.

Many folks have Pearson birds, or descendants of Pearson birds and have met Chuck and Bert both in person and on the Pi list and its precursors. Nobody who ever saw him handle Pi's could ever doubt his love and affection for the birds he was privileged to share his life with.

Chuck's wife, Bert, requested that anyone wishing to make donations in Chuck's memory should send their gifts to the Pionus Parrot Research Foundation. The PPRF has established a Chuck Pearson Memorial Fund from the many donations sent in so far (almost \$1,000). While the Board has not yet made a decision on how this money can be best used, one suggestion has been made that we purchase some forested acreage in Ecuador's Mindo Valley and name it the Chuck Pearson Pionus Reserve. If you knew Chuck - or even one of the birds he helped to raise - consider sending along a donation to help make this happen.

We hope you decide to participate in this memorial. Please mail any donation you feel appropriate to the PPRF and be sure to mark the check "Chuck Pearson Memorial."

### Did you know...

Between June 1979 and June 1980, the following parrots were legally imported into the US:

Blue-head Pionus .....	544
Maximilian's Pionus .....	305
White-capped Pionus .....	142
Plum-crowned Pionus .....	33
Dusky Pionus .....	2



## Pionus Maximiliani Ribeiro

by Bob and Ginny Queen, Queen's Pride Aviary

A bird that is not very common in American Aviculture is the Pionus Maximiliani Ribeiro. There were very few of them that were imported into the United States during the hey day of the imports. A small number of Pionus Ribeiro were imported; however, from most likely Central Brazil. According to John and Pat Stoodley, they can be found in South Goais, South Minas Gerais, Central Brazil to eastern Paraguay. They are also located in northeastern Argentina.

The Ribeiro is supposed to be larger than the *Pionus m. siy*. Nevertheless, when comparing them to the ones we have, they are the same size. The *Pionus m. siy* were imported into the US in great numbers and the majority of the Pionus that you see are the *Pionus m. siy*. I used to frequent the import stations in the Southern California Area and all I can ever remember seeing there were the *Pionus m. siy*. Many of the

Pionus were lost in the quarantine process. They seemed to have or would catch anything that was in the quarantine station. I saw many birds with pox or respiratory complications while at the stations. It was not their usual Pionus stress release but a true respiratory problem. I guess it was aspergillosis. Once you bought a bird from the quarantine station, you needed to head straight for the vet. We found, though, that once we got their health problems cleared up, they stayed healthy.

The Ribeiro is easily distinguished from the *Pionus m. siy* by the coloration of the periphthalmic ring around their eye. The *Pionus m. siy* has a distinct white ring of skin around their eyes. The Pionus Ribeiro has a darker gray ring around their eyes. The first time I saw a Pionus Ribeiro I thought it was a normal (*Pionus siy*) Maximillian that was in breeding condition. I was soon informed that was not the case by the owner of the bird. I was not all that familiar with Maximillians at that time and have since learned that their eye rings change very little in coloration when going into or out of breeding condition; something that is quite common in the Bronze Wings and the White Caps. The Pionus Ribeiro also has more bluish-purple coloration around the chest area than the normal Maxi and has a darker head.

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## Check It Out – PPRF Library Now Open

The website has been built, the librarian position has been filled, and the PPRF library is now open for business!

These first issues of “The Fat Parrot” newsletter have references to research articles, journals, magazines, and books that are part of the PPRF library. Members can now borrow these materials for a generous 6-week period.

Since this isn't a bricks-and-mortar facility, check out procedures are a cross between those of a typical public library and a mail order catalogue. Like a public library, there is no fee associated with checking materials out, but members will be charged an amount equal to an item's replacement cost if it is lost or badly damaged while in their care. The mail order connection is due to the fact that members will be responsible for paying mailing costs – round trip postage and packaging in this case.

Members will be notified of the specific mailing costs up front and will need to remit a check to cover these costs before the materials are mailed out. Once the librarian receives the check for the mailing costs, the requested materials will be sent out with a prepaid return envelope tucked into the packaging. This arrangement was initiated as a means of helping borrowers avoid those long lines at the post office when it's time to return the goods!

There is one reference book for which an additional policy applies. As you may know, PPRF owns a copy of “Pionus Parrots” by John and Pat Stoodley. This is one of the most comprehensive books written on pionus parrots to date. Unfortunately, the book is out of print and would be difficult (and expensive) to replace.

replace. If this book were lost, either by accident or due to vice, it would be a significant loss to PPRF and all its members. Therefore, members wishing to borrow this book will need to make a \$100 deposit to help insure the PPRF against the risk of loss. The deposit will be refunded to the borrower once the book has been returned to the librarian in good condition. We're also recommending that the book be covered by insurance as it goes back and forth in the mail.

Please see the library website at [www.fatparrots.org/library/library.html](http://www.fatparrots.org/library/library.html) for a full list of reference materials available as well as the complete text of the library policies and procedures. You can submit requests for materials through an electronic check out form right on the website. In addition, you can use one of the site links to contact the librarian directly with any questions about materials or the program.

We sincerely hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to read articles from the great range of reference materials in the PPRF library.



## Shutterbug Serendipity!

Folks, I made a boo-boo — took some photos of our Pi's without checking my camera settings after I returned from Ecuador.

I developed the roll anyway, and, boy am I glad I did. These turned out to be the best Pi pictures I have ever seen.

Try the following technique with your own pictures and see what I mean.

- 1) Go to a camera store and pick up a Fuji professional film named Velvia with an ISO speed of 50. Hint – if your camera shop stores any film in a cooler, that's where you'll find it.
- 2) Turn off your 35mm camera's DX feature, and set the ISO rating to 100 (not 50).
- 3) Set your external flash to work with ISO 200 film.
- 4) Shoot indoor pictures. No other light is required, but I had some strong ambient lighting – in the bird room we use GE Daylight full spectrum 40w fluorescents (we got them at Kmart). However, I also shot some pictures in the house using whatever sunlight filtered in through the windows.
- 5) If your camera has an automatic mode designed for use with long lenses (on Nikon, it's called Pm) use it.
- 6) Any 35-70mm lens will do. If you don't have autoexposure lenses, keep your shutter speed on the slow side – but bracket your settings just to be sure.
- 7) Shoot your pictures.
- 8) As soon as possible, take the film in for developing (Velvia dyes are very fragile, so the sooner you develop after exposure, the better. Be SURE to tell the lab that the film was shot at ISO 100; the developing will cost a little more.

Let us know how you make out. If you get some slides that are really nice, have a print or scan made and send it to us. We'll put it up on the PPRF website.

**Donate to the Chuck Pearson Memorial Fund! See Page 2**





## *Pionus Ribeiro* (continued from page 2)

The first *Pionus Ribeiro* I saw was owned by Helen Hanson of Riverside. We were attending a sex party (surgical sexing gathering) at a local person's facility. Helen had some juveniles she was having sexed and I arranged to buy a pair of them from her. Helen told me that she had two imported pairs of them at the time and that Dale Thompson also had an imported pair. Therefore, Helen sold me a male and a female, one from each pair. We have had limited success with our original pair of them. They usually lay a clutch of eggs once a year. The clutch size is usually four eggs. Normally only one or two will hatch and the majority of the time they are males. It seems that their fertility is lower than it should be. We have normal maxi's and they have a high fertility rate to their eggs and will usually double clutch. Our pair of *Ribeiro* has yet to double clutch.

We house our *Ribeiro* in 3' x 4' x 8' suspended flights (1/2" x 3" wire). We use a solid metal sight barrier between each pair. For a nest box, we use a medium size reverse boot box mounted to the outside of their flight. We have used 8" x 8" x 20" nest boxes as described in the Stoodley book but have found that it is too difficult to deal with the parents when we examine the nest. Our nest boxes are constructed of 1/2" plywood. We place approximately 4 to 5 inches of wood shaving in each box. We also dust the nest with Sevins Dust. Our birds are maintained in a protected structure, but have no heat or air conditioning. Whatever temperature or humidity Mother Nature provides here in the hill country of Texas is what our birds get. They have done just fine for the 2 years we have been in Texas with them. Before that, we were located in Riverside, California for many years, which had the same basic temperature spread but without the higher

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## *Mindo Trip* (continued from page 1)

As soon as we arrived in Mindo, we began asking the local farmers if they had run across flocks of parrots recently. Everyone we spoke to told us that they had seen large groups feeding in their guava (*Inga*) and guayabo (what we North Americans call *guave*) plantations within the previous two weeks. Jane told us that the regular early dawn flyovers of Bronze-winged parrots had ceased only two days before our arrival. On our first trip, these flyovers had occurred daily. Jane pointed out that as the breeding period approached, the groups gradually began to diminish in size. The fact that they had ceased was a strong indicator that breeding had already begun in the valley.

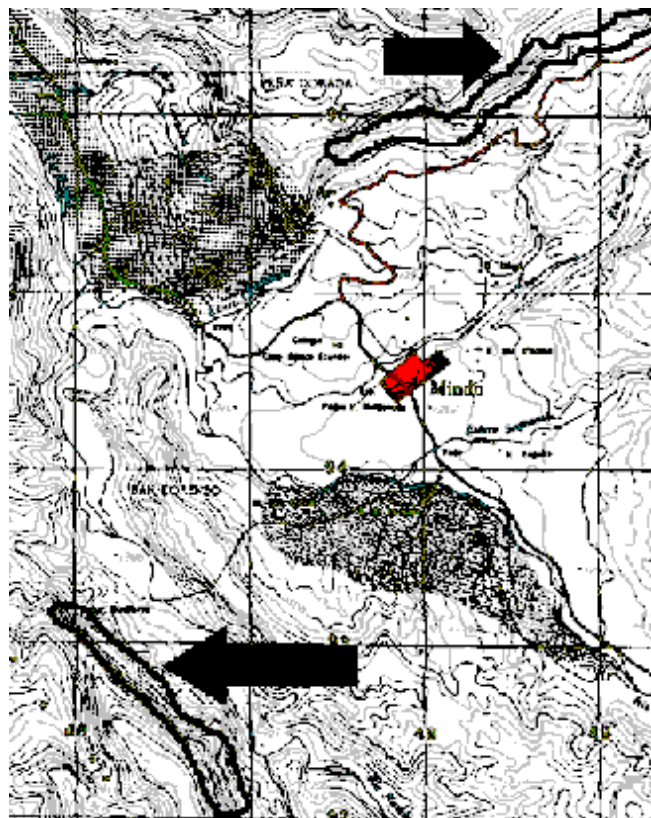
A few days earlier, I had managed to secure detailed topographical maps from the Military Geophysical Institute in Quito. When we arrived in Mindo, we spent the first afternoon hiking to some locations that were identifiable on the map so that we could calibrate our global positioning systems.

Although there is no rainy season (or dry season) in the Mindo Valley, we managed to arrive just as a front moved in off the Pacific and parked itself along the mountains on which we were situated. We had heavy rain every day – on several days the rain was so strong that we were unable to go out in the afternoon.

As we began working, we took many GPS readings – every bird sighting, every nest tree sighting, as well as locations of *Inga silvestre*.

We spent the first three days hiking along the east and west ridges of the valley – starting at 6AM and continuing for five to six hours. We saw many small groups of parrots – and all of the groups were heading towards or over the eastern ridge. There was no regularity in their movements as we had observed on our first trip, nor were there any groups larger than a dozen birds. Most of the groups we saw consisted of six or fewer parrots. We also noticed

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*Pionus Ribeiro (continued from page 4)*

humidity. It has gotten down to 23 degrees in the winter here, which is colder than what they saw in California. We have not lost any birds or toes due to weather.

We normally pull our chicks when they are between 10 to 14 days of age for hand feeding. The Ribeiro chicks do look a little different from the normal maxi chicks. The Ribeiro chicks have a yellower beak than the normal maxi. The Ribeiro also sounds different than the normal maxi. The Ribeiro has a deeper sound and almost sounds like a little goose. We can tell which is which just by the sound of the chick. The chicks grow at the same rate as the normal chicks and are real sweethearts.

Over the years, we have kept our eyes open for more of these birds but have found very few. The only ones we know of for sure other than ours that were set up for breeding were the Hanson birds, which she no longer has. We have never been able to track down the Thompson birds, so we do not know what their status is. There was another pair in Kansas, but the male (a captive-bred bird) just passed away last month.

We also saw a pair at the LA Bird Mart several years ago that were for sale by Steve Garvin. They looked a lot darker in color and I was afraid to buy them thinking that they might have been a cross. The day these birds were at the LA Bird Mart, Dale Thompson was also there and he commented to me that he thought the same. They were different than any other Maxis that either one of us had seen. Steve told me that they had never laid fertile eggs. I do not know what ever happened to that pair. They may have been of some other sub species. The pair in Kansas was the most colorful of all the Ribeiro that I have seen. We just set up two new pair of Ribeiro last fall with our offspring and offspring from the Kansas pair.

The Ribeiro have not been easy to track down. Some of the so-called experts (in their own mind) have told some of us that this bird does not exist in captivity and sort of laughed at some of us because we were looking for these birds.

The diet we feed the Ribeiro is the same as what we feed all of our other Maxis. We feed a pair of Ribeiro 1/4 cup of large hook bill seed mix and 3/4 of a cup of mixed fruits and veggies per day. We also give our Maxis Lysine and Spirulina every day on their veggies. We supplement with limestone powder, Vinate Vitamins, and lactobacillus once a week on different days. In years past, we use to feed our Pionus what is called Soak and Cook, basically a bean mix that is soaked over night and then cooked. We no longer use this type of product because we feel it is too high in protein for Pionus. That's just our opinion. We have no hard evidence that this is true; but, until we find out otherwise, we will stay on our present course.

Over the years, we lost a few of our Pionus to visceral gout and after talking with our vet about it, we decided that the Soak and Cook made their diet too high in protein. Since we have stopped feeding the Soak and Cook, we have not lost any Pionus to visceral gout. According to our vet, you can possibly detect visceral gout in your birds if they have an elevated uric acid level in their blood test. We discovered that the bird is doing fine one day and the next day they are not. When they finally show symptoms, it is too late. We did keep one alive for 3 days on IV's at the vets office but Mother Nature finally won. Our vet in California told us that the only time she ever saw birds that had visceral gout was after they had died and she was performing the necropsy. She said the moment you open the bird up it is obvious. All the internal organs are covered with a white looking film.

Ginny and I have been raising birds since 1970. We were introduced to the Pionus by Linda Sun. Linda used to make the rounds of the bird clubs in Southern California putting on slide shows and talks about the "Sweetheart Bird" - the Pionus. She called them this because of the red area under their tail that looks a little like a heart. So thanks to Linda, we got hooked on them. We obtained our first Pionus in 1987. We raise six of the eight types of Pionus and have produced babies from all six types. We raised birds that have been shipped as far as South Africa, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Philippines.

**Ed Note** - The PPRF would be interested in hearing from any members who may be aware of other Ribeiro kept by breeders or pet owners. It appears that the gene pool for this striking subspecies is rather limited and we feel that any effort to maintain this subspecies is worthwhile.



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*Mindo Trip (continued from page 4)*

that, in most cases, they were flying much higher than we had observed the previous year. We found many nest trees (>40) on both the eastern and western ridges of the valley, but were unable to determine if they were being used. While the suspected nesting sites had freshly chewed wood around the perimeter of the openings, we failed to observe any parrots entering or exiting the nests. Many of these trees were in inaccessible locations so we used spotting scopes and binoculars to view them.

Since most of the birds we spotted were heading towards the southeastern ridge, we decided to set up some observation points in the valley about 1/2 mile west of the ridge.



We could use the spotting scope in an effort to discover where the parrots were landing.

Unfortunately, the area we wanted to work in was a private farm; the manager did not want to give us permission to sit in his fields all day, so we were forced to put off that effort until Saturday when the owner was scheduled to visit.

We decided to head back to the top of the southeastern ridge and explore some of the areas on either side of the trail. We spotted many small groups of parrots, but this time they were not high overhead.

Instead, they were flying noisily through the canopy. We tried to follow as best we could,

but the terrain refused to cooperate.

Viviana and I made plans to travel to the southernmost end of the valley – five miles outside the town of Mindo - to a planting of *Inga silvestre* that we had identified on our first trip. If the parrots were still eating guava, they would be at that location, since it was the largest stand we were aware of in the valley. We got up early Friday morning and hitched a ride on the ever popular and reliable milk truck. During the ride we chatted with some of the other passengers and they also reported seeing large groups of Bronze-wingeds and Coral billeds flying to the last farm on the road. There were large plantings of Inga in the farm's pastures.



When the milk truck reached its final stop, we had to proceed another mile or so on foot until we arrived at the end of the road. Some workers unlocked a gate to a small bridge over the river and, after obtaining permission, we walked into what we thought was a quiet pasture at the edge of the Inga planting. We were wrong. The pasture was occupied by a bull, several cows, and a few calves. The bull was not happy about our intrusion, so after some determined scrambling, we managed to get through a barbed wire fence into a pasture that was overgrown with high weeds and filled with Inga trees.

We sat for 4 hours, waiting for the parrots to arrive. We saw one pair fly over us. The guava pods were ripened, some to the point of spoilage, so it may have been beyond the point where the parrots found it attractive.

The parrots open the pods and eat the white cotton candy-like fibrous material that surrounds the half dollar-sized seeds. Viviana

told us that the white material is very sweet and that children in her native Costa Rica consider it to be a treat.

The following day we were allowed on the private farm, so we hiked in, spread out over a one-mile area, set up our spotting scopes and cameras, and waited for the birds. And waited. And waited. All to no avail. Not a single bird flew over us, nor did we spot any moving over the ridge. That afternoon we were rained out, so we spent some quiet time back at the Bird House.

Sunday it rained heavily the entire day. I went out in the morning, but nothing was moving in the air except the raindrops and a few hummingbirds. This was the worst day in terms of weather I have experienced in Ecuador.

Monday morning it was still raining heavily, so we decided to call it quits. It was pretty obvious to all of us that the parrots had settled down into their nesting areas. We had a good idea where they were, but with only one day left before Viviana had to fly back to Costa Rica and faced with Julia's inability to walk more than a few steps a minute (due to a nasty fall she'd had earlier), there was no way we would be able to climb the southeastern ridge yet again and bush-whack our way to where they seemed to be headed. We called our driver in Quito and by late afternoon we were headed out of the valley.

Even though we cut the trip short, we still managed to add some information about Bronze-wingeds.

First, they feed heavily on guava just before going to nest. While most species of Inga

**Continued on page 7**





Winners continued from page 1

- **Silvia Schwartz** (Sacramento, CA), **Julianne Fletcher** (Lansing, MI), **Hideo Fujii** (Amherst, MA), and **Karyn Buchanan** (Pflugerville, TX) won the 25\$ credits provided by Grey Feather Toy Creations.
- **Maggie Tarleton** of Columbia City, IN won the Oxine disinfectant provided by Avitec Inc.
- Winners of copies of the book, by Alicia McWatters, Ph. D, Guide to a Naturally Healthy Bird were **Kathy Busch** (Englewood, CA), **Mark Cnota** (Chicago, IL), **Robin Nollet** (Greenfield, MA), **Jackie Miller** (Torrance, CA), **Marie Potter** (Lakewood, WA), **Kari Banta** (Austin, TX), **Iлона Rechlin** (Cranbrook, British Columbia, Canada), **Marsha Mitchell** (Oil City, PA), **John Culver** (Provincetown, MA), and **Jayne Lindgren** (Jamestown, RI).
- Winners of the fabulous toys donated by Avian Network were **Joe Baker** (Kurtistown, HI), **Tracy Larrabee** (Santa Cruz, CA), **MaryBeth Froscio** (Madison, CT), **Erin Mayer** (Calgary, Canada), and **John DeVilliers** (Concord, CA).
- Winners of the PPRF caps provided by BullShirts were **Patricia Warnock** (Marblehead, MA), **Cynthia Chadwick** (El Cajon, CA), and **Chris Kazmierski** (Westmont, IL).
- **Patty Pai** (Los Altos, CA) and **Norm Webster** (Ewing, NJ) won the PPRF mousepads provided by BullShirts.
- Winners of the AvianRescue.org's Not To Worry Beads included **Eva Terres** (Lompoc, CA), **Carol Crespo** (Sacramento, CA), **Jerry Johnson** (Gainesville, FL), **Bob and Ginny Queen** (Kendalia, TX), **Sue van Gelder** (Houston, TX), **Amanda Hitt** (Saline,

- MI), **Millie Kemerer** (York, PA), **Connie Weber** (Ocean Grove, NJ), and **Ed Warnock** (Middleton, MA).

**Keep watching for the next PPRF Membership Giveaway coming in November, 2001!**



*Mindo Trip(continued from page 4)*

fruits almost continuously, the species predominant in the valley all seems to fruit and ripen at the same time. Perhaps the BWs wait for the guava to fruit and abandon it for their nests once it has fully ripened.

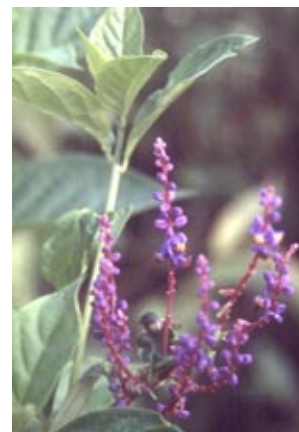
Second, the farmers told us that large flocks of BWs would settle in the Inga plantings for several hours at a time, eating noisily, yet two weeks later, the large flocks had disappeared entirely, leaving behind what we think are small groups of non-breeding adolescent parrots. I say adolescent because the remaining birds did not exhibit any sense of "flock" – they traveled in small groups, seldom perched, and flew far too high to be safe in a valley populated by several species of hawks.

There were other folks staying at the Bird House while we were there, and, after hearing about the work we were doing, they kept an eye open for BWs as they followed their own bird watching agendas.

One of them spent a day further upslope in an area of Choco Forest outside of the Mindo valley where we had spotted large numbers of nest trees on our previous trip. He reported that he saw several small (three to six) groups flying high overhead, similar to what we were experiencing farther down in the valley.

Finally, we saw very few Coral-billed and no White-headed. Stoodley and others have suggested that white-heads actually move to another area for breeding and our observations do not detract from that hypothesis. More work needs to be done to identify the location of the white-headed's nesting areas.

Three weeks after I returned home, I received a phone call from an excited Jane. She and Vinicio had just returned from a birding trip on the northern ridge and they had spotted some active BW nests. When I checked my records I was pleased to learn that the pairs



they spotted were nesting in trees that we had identified and conjectured were active nest sites. Jane and I communicated regularly through the middle of April.

## From the Managing Director - Russ Shade

The PPRF has been busy over the past 7 months, as this issue indicates. We conducted one study early in the year and are making a second trip in just a few weeks. Our Membership Giveaway was a success – more than 100 new members joined and we shipped out over \$1,000 in prizes and premiums (thanks, Sharon!).

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*Director's Message continued from page 7*

Numerous items have been added to the library (thanks Charron!), the website has been growing (thanks, Adrienne!), and our newsletter is starting to look very impressive (thanks, Pam!)

The PPRF will be represented at this year's AFA Convention and the Canada Parrot Symposium. If there are other events where you think the PPRF should be present, tell us about them and we'll see what we can do.

I'd like to thank the Board for the great support they've shown over the past 8 months. When any organization begins to grow, there are always lots of glitches, but we managed to catch all of them before they turned out to be serious problems. Our secretary (Pat Burke) and treasurer (Margarethe Warden) have taken on big jobs that remain more or less invisible to someone outside of the organization, but their help is vital to our continued growth.

We plan to have the next issue of The Fat Parrot in your mailbox in November. That issue will contain information about our September trip as well as a new project we've been working on to provide members with an opportunity to join is on an upcoming research trip. If you have any issues you'd like to see addressed in an upcoming newsletter, feel free to contact me at [rshade@fast.net](mailto:rshade@fast.net) or by telephone at (610) 767-8595.

## Brenna's Story

by Sandy Bortnick

My BronzeWing Pionus hen, Brenna, is a constant surprise. While I'm not quite sure of her background, I do know she is domestic born and raised bird. She was born in 1992 and is banded. I bought her from the lady who introduced me to Pionus and this woman guided me through raising and breeding these wonderful birds, sadly she is now retired from breeding. I won't go into Brenna's quirky

personality, which I love, but I want to share her breeding to date with you.

Brenna was set up as the supposed male of a breeding pair before I got her. Although the pair of Bronzies bred incessantly, the previous owner kept being presented with clutches of 12 or more clear eggs. So off to the vet they went for surgical sexing and lo and behold—both Bronzies were female!! After deciding which bird she wanted to keep, the owner offered me the bird I called Brenna. While I was unsure I wanted to pay as much for a BronzeWing as she was asking, I trusted this woman and bought the bird sight unseen. When I saw her I was breathless—she was the most colorful Bronzie I had ever seen. I had never seen such thick, lustrous feathers and her eye rings were such an intense salmon pink. But when I picked her up I was shocked at how thin she was. She seemed healthy and after a few months of close observation and some serology and a great diet, which she ate heartily, she felt normal but she was always on the thin side. She was smaller, too than any Bronzie I had known weighing only 212 grams. Now I've heard of others in that range but when I got her I thought BronzeWings were larger.

She was 4 years old when I got her and I bought a male Bronzie who was parent reared and 9 months old and immediately (after quarantine, of course) put them together. They got along very well from the start. The next summer when he was 2 she began soliciting him to breed. That fall I gave them a nest box and the following spring she produced 4 eggs. But they were clear. I moved and set them up in a new cage and for a year they only acted like brother and sister. I moved again and set them up in a new cage with a nestbox and 4 months later she started to lay. In October she laid 5 eggs—all fertile but one chick died in the egg while trying to hatch. The parents were both fantastic parents and not being able to restrain myself, I checked the nestbox every day.

Neither bird liked me visiting the nest but they weren't overly upset and NEVER

harm an egg, each other, or a chick. I removed the chicks at 12 days for banding and then put them back with Mom, who tried to eat my arm off, and left them until they were 21 days old. After I pulled the chicks for handfeeding and took the nestbox down, Brenna and her mate were upset for about 24 hours and then they started breeding fast and furiously. About two weeks later I saw her vent swollen and she looked a little depressed. My avian vet came over (she made housecalls), gently palpated her, took some blood and cultures and told me to put the nestbox back NOW. By the next morning she had laid again—and when I checked on her she looked at me as if to say “Whew—that was a close one!” This time she laid 4 eggs and all hatched and she and her mate raised four healthy chicks. I followed the same banding, checking and pulling time schedule but this time when I took the nestbox down, I watched carefully for signs to replace it. Sure enough, three weeks later she laid another five eggs!! This was crazy!! Three clutches in 7 months. I let her incubate the eggs to 18 days and then pulled them and gave them to a friend with an incubator. Four of five hatched.

This time, I not only took the nest box down I separated the birds into different cages. They cried for each other constantly and both ate very poorly so I relented and put them back together—but no nestbox. They didn't breed but were very happy to be together again and preened each other once in a while — which I'd never seen them do before. I moved again—this time across country. The pair stayed together at a friend's house and I came back for them a month later and flew them to a new home and new cage. Three months after settling them into their new cage, I gave them a nestbox. Two months later Brenna produced five eggs, all of which hatched.

I followed the same checking and banding routine. But at 4 weeks, I pulled three of the babies and left two for the pair of Bronzies to raise. Some people had advised me against doing that and I wondered if I

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## The PPRF Speaks

The American Federation of Aviculture recently announced that PPRF Managing Director, Russ Shade, will be one of the featured speakers at the 2001

Annual Convention being held, August 8 - August 12, 2001 at the J.W. Marriott Hotel, Houston, Texas.

For more information about the convention, visit

<http://www.afa.birds.org/convention/index.html>

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Russ will also be one of the speakers at the 12th annual Canadian Parrot Symposium being held on November 16th-18th at the Toronto Airport Hilton in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. The Canadian Parrot Symposium (CPS) is an international convention for those interested in keeping or breeding parrots. Experienced or novice, pet owner, breeder, or just fascinated by parrots, there is something for everyone. Topics covered by speakers include husbandry, nutrition, health, behavior, conservation, and more.

Delegates have an opportunity to have their questions answered during session or even one-on-one. For more information, see [www.silvio-co.com/cps/nextsymposium.htm](http://www.silvio-co.com/cps/nextsymposium.htm) [www.silvio-co.com/cps/nextsymposium.htm](http://www.silvio-co.com/cps/nextsymposium.htm)



### *Brenna (continued from page 8)*

was dooming the two chicks I had left with their parents to mutilation or worse. So I started checking the nestbox three times a day and saw the parents didn't miss a beat. The parents started merrily breeding and after about three more weeks Brenna spent a lot of time in the nestbox even though the chicks were coming out. When the two chicks were fledged for about three weeks,

one night I heard a terrible noise coming from the aviary!! The chicks, now about 10 weeks old, had been banished from their nest in the middle of the night by their parents. Their father still feeds them twice a day but Brenna has nothing more to do with them.

After the babies were banished, I checked Brenna in the nestbox and saw 8 eggs. It has been about 24 days now since I first saw the eggs and tonight I heard the cries of the first hatched of this new clutch. Tomorrow, I will remove the fledged and weaned chicks to their own cage. They are 14 to 15 weeks old now and have been eating really well for the last month.

What is going on?? I'm not sure. Brenna's mate, Bernie, is a very good father and husband. He is busy all day long feeding her and then her and the babies. I pull him every couple weeks to weigh him and make sure he's OK. He is as valuable a breeder as she is.

I have to admit to doing something I was advised against but it seems it may be a good thing — not bad. To make friends with my two Bronzies I started giving them shelled almonds — only one per day and only as part of a special interaction with me. Then the first time Brenna went to nest, I didn't have a video yet and was afraid Bernie wasn't feeding her so I supplemented her. She wouldn't come out of the nestbox (I didn't know that meant he was feeding her) so I would give her an almond one day and a sprig of millet the next day. Besides she was easier to check in the nestbox when she was given a treat. I only used those two foods because I didn't want to foul the nestbox or have to pick out leftovers. Giving her treats has become a habit and now I give Brenna a treat every day that she is in the nestbox, even when she has babies.

Is this because of the diet I feed? I don't know. Brenna's genes? Probably part of the reason. Is her fecundity partly due to her age? — I have a BlueHead who while a good producer doesn't come close to Brenna's production, but my BHP is only five and in

her second breeding season. Time will tell. And I'm going to have a complete medical work up for both Brenna and Bernie when these babies are five weeks old.

Sandy Bortnick

BREEZYS BIRDS

Exclusively Pionus

[Breezysbirds@worldnet.att.net](mailto:Breezysbirds@worldnet.att.net)

**Editor's Note: Look for Part II of Brenna's Story in our next newsletter.**

## Latest Acquisitions

We've been steadily adding information resources to our library. Newest additions include:

**Journal of Field Ornithology**, Autumn 2000, Winter 2000, and Spring 2001.

**Neotropical Birds: Ecology and Conversation.** This book, authored by Douglas Stotz, John W. Fitzpatrick, Theodore Parker, III, and Debra K. Moskovits is a compilation of all fieldwork performed in Latin and South America over the past 25 years. It lists all known species of birds, their ranges, their conservation priorities as well as detailed descriptions of habitat changes. While this book is not designed to replace the difficult work of plowing through thousands of research papers, it does provide persons interested in neotropical birds with the ability to acquire much of the requisite background knowledge for planning conservation projects.

**Behavioral Ecology of Tropical Birds**, Bridget J. M. Stutchbury and Eugene S. Morton. This fascinating book is a detailed discussion of the behavior of neotropical birds. The authors argue that since the majority of the birds in this hemisphere live in the neotropics, scientists should use their behavior as the standard against which all other compared. The book discusses in detail such topics as extra-pair fertilization and other "innovative" reproductive behaviors,

*continued on page 10*

*Acquisitions continued from page 9*

physiological components of bird behavior, seasonal breeding territoriality, flock behaviors, vocalization, and biotic interactions. I have read this book at least six times and I learn something new each time I open it. If you're sick and tired of reading "theory" about bird behavior and would like to see what recent research has established as fact, spend some time with this book.

**Conservation of New World Parrots; Proceedings of the ICBP Parrot Working Group Meeting.** Although these proceedings were released 20 years ago, there is much information about parrots to be gleaned from its pages. Sadly, some of the warnings presented in the book have come true while other situations have improved greatly. The book includes lists of parrots legally imported into the US during 1979-1980 – including 33 Plum-crowns and two Dusks. No BW's.

**Bird Trapping and Bird Banding,** Hans Bub. Ever wonder where you could find plans for a two compartment raptor trap? Ever wonder what a Siberian basket trap really looks like? Probably not. This is

one of those books that provides you with more information that you will most likely ever use. Traps ranging from simple falls to complicated double pulls, are covered in detail. This book is THE reference on proven techniques for capturing birds..

**Interpretive Birding Bulletin,** Volume 1, number 6 and Volume 2, number 1. I made the mistake of overlooking the renewal notice, so we've missed the most recent three issues (we're endeavoring to get them now). This is the most fascinating bird journal on bird behavior I have ever read. Check out an issue or two.

In addition to these materials, we've added Part Three of Paul Salaman's disturbing Colombian EBO study to the fatparrots website. Read it to find out how the US drug war is destroying wildlife in the Colombian mountains once filled with Bronzewings, Coral-Billed, and Blue-heads (the authors spotted a single Blue-head in the two year period since the wide scale spraying of herbicides has commenced). There's also a disturbing newsletter there from our friends at Amazon Watch about the pipeline slated to be built in Ecuador's Mindo Valley.

## Next Issue

Our next issue (we're aiming for November) will include a review of Roger Sweeney's just-published book on Pionus parrots. We'll also find out what Brenna's been up to.

Look for an article about Russ' September trip to Ecuador and more information about the OCP pipeline. There will be a report on the PPRF's activities at the AFA convention.

We also plan to provide information about how YOU can join us in Ecuador for the adventure of a lifetime.

Be sure to stop by and visit us at AFA and, if you can spare the time, plan to drop by our meeting on Friday night from 8-10PM in the Houston room (right after the Pionus Breeders Association meeting).

PS: If you want your newsletter in color, you must notify us and request the PDF version to be emailed to you,

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**Pionus Parrots Research Foundation, Inc.**  
**PO Box 34**  
**Danielsville, PA 18038**