

Turquoise Parrots in Captivity

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Being very interested in the article on the Turquoise Parrot (*Neophema pulchella*) at liberty, which appeared in the April (1930) number of *The Emu*, I thought I would write a few notes on the Turquoise Parrot in captivity. No doubt a great number of our members think that this beautiful Parrot should not be in captivity, but I do not agree with them. Very few ornithologists have seen a live Turquoise Parrot, and most people do not know that we have such a Parrot in Australia. Then why not keep them in suitable aviaries and study them and let people see what beautiful birds we have. Some say it is cruel, but I consider that they must be contented when they go to nest and rear their young year after year.

I secured my first pair of Turquoise Parrots in January, 1926. These were placed by themselves in an aviary measuring 13 feet x 8 feet x 6 feet high, the enclosed portion being 8 feet x 5 feet, the remainder being open flying cage. Two hollow logs were suspended from the roof. The one they chose was 3 feet long and about 5 inches in diameter, and had one end blocked. This log was hanging on one side of the house behind a sheet of iron, the entrance to the log being about one foot away from the iron, thus making the spot very private.

The female went to nest about October 20, 1926, and the first young one, a female, left the log on December 14. The second left on December 16, and two more on December 19. The young comprised one male and three females. The chestnut-red shoulder patches were discernable a few days after he left the log. When the young had hatched out but were still in the log, the male bird used to feed his mate and she fed the young, but as soon as the young ones left the log their feeding devolved upon the male, as his mate went back into the same log on December 20, the day following the appearance of the final pair of young. The female does all the sitting.

In the second brood a young one, a female, left the log on February 4, and three more appeared on February 6. They turned out to be two males and two females. One of these males had the chestnut-red shoulder patches showing when he left the log, but on the other male they did not appear for a few days. This brood appears to have left the log about one week earlier after hatching than the first, and in the case of the second brood both parents fed the young.

The next season (1927) one of these young cocks was mated to a young hen which was reared by Mr. Heuman

in Sydney. This pair went to nest in a log hanging in the house—both birds being barely 12 months old. From this nest four young were reared, one cock and three hens. No attempt was made to nest again. The old pair that reared eight young in 1926 had eggs, but no young were reared.

In 1928 my old original cock bird mated with a young aviary-bred hen, and reared three young. During this season a wild cock bird, mated with an aviary-bred hen (one of the 1926 young ones), reared one young. Prior to nesting this hen was very off colour. I caught her and shut her up in a box cage and kept her inside, giving her Dimol syrup in water—no other water was given. She was terribly thin and I did not think there was any hope. After about three weeks, however, she recovered and was put back in the aviary, and within a fortnight was sitting. The young one reared was a hen.

Elegant Parrots (*Neophema elegans*).—One pair of "Elegants" was put into one of the breeding aviaries, measuring 17 feet x 5 feet x 8 feet high, about January, 1929. They remained in there through the winter and commenced sitting on October 14, 1929. After about three weeks the hen was seen occasionally and was usually being fed by the cock. During the first week the hen alone feeds the young, in my opinion; after that the cock takes a hand. The same applies to the Turquoise Parrot (*Neophema pulchella*). The first young one left the nest on December 3, the second on December 4, and the third on December 6. When first out of the nest the two blues showed on the wing, also the orange patch on the belly. Yellow on the face was also showing. Once the hen commenced sitting she was not seen until the young were hatched. I do not say she never left the nest, but I did not see her. The hen commenced sitting again on December 13, a week after the last young one's leaving the nest. This time two young were reared; one left the nest on February 7, the second on February 8.

Several pairs of "Elegants" were turned into one of my old aviaries at Millswood amongst two or three dozens of Diamond Doves (*Geopelia cuneata*). One or two logs were hanging in the trees and one pair commenced sitting and reared two young. These birds were only caught in September. This proves that newly-caught birds will breed the first season in captivity, and that it is not necessary to have a separate aviary for each pair. But I am sure one gets better results by giving each pair an aviary. This pair only had one nest.—S. HARVEY, R.A.O.U., Kensington, S.A.