

Inside the Nestbox of the Golden Conure (*Guarouba guarouba*)

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In comparison to other species of parrots, there are instances in which the conure doesn't seem to get an abundance of respect. The cover of the January, 2003 issue of the *AFA Watchbird* featured a superb photograph of two of my breeding Golden Conures. While at the camera store picking up an enlarged print of the slide I planned to donate to the silent auction, I met a professional photographer. When he told me he also owned a parrot I proudly pulled the print out to show him. "What kind of parrot is that?" he asked. I told him it was a Golden Conure. "Oh," his voice dropped an octave—"a conure." His voice immediately rose when he announced with pride, "I own a Macaw!" As I raised the picture for another viewing I replied, "But it is a Golden Conure." He only smiled at me. I almost thought I could see a little sympathy in his expression.

I have little knowledge of taxonomy, but I believe that eventually the Golden Conure will be reclassified as something other than a Conure. While researching the history of the Golden Conure, I found some interesting facts. Some individuals believe there is a linking genus between Macaws and the *Aratinga* conures. Many of the larger Conures are very macaw-like, this being especially evident in their habits and the way their young develop. At one time, the Golden Conure was called the Yellow Macaw in Portuguese because of its habit of flying high over the forest, of feeding on palm fruit, and because its nesting habits are very different from most other Conures. Regardless of whether this parrot is a Conure or a Macaw, no one can deny that it is one of Nature's most beautiful creations.

It never occurred to me there would come a time when I would have the knowledge or occasion to install a nestbox camera. A year ago, I was woefully ignorant of the workings of even the most simplistic audio visual equipment. But, there was also a time when I did not know if I could construct a flight, assemble a metal nestbox, clean a thermal coupler on a greenhouse heater, or kill a rat with my Red Ryder BB gun. In keeping parrots, I have discovered over the years that Necessity is the Mother of invention.

I contacted several companies before locating someone in the industry who did not consider my venture to be perverted. I spoke with an employee at Clover Electronics (w) and quickly learned he and his wife also owned parrots. Larry was fascinated with the scheme of installing a nestbox camera. Since he understood and appreciated my plan, and knew parrots, he was able to lead me to the most suitable equipment to insure success without my spending a great deal of money.

Once the first camera arrived, Joe (my husband) joined in the project and installed it inside one of the nestboxes. Since I wanted to view the monitor and record activity inside the bird kitchen, Joe also had to run extensions from the camera in the conure aviary to the kitchen, a distance of about 100 feet. It was an exhilarating feeling to finally succeed in hooking up the components and watching the avian family on television.

I must also give credit to fellow AFA member Jerry Johnson for his encouragement and for the information he provided in his article on nestbox cameras which appeared in issue Number 2 of the *AFA Watchbird* published in 2001.

I had several goals in mind when I began recording the nestbox activities of 3 pairs of my Golden Conures. The events that take place inside a pair's nestbox are often shrouded in mystery. I, and many others, want to know what actually happens during breeding season. Why are eggs broken? Why are chicks not fed? Why are chicks killed? Do males incubate? Do males feed? What does a hen do all day while she is incubating? Is the male welcomed when he enters the nestbox? The questions to which I needed answers were endless.

Limited observations of the Golden Conure in the wild indicate the possibility that older juveniles remain with parent birds to facilitate the rearing of subsequent clutches. Since I am one aviculturist who encourages parent rearing and parent fledging, I believe it is my responsibility to investigate new theories and to report my findings.

I also think it reasonable to believe that by studying the nesting habits of adult parrots in captivity, I will have a greater understanding of the behavior of the juveniles in a nursery setting. And, it is logical to assume that studying and attempting to analyze the behavior of adult males and females of all species within a family unit may assist companion parrot owners in determining what behaviors may be innate and what behaviors may be learned exclusively as a result of living as a companion parrot.

The nesting activities of three pairs of Golden Conures were recorded over a 6-month period. I like to flock my birds to allow them to choose their mates. Sometimes I will flock one male and several hens and sometimes I will flock two males and two hens. The birds are so gregarious that it can be very difficult to ascertain who has paired off with whom. I believe flocking allows for a much greater chance of success in breeding. Flocking unpaired birds should not be confused with colony breeding.

Pair 1 is a 16 year old pair of Golden Conures that have proven to be excellent parents, but have never had the opportunity to nest while a juvenile from a previous hatch remained a part of the family unit. The unsexed juvenile living with this pair hatched in June of 2002.

I was sure my greatest chance of success would be as a result of the nesting of Pair 2. A juvenile from a previous year's hatch (March of 2002) also remains a part of the family unit. This family unit of three has experienced the rearing of a subsequent clutch. The 10-year-old parents are a portion of my second generation birds I held back for future breeding.

Pair 3 is also a portion of my second generation birds. Their first ever chick hatched in March of 2002. Within one hour of hatch, the neonate was inadvertently killed. It is a heart wrenching experience to find that a hatchling has died. I was so overwrought at finding the maimed chick that I pulled the remaining eggs and did not allow this pair to attempt to feed another chick from the clutch.

It seems inconceivable that Golden Conures are capable of maliciously killing their chicks, since by nature they are such social creatures. I personally believe most incidents of failure can be attributed to excessive invasions of privacy or other environmental factors. I also believe, especially in this situation, that some parenting skills are learned by trial and error, and pairs must be given more than one opportunity to be successful in feeding neonates.

I began recording the nesting activities of Pair 2 (with the

juvenile) in December of 2002. One adult spent much of each day in the nestbox, breaking up fresh nesting material I had provided. In some species, such as the *Pionus*, it is thought that the dark interior of a nesting cavity brings on hormonal changes that ready a hen for nesting. I assumed this particular Golden was the hen, getting ready to nest, but after checking bands I learned this was the male. From his behavior, he appeared to be waiting for the hen to join him.

As I watched the interactions of these 3 birds in the nestbox, it became evident that the family unit of the Golden Conure plays a significant role in its well being. This was a real family! I felt as if I were watching an episode from *The Waltons*. The juvenile seemed to take great delight in entering the nestbox and attempting to engage in play with the male. The male was very patient, but when he tired of the youngster's antics he would leave the box, apparently knowing the juvenile would follow. This scenario replayed so many times that I quit counting. Eventually the juvenile would remain outside the nestbox and the hen would enter.

Copulation between the adults began on January 3, 2003 and occurred several times daily, always following the same ritual. The juvenile was never present during copulation. The mating act itself lasted several minutes, and during the act the hen emitted a very low humming noise. When the act was complete, the male rested as if in a trance while the hen vocalized demurely. The first time I witnessed this on camera, the male was so still I thought he had expired.

At other times, while the trio interacted in the nestbox, the unsexed juvenile continued to solicit feeding from the parents. The juvenile would roll on its back with infantile jubilation, inspecting its toes and attempting to play with the tail feathers of the parent birds. Occasionally the parents would wrestle good-naturedly with the youngster. Corporal punishment was also administered as the parent birds deemed necessary.

At bedtime, it was evident that life with a "teenager" can be trying and downright aggravating. While the parent birds were ready to retire for the night, the juvenile considered it an ideal time for more tussling. When the parents became weary of the youngster's games, they would exit the nestbox, wait a few minutes, and re-enter. The youngster always followed its parents' lead and eventually the trio would settle in for a night of slumber.

I was shocked to learn how little these parrots slept in a deep sleep. All three pairs that were captured on video appeared to be in deep sleep for periods of only about 45

minutes to 1 hour. During the intervals of wake, the adults and juveniles stretched wings and legs, engaged in mutual preening and feeding, and changed sleeping positions. They also climbed the ladder to perch at the entrance of the nestbox (which houses a platform).

Horses, like parrots, are prey animals. Research into the sleep patterns of the horse has proven that they do not need as much deep sleep as other animals. Do our parrots actually require 12 to 14 hours of sleep, or is it more in line with nature to say parrots should have the opportunity to rest 12 to 14 hours? During most nights, particularly when there is a full moon, I often hear many of my breeder parrots vocalizing in the middle of the night. Until further research has been undertaken to study the sleep patterns of parrots, it would be grossly irresponsible for anyone to conclude from these observations that all species of parrots sleep at intervals of 45 minutes to 1 hour. My recent review of the nestbox behavior of a pair of Vinaceous Amazons showed that the Vinaceous hen and chicks slept much sounder and longer than the Golden Conure.

I eagerly awaited eggs from Pair 2, but none were forthcoming. It is possible that copulation in this species can serve as a method of retaining a close bond between the male and female. I began to feel a sense of doom. I had a commitment to speak at the AFA convention, and my presentation was to include actual footage of the interaction of adult Golden Conures and chicks in the nestbox. When March arrived, I had nothing but hundreds of hours of video footage showing the interaction of an adult family unit. I needed eggs and chicks, and I needed them without much more delay.

In the meantime, I also was keeping a watch on Pair 1, the other family unit of 3. They showed absolutely no inclination to engage in any nesting behavior. I did not really want this family to nest, because I did not know how the juvenile would react to eggs or neonates. To my dismay, this project was not evolving as I expected. In early April of 2002, Pair 3 (whose first chick had been inadvertently killed) began showing evidence that they might go to nest. I had no desire to record the nestbox activities from a pair of Golden Conures which had shown to be miserable failures as parents. The purpose of my proposed presentation was to encourage other aviculturists to parent rear and fledge chicks. I had no desire to present evidence which gave credence to other aviculturists' beliefs that critically endangered parrots should not be allowed to rear chicks.

In vain, I continued to record the activities of Pair 2. I could not think of any conceivable reason the hen would

not begin to lay after such a protracted period of copulation. Where were those eggs?

Pair 3 (whose chick died) did indeed go to nest the first week of April, 2002. Four fertile eggs were produced, and the hen was incubating them faithfully. I finally decided I had no choice but to mount another camera and record footage from this pair. Joe completed the installation of a camera in a spare nestbox which was identical to the box with which the pair was familiar. With the exception of plugging the camera into the pigtail, the wiring from the aviary to the bird kitchen was also finished. The first egg had already pipped under the hen. I was taking a huge risk violating the privacy of this pair at a critical time in the chicks' development, but it was imperative that the eggs hatch under the hen, not in an incubator. I do own pairs of various species that will feed a chick sneaked in on the sly, but I did not believe this pair would prove that versatile.

Joe and I planned in detail the nestbox switch. Each of our duties in the switch was synchronized down to the second. It was vital that the existing nestbox be removed and the camera-ready box be hung in a matter of seconds. The plan included replacing the fertile eggs with infertile ones in the event the hen was alarmed by the presence of the tiny camera.

All of the tools needed to complete the switch were at hand—the camera ready box replete with nesting material, wire cutters (all boxes are affixed to prevent accidental escapes), a padded bowl for the fertile eggs, a temperature-controlled brooder, and clear eggs saved from another pair.

I knocked gently upon the nestbox and the hen willingly exited. Neither she nor the male were noticeably agitated. I carefully retrieved the fertile eggs, and placed them in the padded bowl in the warm brooder. At the same time, Joe cut the wire that secured the nestbox, removed the box and placed it beside the camera ready box. I took a few inches of her used nesting material, including some of her feathers, and laid it atop the fresh material. I added the clear eggs and Joe hung the box and wired it to the flight. After the pigtail from the camera was plugged into the extension, we hurried to the bird kitchen to discover if our experiment was a success or a disaster.

In an "el" or "7" style nestbox, a platform is at the entrance of the box which allows birds to view the nesting cavity without climbing down. The hen remained on this platform for about 30 minutes before resuming incubation. No harm was done since her fertile eggs were in the brooder. After enough time elapsed to ensure she had undeniably

returned to serious incubating and was not planning to abandon the nest, I returned her fertile eggs. She did not seem affected by the presence of the camera.

The male was initially very concerned with the presence of the camera. Several hours passed before he overcame his apprehension and entered the nestbox. The hen called to him continuously from her nest and his urge to care for her finally conquered his anxiety. For the next few hours, however, he eyed the camera suspiciously whenever he climbed down to the hen.

It was fascinating watching the hen within the confines of her nestbox. What did this hen do while incubating during daylight hours? She was not shy about leaving the nestbox, and did so numerous times throughout each day. She kept in constant communication with her mate. She preened her feathers and napped infrequently. She (and the other incubating hens I videotaped) never acted as though she was in a trance-like state. Errant feathers inside the box were mouthed thoroughly and rearranged. One favorite activity involved "popping" the inspection door by inserting the upper mandible into the inspection opening and pushing the lower mandible against the trunk of the nestbox. I considered these activities as opportunities to prevent boredom. When the male was in the box, the hen frequently solicited feeding. She bobbed her head, flicked one wing and generally reverted to acting as a juvenile.

The eggs were "turned" by various methods. There were instances in which the position of the eggs was changed by the hen intentionally as she remained facing in a particular direction. There were more instances of the eggs being passively "turned" by a change of direction of the hen. That is, if she was facing north, she would turn to the south, but the position of the eggs would not physically change. Since a redistribution of heat surely takes place during this action, I consider these deliberate alterations in direction as "turning" of the eggs. The position of eggs can also be changed through carelessness as a result of increased activity level inside the nestbox, but I personally would not consider these random position changes as "turning" because they are not deliberate acts of the hen.

While the male was present in the nestbox during daylight hours, the hen continued incubation. She also solicited feeding by moving her head in a backward and forward manner, with one wing extended. The male dutifully fed her, and much time was taken for mutual grooming. The male never attempted to touch or incubate the eggs. I recently read on the internet that the male Golden Conure

shares in the incubation process. I do not know who wrote this, but I do not believe this is an accurate statement. From the three pairs I videotaped, I never saw a male attempt to move or incubate eggs.

The night time activity of this pair mirrored that of Pair 2. Periods of deep sleep were limited to less than one hour. Each and every activity that was performed during daylight hours was performed during the night. An additional activity of all pairs that was recorded only during the night was beak grinding. Since less time was spent out of the nestbox, there were more instances of stretching legs and wings by both sexes. The sleeping location of the male from Pair 2 fluctuated from the upper platform to an area near his incubating hen.

The next morning I sprang out of bed, anxious to learn if I could see a newly hatched chick on the monitor. It had not hatched. Throughout the day, I was a little concerned that the hen might be leaving the nest too much. In one 3-hour period she was off the nest 6 times. I had no idea if this was normal or abnormal. It felt as if my brain was receiving newly learned information faster than it could be logically processed. The parents-to-be were as calm as ever.

The first chick finally hatched before noon. Through the monitor, I watched as the hen gently preened her chick. For the next few hours, it looked as though she were practicing the motions of feeding. The chick continued to beg as the hen called to her mate and fiddled with the inspection door. The chick was not fed, and she eventually left her crying neonate to join the male.

What can we do if inexperienced parents do not feed a hatchling within a definitive period of time? If the parents will tolerate it, we can supplement the chick with prepared hand feeding formula and hope the parent birds grasp the idea themselves before the second or third day. When the hen left the nestbox, I prepared some thin formula and fed the chick, which alleviated the begging for a short period of time. The hen returned to brood her chick.

If you decide to supplement a chick in the nest, have everything prepared before you enter the aviary. In this situation I kept my supplies on a tray in the bird kitchen. I mixed the formula before I disturbed the pair and intentionally made it too hot to feed. When the thermometer registered 110° F. I pulled the chick and fed it. You can always let formula cool, but once you enter the aviary heating it becomes more difficult.

The myth that the Golden Conure will not feed chicks is just

that—myth. It is true that some individual pairs of any species will never feed their chicks and will always kill them. I own pairs like this. I also own pairs that fed their first chick to fledging but have destroyed every egg laid since then. I also own pairs that have fledged their very first chick to weaning and will incubate eggs, but kill every chick immediately after hatch. nestbox inspections are not well tolerated by some pairs of Golden Conures. I really think that once it has been determined that chicks are being fed and nurtured, nestbox inspections should occur only two or three times weekly. I would never think of disturbing certain pairs of my Golden Conures while they are feeding chicks. However, the 3 pairs that I videotaped tolerated frequent nestbox inspections with little or no grumbling.

The male finally entered the nestbox late that afternoon, the first time since the chick had hatched. He appeared to be very excited about the chick, but the camera made him a little apprehensive. He and the hen were vocalizing loudly. They fussed over the neonate as it begged to be fed. Shortly thereafter, the hen left the male alone with the crying chick. He seemed very concerned about the chick's constant crying and his inability to console it. He called to his mate and she finally returned to the box.

From the monitor, I could see the male was attempting to feed the chick and the chick was responding properly. It continued to cry, and when I physically checked the chick 15 minutes later, it was obvious his attempts had failed. Sometimes I like to put words in the beaks of my parrots. When the male and hen seemed to be communicating earnestly about the new chick, I imagined the hen asking him, "Well, what do we do now?" I imagined him responding, "I don't know, but whatever we did last time didn't work. Let me go ask one of the neighbors." At this point he left the box and began communicating loudly with the other Golden Conures in the aviary. The male returned 10 minutes later and fed the hen. He also preened the chick and continued in his attempts to feed it. The chick again responded properly, but received no food. I supplemented the chick again before going to bed.

The male finally succeeded in feeding this first chick. In his failed attempts to feed, he tried to feed as he fed the hen, with massive head movements. When this continually proved to be unsuccessful, he by some means, discovered how to manipulate small amounts of food with his tongue. In the bird kitchen, I was elated when I heard the excited feeding response of the chick coming from the monitor. The hen watched the male closely. After the chick was satisfied, it nestled peacefully under the hen. I smiled

with relief as I realized one more part of the chick-rearing riddle had been solved by this pair.

Two additional eggs hatched without incident over the next few days. The parents fed the next two chicks as if they had been doing so for years.

I believe the outdated theory that parents do not feed at night stems from the fact that parrots in the wild do not forage after dark. In captivity, parrots that are feeding chicks should always have food available. I feed Hagen Tropicana Maintenance free choice, and offer a mixture of oranges, apples, raw carrots, cut corn, green peas, butter peas, sprouts from China Prairie, and pine nuts. Adults that are feeding chicks are also provided grey stripe sunflower seed.

During the neonate stage, the chicks were fed numerous times throughout each night. I was relieved to learn that parent-reared chicks have appetites equaling those of chicks hand reared from Day 1. (A formula used for feeding the day one Golden Conure is included at the conclusion of these proceedings.) While reviewing night time recordings, I was also very surprised to see footage of the chicks being fed during the night after they were 40 days old. At this point, however, it must not be assumed that every species of parrot feeds chicks at night once they pass the neonate stage.

The sleep patterns of this pair were very erratic the first few nights after hatch. As a result, the parents napped during the day. The parents also spent an inordinate amount of time grooming themselves and their chicks. Much attention was given to cleaning the chicks' beaks. Each chick was thoroughly and vigorously groomed several times daily. The parent birds would even turn the chicks on their backs to clean the tummy area.

There were consistent occurrences of mutual grooming at night. During many incidents, the male would preen the hen while she slept. There were times that she seemed oblivious to the male's attention. There were other times when she would acknowledge his presence by lifting a wing as he preened it, while her head remained tucked in a sleeping position.

By the time the oldest chick was 8 days old, the hen of Pair 3 had become very adept at feeding. The oldest chick was usually kept in a different place than the younger chicks, since it was better able to retain its body heat. The elbow of the wing seemed to be a favorite spot. Sometimes when the hen would change positions, the chicks would be two or

three inches away from her. They always scooted in the right direction to locate her. I wondered if they knew how to find her because of her body heat radiating. She also would use her feet to physically move the chicks from one side of her body to the other while they were being brooded.

By Day 13 the chicks really began to change. While the male was out of the box, the hen constantly listened for him and watched for him to come to the nestbox entrance. When the chicks were younger and being brooded she sometimes refused to let the male get to the chicks. This usually put him into a tizzy. He would literally push himself under her and raise her off the chicks to check on them and preen them. Of course, when the chicks were hungry she never denied the male access to her brood.

On Day 20 at about 7:30 A.M., the male sounded an alarm call from outside the nestbox. Inside the nestbox, the hen was greatly distressed, but resisted the urge to abandon the nest. She leaped off the chicks and started to climb the ladder. After a few seconds she warily returned to her sleeping brood. Pairs with chicks are always fed first in the morning. From the background noise on the videotape it sounded as if I entered the aviary to give the parents fresh food. The adults could also have been upset if one of the dogs was too close to the aviary.

As the chicks grew, their appetites grew also. By Day 34 their wings were well pinned, and they were very aware of their surroundings. The parents began feeding from the vertical ladder before Day 40 to prevent being mobbed by their clutch. The male and female also spent part of each night on the upper platform of the nestbox since the chicks did not require as much brooding.

By Day 47 all three chicks had feathered out very nicely. They flapped their wings furiously to aid in the development of chest muscles. Two chicks were mastering the art of ladder climbing. And, their vocalizations became those of an adult. The Golden Conure is a very loud parrot! W. T. Greene's book, *Parrots in Captivity* had a fascinating description of the voice of this very vocal parrot. "The Golden Conure is not gifted with a melodious voice, but is, on the contrary, master of one of the most piercing shrieks that can distress a sensitive ear."

On Day 47 one chick had managed to climb all the way to the upper platform of the nestbox. Day 47 is much too early to be leaving the nestbox, and this hen knew it. The hen was clearly agitated and forced her precocious chick to return to the nesting area.

On Day 55 the same chick was determined to fledge. Due to its age, the behavior this chick was demonstrating was very unusual. Each time I would discover the youngster outside the nestbox on the floor of the flight I would return it. Its crop would always be full but it was much too young to consider fledging. As I was returning it another day, I noticed its breathing seemed to be a little raspy. I didn't want to interrupt the family unit but knew I needed to get some cultures and have the chick treated. The adults never reacted to its disappearance in a manner I was able to recognize. I know parrots are empathetic animals and are quite capable of experiencing grief. I am certain the parent birds realized this chick's health was compromised and were behaving as nature intended.

Sometimes even the best medical intervention cannot save our parrots. The ill youngster died a week later while under veterinary care. The necropsy showed the chick succumbed to aspiration pneumonia. I do not know if the parents aspirated the chick or if it aspirated itself in its numerous attempts to enter and leave the nestbox.

The 2 surviving chicks were consistently occupying the upper platform of the nestbox by Day 62. They continued to develop chest muscles by flapping and were able to climb up and down the interior ladder without falling.

By Day 75 the chicks were as large as their parrots, and were very close to fledging. They also began the practice of spending a portion of each night in the upper platform of the nestbox.

The chicks fledged on July 28—88 days after hatch. After fledging, adults and fledges of this species frequently return to the nestbox during the day and continue to sleep in the box at night. I always refurbish the nestbox after chicks fledge. When these chicks fledged, I considered the video footage of Pair 3 complete, and I was very pleased at the outcome.

Pair 1 (with the inexperienced juvenile) began nesting the first week of June, about the same time the eggs from Pair 3 were hatching. This was going to be my only opportunity to record the interaction of a juvenile with eggs and chicks. My presentation was only a few weeks away, and I had a limited amount of time to prepare a video that would include only a few days of this footage. My greatest fear was that the juvenile would not recognize a hatchling as a family member.

When I began recording the activities of Pair 1 and their youngster, I was astonished at what was taking place. The

juvenile was in the nestbox with its incubating mother, and the juvenile was feeding *her*! It was easy to identify the juvenile by its immature color and by the fact that I had squared off its tail with a pair of scissors. The adult male also fed the hen. When the parents left the nestbox, the juvenile enjoyed rolling the eggs around, but never exhibited any genuine interest in incubating them. When the hen would return to the box, the juvenile would find some other way to keep busy, and would pretend to have no interest in the eggs.

Two eggs from this clutch hatched. The hen was experienced and had no difficulty feeding her chicks. She did not constantly call for her mate as did the inexperienced hen. The male did not display near the interest in his chicks as did the inexperienced male. However, the juvenile showed a great deal of interest in the chicks and began feeding and preening them when they were only a few days old. Did this juvenile learn to feed from watching the hen? I can now confirm the fact that juveniles remaining within the family unit of the Golden Conure actively assist in the rearing of subsequent clutches.

Having the opportunity to watch parent-fledged juveniles interact with neonates helped me understand the intense interest juvenile Golden Conures show in chicks of all ages and species when they were being hand reared in the nursery. If allowed, fledglings will travel from cubicle to cubicle, searching for a youngster to feed. They are intensely interested in watching young chicks being fed and befriend any species that will accept them.

Pair 2 (the only pair I planned to capture on video) finally did begin nesting in earnest. Unfortunately, that event did not take place until late June. This family unit consists of the parents, the juvenile from 2002, and three healthy chicks that hatched in late July. The parents and the oldest juvenile were only occasionally seen outside the nestbox

from June through October. I have no knowledge of what took place inside the nestbox because the camera was removed a week before any eggs were laid to record the actions of Pair 1. It would be very interesting to see how 6 Golden Conures managed to interact within an area that measures 12 x 12 inches. These three chicks fledged in October, 2003.

After my review of the nesting behaviors of these 3 pairs of Golden Conures, I have come to believe we commit a disservice to aviculture when we assume a particular behavior may be species-specific just because one parrot or pair of parrots acts in a certain manner. None of these pairs acted in an identical manner that could be pegged as "species-specific." When we think we know it all, our parrots will make us out to be liars, or at least humble us.

I envisioned my experiment in capturing the behavior of these parrots on video as a means of answering the many questions I had concerning incubation and rearing of chicks. I now have even more questions to which I need answers, and look forward to another season of cameras inside the nestbox of the Golden Conure.

FORMULA FOR GOLDEN CONURE CHICKS FED FROM DAY ONE

The ingredients must be weighed on an accurate gram scale before mixing.

70 grams prepared hand feeding formula
20 grams sunflower seed kernels (ground fine)
40 grams fresh apples
40 grams fresh broccoli flowerets
230 grams boiled water ❖