

Crimson Bellied Conures as Pets

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www.birdcompanions.com ★ birdcompanions@onlineok.com

We've seen enough of these gorgeous little Pyrrhuras, the Crimson Bellied (CB) Conure [*Pyrrhura perlata perlata*], to know we love the looks of them. But beauty is as beauty does. Preservation and proliferation of these gems are excellent avicultural goals, but there are a limited number of aviculturists who can keep a breeding "collection" without needing some return on investment. Plus, when a species is as special personality-wise as these guys are, more people need to experience them!

CBs have been in the U.S. since the late 1990s, but they are becoming more known all over the country. The time has come when the important question must be answered for breeders who are considering marketing to pet homes: "How do these guys compare as home companions to other *Pyrrhura* conures and other small parrot species?"



While they have the *Pyrrhura* traits that endear them to Py people—spunkiness, territoriality, playfulness, touchy-feeliness, emotive expression of likes and dislikes, flock mentality, aerial agility, etc.—CBs also have some traits that I think are unique to them in comparison to many other companion *Pyrrhuras*.

Now, any of the pys can have endearing qualities, but anyone who has thrown a bunch of green cheeks in a flight knows that you have to watch them for a while to be sure they don't take on the gang mentality and stalk and pounce. CBs are less that way—more easy going, like sun conures.

Suns in Christmas Drag? What CBs are NOT are green cheeks in Christmas drag—but maybe suns? To me, they have almost a sun conure disposition as youngsters—extra



CBs and parrotlets raised together were very compatible. The CBs were very good at ignoring the parrotlet "chatter" and literally shoving them out of the way if it suited them. That actually helped the parrotlets curb that natural "Napoleon complex" that they seem to express with other, larger birds. The parrotlets were not nippy, but then, they were not having to defend themselves against that action from the CBs.



This young mature pair of CBs befriended a young cinnamon GC female. There was lots of mutual grooming and they hung together in the evenings when everyone was out. I watched at first with concern because of the difference in age and the fact that the CB pair was bonding with each other, but the cinnamon GC just got in between the two of them, and they “worked on” each other.

sensitivity, sociability with a bit less territoriality than many other Pyrrhuras, and cuddliness that can rival suns.

CBs seem to be “gentler” in nature than GCs—more like what I’ve seen with sun conure youngsters. Of course, the “spiciness” of the Pyrrhuras is what attracts many people to them, but mellowing that a bit with the CB is welcome also.

That’s not to say they don’t have their own “Pyrrhura strut”, because they sure do like to puff the backs of their heads out, almost like miniature hawkhead parrots, and chatter seriously, as if to say, “I’m BAD, see I’m BAD!”

Mixing Species—From my experience with mixed flocks in a home, young CBs seem to be more easy-going when it comes to accepting other species once mature than green cheeks (GCs) or black-capped (BCs). Now, if any of



them are going to nest, or in that time of year when hormones flare, they would be typical parrot-defensive. I don’t think we could expect any less!

In fact, what I’ve seen is that if another species is not aggressive, the young CBs aren’t either. The clutch of CBs raised with parrotlets was very accepting of them—but then, so were the GCs that were raised with parrotlets (different clutch). It may be a good early experience for these birds to be around other species, as they may be more adaptable to “different” types of birds in a pet home. That said, just as with ANY parrot, caution should be used in introducing new birds to a flock and in mixing CBs with bird of greater or lesser size than they are.

I’ve also raised CBs with sun conure babies, and talk about compatible! They get along fantastically.

Talking and Mimicking—More so than GCs or BCs, I have heard CBs mimic sounds of other species, like the tiny whistle of the parrotlet and the raspy call of the sun



The CB and white eared (WE) conure in the picture were out in the same area, but not caged together. Both were from spring. Since the WE was not aggressive, this particular CB male was friendly—and he was a pretty territorial little guy around his own cage.



CBs and suns are just naturally compatible. Three suns and four CBs shared a flight while fledging and even post-weaning, and they communed in everything very amicably. I even think that the suns may have made the CBs even more gregarious by example.

(in a much less strident tone). I have not noted that CBs are exceptional talkers, but they do learn a few phrases. If they are more isolated with people and less in a communal flock environment, I'd think they would be somewhat better talkers than suns, GCs, roseifrons, or BCs.

Acrobatics and Playing—

Perhaps because they are heavier-bodied than GCs—more like the cobby-bodied suns—while they can swoop through the air, their flight patterns are more sun-like rather than jet fighter-like.



Like most Pyrrhuras, the CBs like to hang upside down in their cages. They also LOVE bells—they will ring them over and over again. They love the long hanging plastic chains. I've seen them get about 2/3 of the way down the chain, flap their wings, and fly in circles around the chain

(in the middle of the cage). Indoor calisthenics!

Sociability and Cuddling—Similar to suns, the CBs seem to be little social butterflies. When out, they are also constantly checking in with the resident human caretaker. CBs are also incredibly curious. They want to know what you are doing, what you just did, and to explore any place you might have been! Oh, and CBs purr (yes they do—a low almost cat-like purr).

CB youngsters do not seem as prone to gnawing on flesh as some Pyrrhuras, more like gentle tasting (similar to suns). They are very easy to discourage from true nipping so long as they are not frightened. Even my pet pair of CBs (that have raised babies for me), have never nipped hard, and continue to be friendly and sociable, including cuddling.

Like most Pyrrhuras, they love to be snuggled up to your chest. And unlike a typical Pyrrhura which cannot be still for long, a CB will quieten down and snuggle for long periods, e.g., for a nap with a favorite person.





CBs are naturally curious and love to play with colorful toys and on playscapes.



Future Potential as Pets—I think their future as companion birds is EXCELLENT! CBs are a bit larger than the typical *Pyrrhura conure*, so they have more “substance” to them, which is important to some people who are intimidated by smallness in *Pyrrhuras*. CBs are beautiful, expressive, and affectionate, and although they can get “noisy,” the decibel level and stridency cannot remotely approach a sun’s, for example.

Insofar as breeding for the future, it must be noted that the gene pool is somewhat limited, so it is important to keep records and not cross closely too often. A good way to aid that is to give a pedigree back to import with each baby so that bloodlines can be monitored.

These birds do not seem to be quite as prolific as the popular GCs or suns, for example, so the availability may not be quite as good. However, that probably means the price will continue to be higher than some other companion conure species.



More information about and pictures of these gems may be found at many breeder web sites, including the following:

<http://www.birdcompanions.com/conures.htm> & [/articlesindex.htm](http://www.birdcompanions.com/articlesindex.htm)

http://www.hillcountryaviaries.com/special_breeding_prog.htm