

Crimson Bellied Conures in the Family Room

Marcy Covault, © 2007

Charley and Chloe (C&C) are a 2005 pair of Crimson Bellied Conures that I kept from that year's hatch because of their exceptional personalities, and because in the back of my mind, I thought I'd try with them what I've done with my sun conures—co-parenting—or maybe a better term is “supportive parenting.”

Small breeders who want their *Pyrrhura* pairs to be part of the family, including hatching and raising chicks, have had mixed success in this. I have as well, and I truly believe it depends on the pair AND the environment.

Often a young pair, no matter what species, must be carefully watched because of potential issues with their first clutch:

- (1) infertility (because the parents haven't “gotten it right” or they are out of sync with each other in reproductive timing);
- (2) small hatch (because they may be nervous and either not feed or mishandle or they may not incubate well); or
- (3) normal hatch (because they may feed only the oldest, or not give the youngest enough).

I have had all of these scenarios occur in the past, as have most other breeders!

Because C&C were so tame—easily stepped up out of the cage and interacted with me—I was a bit concerned about how they would deal with a clutch, and even though they had a nestbox, I thought they might wait another season because of the hustle and bustle of my family room (with a pair of young, vocal sun conures right next door to them). Not to worry—they seem unperturbed by the activities. They bred in the privacy of their 24” tall grandfather



nestbox (like many Pys do), and Chloe laid 5 eggs, four of which were fertile and hatched. Of course, when other birds were out in the evenings, in typical territorial behavior, Charley, in particular, would ruff up his neck feathers and warn others away.

When they went out of the nestbox, I'd slide the door up and check babies. They did not rush back in nervously, but rather, they sat on the perch just outside the nestbox opening and peered in to watch what I was doing.



With this first clutch, as is not uncommon, they fed the oldest, most vocal babies first and most. The third baby was adequately fed, but not stuffed like the oldest two, and the youngest (which was actually hatched from the 5th egg laid) was 4 days behind #3, and was marginally fed. I wound up supplementing a couple of times a day to keep him up with the others. Since I was handfeeding another clutch anyway, it was little extra work.

When I pulled the babies for handfeeding (just under 4 weeks old), they were very used to my handling, and C&C, within a day, went back to stepping up, snuggling, and flying around the room, as they had done pre-babies.

If I hadn't known they'd been parents, I would not have been clued in by their behavior. (Since I really didn't want them to go back to nest this season, I replaced their nestbox with an open-fronted sleepbox, which they adapted to easily. I have started doing this with my conures when I want to end the season, or someone will get enthusiastic about going back to nest in the middle of the summer!)



What a wonderful experience being able to support C&C in their first parenting effort! This is part and parcel of what makes raising birds worthwhile.