

Those Charming Roseifrons Painted Conures!

By Marcy Covault

With the first importation into the U.S. in 2000, the P. Picta Roseifrons Painted Conure is still one of the best-kept avicultural secrets.

This "red-headed" Painted Conure has a promising future in American aviculture because of its ease of breeding, beauty, and excellent temperament.

Brief History

The Roseifrons (aka Rose-fronted) Conure is one of the nine subspecies of the Painted Conure. The first captive breeding was probably done in 1908 in Sao Paulo.

In 1996, an *AFA Watchbird* issue commented that the Roseifrons was rare and expensive in Europe and had limited availability. However, this subspecies is now available in the U.S., thanks to the efforts of two breeding consortiums that imported these conures a few years ago. The first



*Adult picta roseifrons painted
Photo courtesy of Richard Cusick*

successful breeding of this subspecies was by Richard Cusick, Outback Aviaries, California, for which he was given the AFA Avy Award in 2002.

The Roseifrons Painted originates from the river regions of the state of Amazonas in northwest Brazil and probably also from eastern Peru. The red feathers on the head extends from the cheeks, forehead and back to the nape. The red coloring increases with maturity and can vary in individual birds. The clutch size is usually four to six eggs, which are incubated for 23 to 24 days.

Breeding—Setting Up Pairs

When I contemplated breeding this species, I was concerned because of the reputation (and my past experience with the nominate species of Picta Painteds) that the Roseifrons Painteds (aka 'Roseis') would be difficult to breed. My first pair wasn't that prolific, though they have done better this year. Last year, I replaced the nestbox with an open-fronted sleepbox for my second pair after they surprised me with a third clutch. They might not have gone to nest again, but I wasn't taking any chances, as two clutches is all I prefer to allow, because of the

stress on them, particularly the females. Typically, my Pyrrhuras don't produce more than two clutches per season, and I leave their nestboxes up year round. Not this pair of Roseis! The male of my second pair was parent-raised, so doesn't want me anywhere near him. He obviously doesn't feel that way about his handfed mate!



My pairs are in indoor/outdoor flights. The smaller indoor flight is 2'W x 2'L x 3'H, with a bumpout on the front for food and water, and a tall grandfather or boot box on the front over the bumpout. A full spectrum light is hung in the middle of the "bird room," but that's more for the flights that are totally within the room, because the Roseis have access to outdoor flights. There is a portal to an outdoor 2'W x 3'H x 5L' flight which faces a treed, dappled-sunlit east.



Disposition—Definitely Pet Quality!

I have been delighted with the temperaments of the Roseis. They are alert, active, and playful, and like all Pyrrhuras, they are "beaky"—but not particularly nippy. The babies are easy to feed, like most Pyrrhuras, and they have calm, intelligent eyes that watch everything closely, as if considering every bit of their environment. They also love to be handled, and even when full-flighted, most are easy to catch, especially when it's bedtime. (I have lights that dim sequentially and signal nighttime to them. When I go the front of each of their flights, they mob me to put them up for the night.)



What has pleased me also is that even adult Roseis (that were handfed) seem to be relatively trusting, and very seldom has any individual appeared to be what I term as a "wild child" in disposition.



True story: In the summer of 2006, the 5 year-old female from my first pair got out of her flight into the bird room and landed on the side of another cage. I gently cupped my hands over her, making kissing sounds (as that's one way I communicate with them when I bring food in the mornings), held her against my chest, kissed her beak, and put her back in the cage. She was making kissing sounds back to me and didn't struggle or offer to bite. This is typical temperament, from what I've experienced, when they are handled with gentleness and care, so that they don't fear-bite—which is their main reason to bite, in my opinion (other than normal cage and nesting territoriality which increases during breeding season).

Like many Pyrrhura species, if they are kept in “flock” environments, even in the home, which is how mine are kept, most Roseis will go through “flighty” periods, particularly when strangers come in. If kept separately or in twos, and particularly if then worked with just a bit, they are very sociable and touchy-feely.

Roseis don't get their full “red heads” until around 2 years old, so they are not as colorful as just-weaned youngsters such as the yellowsided green cheeks. But anyone who has seen a Rosei youngster coloring up watches the blossoming of a little beauty, and an adult Roseifrons in person is striking and lovely.

Good disposition coupled with beauty is precisely why I highly recommend these birds as pets.



6 month old Roseifrons getting his red head

Comparison with Other Pyrrhuras

While many factors affect temperament, including environment and genetics, I place the Roseifrons Painted in-between Green Cheeks (GCs) and Crimson Bellied (CBs) in type of disposition.

Roseis are more similar to GCs in boldness, that is, somewhat bolder than CBs. Roseis seem to be more like CBs in mouthing tendencies, with very little tendency to bite down hard, and Roseis seem gentler in that respect than many GCs. Roseis don't seem to strut quite as pointedly as CBs.

All three species mentioned above pick up sounds easily, e.g., kissing (smacking) sounds. Although none are great talkers, they often pick up a few words, spoken

with a Py-accent, of course. Of the three, the CBs are probably the loudest, but still can't compare in volume to a Sun Conure!

Future Breeding of the P. Roseifrons Painted Conure

I believe that breeders of Roseis, as well as other rare species—e.g., Crimson Bellied, Fiery Shouldered, and even the nominate Picta Painted and Pearly conures—should be conscientious about keeping lineages of these birds and passing them on to buyers of offspring, so that genetic viability remains strong into the future.

Because the Roseis Painteds are not as available in the U.S. as some other Py species, they will likely continue to be at the higher end of the Py pricing (as compared to the more colorful GC color mutations or CBs, for example) for some time to come.



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