

International News Round-Up

continued

anthropology and medicinal plant studies.

Advisor to this project will be Leigh-Anne Stennett, former curator of Sunken Gardens, St. Petersburg, Florida. She has extensive experience in breeding macaws at Sunken Gardens and in her own collection. From her comes the news that the breeding stock will consist of handicapped macaws which could not be released back into the wild after being confiscated by the Peruvian Government. They were removed from people attempting to smuggle them out of the country.

Their eventual offspring will be parent-fed with a minimum of human contact, and eventually released near the Pacaya-Samiria Natural Reserve, about 100 miles up the Amazon from Iquitos. It would be a pointless project releasing macaws in many areas of South America — but Peru has probably the best remaining macaw habitat in the whole of the continent. Many areas of the neotropics still have much intact forest — but the macaws have gone...

We hope to bring you news of the progress of this project in a forthcoming issue.

CHILE

The Lesser Patagonian Conure (*Cyanoliseus p.patagonus*) is a common bird in aviculture — although it is declining in the wild. It is considered as an agricultural pest and much of its habitat is now being used to grow crops. However, in Argentina it is not yet endangered. In Chile, where the sub-species *byroni* occurs, the situation is more serious. The Greater Patagonian Conure, as this race is called, once occurred throughout Central Chile. Now there are two populations, the main one being in the south of the central provinces, where 85% of the population is found. Last year it was reported that only ten breeding locations are known to survive and two of these were due to be inundated as a result of the construction of a hydro-electric dam and reservoir. The birds nesting in the area due to be flooded were being caught and relocated.

Captive breeding could obviously be a very important safeguard for this sub-species — but it has always been very rare in aviculture. In the UK it is probably held in only one collection, Rode Tropical Bird Gardens in Somerset, where it has bred in the past. This year two young were reared in

the breeding centre of Palmitos Park, Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands. Two young were also reared in 1987. There must surely be others in captivity — but where are they? Rosemary Low, now curator of the breeding centre, would like to co-ordinate a breeding programme for this handsome conure so that in-breeding is avoided. Palmitos Park is fortunate in having several unrelated birds — a total of 12 in all.

U.S.A.

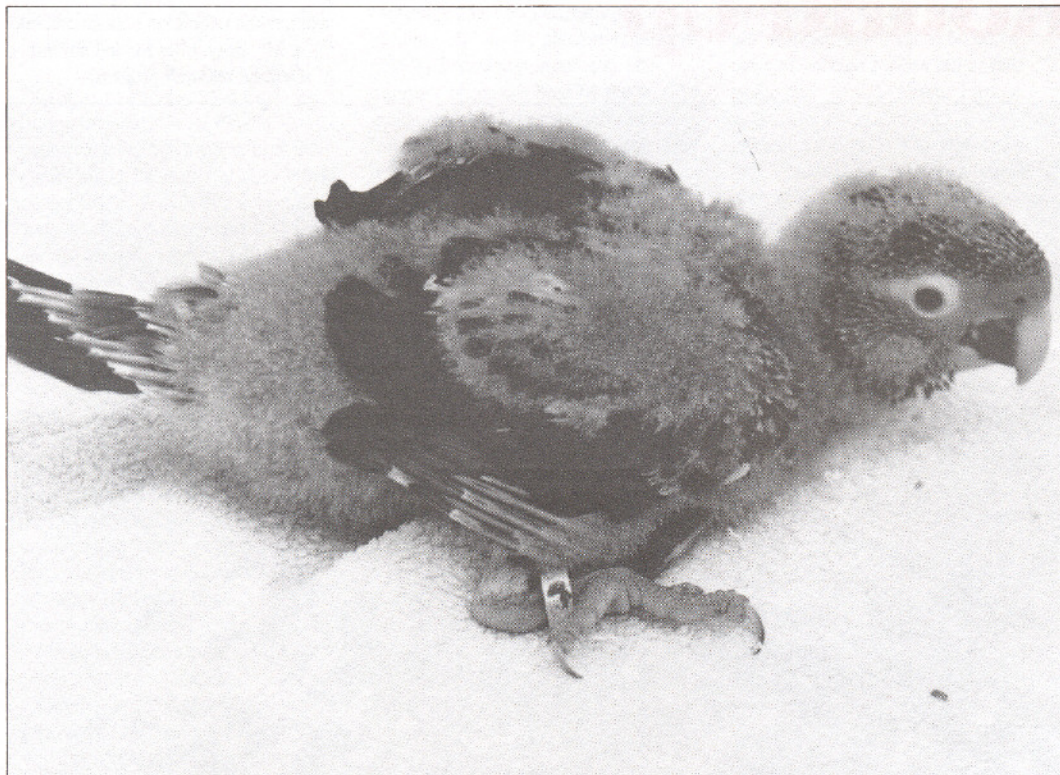
Nashville, Tennessee is to have a zoo. Property has recently been secured and its construction is expected to take five years. The Zooboosters organisation has already worked for four years to obtain permission and funds. Members of the local bird club are working very closely with the Zooboosters. One of them states with optimism: "We hope to have the best psittacine display in the country!"



AUSTRALIA

Finally, on a lighter note, an Australian breeder has found a unique use for a feather duster! His Eclectus deserted the nest leaving a four week old chick inside. It was removed for hand-rearing — with some reluctance as the breeder had no experience of hand-feeding. It was placed in a cardboard box heated by a light bulb with a towel over the top to help retain the heat. But it would not settle down and continually walked around the box, pecking at the sides. The breeder was "at his wif's end" wondering what to do when it dawned on him that the young Eclectus was missing its mother. So out he went and bought a large ostrich feather duster. He cut a hole in the side of the box and pushed the handle through from the inside, leaving the duster part in the box. Within two minutes the young Eclectus was sound asleep in the middle of the feathers.

The moral of this story is ... that someone who has been hand-rearing chicks for years would probably not have thought of this. After a few dozen or a few hundred chicks we are in danger of becoming blasé and our reactions stereotyped. But a beginner solved a problem in a very effective way...



One of the Greater Patagonian Conures, parent-reared at Palmitos Park, this year.

