

First use of an artificial nest box by an Echo Parakeet in the wild!

by LANCE WOOLAVER

We've just started the 2000/2001 Echo Parakeet season here in Mauritius and already have a new and exciting advance in the conservation program. One of our released females, "Txiki" has laid eggs in an artificial nest box in the wild. One of these eggs has hatched and she is presently rearing a healthy 4 day old chick. 'Txiki' was released at Plaine Lievre in April of 1998.

She was seen with a wild male early this season and began prospecting one of the eight nest boxes soon after it had been put up in August of this year.

Three other release Echoes have been seen prospecting in nest boxes but have not yet chosen their nest site for the season so we are hoping for more. This is an important step for us as it is another technique we can use to quickly increase the Echo



Txiki and others at a food hopper

population over the short term. We are able to choose the nest sites which are easier to access and are also easier to protect from rats and nest competitors such as Indian Mynahs and White-tailed Tropicbirds. White-tailed Tropicbirds were one of

our main problems last season.

Three Echo chicks were killed in a nest cavity which had been taken over by a pair of Tropicbirds. This was fortunately a problem easily solved for this season. During

the off season all of the known cavities were Tropicbird proofed by making their entrance holes smaller. Echoes are quite tolerant of changes to their nest cavities as long as they are given some time to adjust to these changes. Despite the loss of these three chicks to Tropicbirds and another four chicks lost to nestfly infestation, the 1999/2000 season was a resounding success with a record total of 19 youngsters fledging in the wild! The upcoming season is also progressing very smoothly. We already have two pairs with healthy chicks and another four pairs incubating eggs. Seven more pairs are prospecting cavities, four of which are release females.

We have been pleasantly surprised with the level of interest that many of our one year old females have been showing in nesting. Most of these youngsters have been observed copulating and looking in nest cavities. We were expecting this from the two year old females but are encouraged by the interest shown by the one year olds. This gives us great hope that within a few years the Echo will be even closer to being removed from the list of critically endangered species here in Mauritius. We would like to thank Mike Reynolds and all of the members and staff of the World Parrot Trust for helping us as we get closer and closer to that goal.



Txiki in her artificial nest box



Lance at an artificial nest site