



# ORNITHO

## info

Scientific journal for contemporary bird keeping

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Aviary Congress in Singapore

Dr. P. Ghysels



King bird of paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*)

In November 2008 we were invited to speak at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Aviary Congress in the Jurong Birdpark in Singapore. For three days we exchanged ideas with renowned ornithologists from many European and Asian countries on the breeding, diseases and feeding of birds. Our own paper discussed 'Nutritional diseases in birds'. One of the points of interest was the harmful impact of too high iron content in the feed of fruit-eating birds (tucans,

turaco's, hornbills, ...). It was notable that the results of this feeding mistake were also strongly emphasised in two other papers.

Richard Switzer, curator of the Al Wabra Wildlife Park (AWWP) in Qatar, reported about the breeding of various types of birds of paradise. AWWP is known especially for its large group of Spix macaws, with which very good breeding results have been achieved. We were honoured to hear that all of these extremely rare birds are raised with **NutriBird** hand rearing food. As well as the Spix macaws, AWWP also has a large group of birds of paradise. Most species of these beautiful birds, which are seldom found in captivity, are also highly endangered in the wild. They are still heavily hunted by the native population for their beautiful feathers and deforestation is doing the rest. These birds are real fruit eaters and like most of the

Greater bird of paradise  
(*Paradisaea apoda*)



**Prestige**

**OROPHARMA**

**NutriBird**

n.v. Versele-Laga  
Kapellestraat 70  
9800 DEINZE (Belgium)  
Tel. 0032-9 381 32 00  
Fax 0032-9 386 85 13  
Editor L. M. Verbeke  
[www.versele-laga.com](http://www.versele-laga.com)



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other frugivorous birds they are very sensitive to an excess of iron in their food. There is very little iron in their natural food. Since they seldom come down onto the forest bottom, they drink almost exclusively rainwater out of tree hollows and on leaves. Rainwater contains much less iron (and minerals in general) than groundwater. Through evolution these birds have therefore learned to be very economical with the smallest amount of iron they ingest. When there is a normal quantity of iron in the supplementary feeds they are given (whether it is softfood or pellets) or vitamins and mineral supplements, it is readily stored by the birds as a reserve in the liver. This will damage the liver cells, which will eventually lead to cirrhosis of the liver and the death of the bird. Before studies had identified this problem in birds of paradise, the park had lost quite a lot of animals to this disease. The turning point came when it was decided to change the whole diet. Now it is a rare occurrence to lose a bird to this sickness. In addition to the obligatory fruit, **NutriBird T16** pellets are now given. These pellets not only have a low iron content but also contain extra tannins, which bind strongly to the iron, and as a result make it less available for the bird.



*Visayan Wrinkled Hornbill (Aceros waldeni)*

Prof. Lucia Lastimoza presented the Visayan Wrinkled Hornbill (*Aceros waldeni*) breeding project at the Mari-it Conservation Center in the Philippines. There are only a few dozen pairs of these beautiful birds still left in the wild. This species has been catalogued as

‘Critically Endangered’ by Birdlife International. It is therefore important that the few pairs that are kept in the Conservation Center are bred as much as possible. Good health, based on the right feed and specialised care is essential for this. The remote location is however not ideal for obtaining specialised feed such as we have here. Frequently it’s a matter of making the best of what is available locally. Thus part of the daily ration still consists of dry dog food – not exactly the most suitable feed for these birds. Dry dog food contains a lot of iron, and in the past there have been various losses ascribed to haemochromatosis (iron accumulation in the liver). Prof. Lastimoza will now be examining the practical feasibility of replacing this dangerous dry dog food with **NutriBird H16**: a large pellet with an extremely low iron content, which was developed especially for the sensitive hornbills.

[www.alwabra.com](http://www.alwabra.com) • [mari-it.pansitan.net](http://mari-it.pansitan.net)

## The use of NutriBird hand rearing food in neotropical parrots

*Dr. R. Gaspar Vieira (Brazil)*

### 1. As a hand food for babies

After 5 years of management experience in the breeding and conservation of neotropical parrots, I have made an evaluation of various types of hand rearing food with the intention of finding a formula that satisfies the nutritional requirements of most Brazilian parrot species.

With data from my database concerning weight gain, plumage, feather colour and weight loss at weaning, I have determined which feed satisfied the feeding requirements the best, thus what is nutritionally the most complete feed for nestlings. For Amazon parrots, pyrrhura’s, aratinga’s and other parakeets, I now use **NutriBird A21** from the birth until weaning. For the first days I use the same product, although more strongly diluted and in smaller quantities (so more feeds). According to the same scheme, **NutriBird A19** is used for the small and large macaws.

## 2. As a high nutrition food at weaning age

Weaning is a difficult period for young birds. It is always a pleasure to see how a young parrot chooses and crumbles its first pieces of solid food. But we must still continue giving hand rearing food 1 or 2 times per day to avoid a sudden, heavy loss of muscle mass and weight.

When NutriBird A19 or A21 was used at the switchover, we succeeded in limiting the weight loss to a maximum of 10% of the body weight. This was certainly not the case with a number of other products. Yet a stable weight is vital for maintaining the health and the vitality of young birds.

For macaws, a small quantity of fat is added to the food during the weaning period, as a result of which the composition of the food changes slightly. Then I use coconut pulp\* instead of warm water to make the paste. This adds more structure and fat to the feed so that their high energy needs are now covered.

Increasing the energy content (= fat content) in general, therefore also for young chicks, in the hand rearing food is not a good idea. Then there is a great risk that the surplus energy we provide will be converted into fat, as a result of which damage occurs during the development of the tissues.

## 3. As a solvent for medication

In the bird clinic, our veterinarians often have problems administering medicines. Parrots are, in contrast to tucans, very selective in what they eat. When medication is added to the fruit,



*Dr. Renata Gaspar Vieira (Brazil)*

parrots pick out the bits to which only little or no medicines stick. As a result, the treatment given is not successful. A treatment in which the bird must be taken in the hand every day (injection or oral administration) is frequently stressful, which also has a negative effect on the result.

For this reason I often use a mash of NutriBird hand-rearing food as a basis for administering medicines. Certainly birds that were hand reared very quickly recognise the tasty food and so take their medication without any problems. In this way we spare the bird not only the stress of treatment, but we also support it at the same time with a balanced feed, rich in vitamins and other nutritional elements.

## 4. As a recovery food after sickness

During the healing process the body weight must also be brought back up to level. This is important for a complete recovery. A NutriBird paste is readily accepted. That not only provides the supplement for all the nutritional shortages, but hand feeding also creates a bond of trust between the bird and the owner. This is very important: a happy and satisfied bird is also healthier.



*\* Editor's note: Dr. Vieira means here the pulp of fresh, green coconuts, which has a completely different structure (juicier, softer) than flesh of the dry coconuts that are sold over here in Europe.*

# The importance of *Aloe vera* in the care of plumage

Dr. K. Jacobs

*Aloe vera* is one of the oldest known medicinal plants. The composition of *Aloe vera* gel has a hydrating, itch reducing and softening effect on the skin and a smoothing effect on the bird's feathers.

## What is *Aloe vera*?

*Aloe vera* (*barbadensis*, Miller) is a cactus-like plant that grows in warmer climates. It comes from the same family as the lily- and onion-like plants. Knowledge of the extraordinarily healing effect of the fresh *Aloe vera* has been passed down to us through folk tales about old medicinal practices. Scientists were not actually able to explain or equal the healing effect of the plant until in 1964 Dr. Coats totally dedicated himself to studying the secrets of the chemical composition of the plant. He did what no one had ever succeeded in doing: removing and stabilising the gel on a natural basis while preserving the natural healing power.

## *Aloe vera*: effect on the skin and feathers of the bird

*Aloe vera* contains more than 75 active ingredients, all with a very diverse action. The presence of lignine ensures that when used externally many other active ingredients of the plant easily permeate through the skin. In this way *Aloe vera* can take its effect. An important component is the bradykinase, an enzyme with an anti-inflammatory effect. Furthermore, the plant contains at least 6 antiseptic ingredients that kill or slow down bacteria, viruses and fungi. This gives the skin the chance to recover, helped by the various ingredients that stimulate the growth and development of new healthy skin cells. *Aloe vera* reduces itching so that the skin can repair itself without interference. Healthy,



hydrated skin allows the bird to nicely preen its plumage and prevents the bird's feet from becoming chapped and dry.

## External use of *Aloe vera*

In the wild, birds wash themselves in a shallow puddle of water, between wet leaves or directly in the rain. This washing ritual is essential for keeping the bird's skin and feathers healthy. After washing, the birds clean their feathers and smooth their plumage with their beaks or sometimes by scratching with their feet.

Birds in cages and aviaries are often exposed to dry, warm air. They do not often have the chance to wash themselves to keep their plumage free of dirt and parasites. This generally results in the plumage being in poor condition with an accumulation of white powdery feather dust and scales, as a result of which the skin becomes dry and itchy and the chance of feather damage and feather plucking increases.

**Jungle Shower** from Oropharma cleans the feathers effectively, removes feather dust, dirt and parasites and gives the plumage back its natural shine. The presence of *Aloe vera* hydrates the skin and contributes to the preservation and recovery of a healthy skin. The anti-inflammatory and disinfectant activity reduces the chance of feather plucking.

Jungle Shower can be sprayed onto the birds daily and becomes a practical alternative for the bird bath. A simple way to give your birds a healthy, glossy and smooth plumage!

