

Breeding of White Cockatoo *Cacatua alba* in Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad

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General Note:

White Cockatoos are present in the central and northern Moluccas, Indonesia. The species generally moves in pairs or in small parties flying above the tree tops. General plumage is white including a broad, backward curving crest. The underside of their flight feathers and tail feathers is suffused with yellow. The bill and legs are grey or grey-black. Their call is a loud and raucous screech. Iris is dark brown in the male and reddish brown in the female. The natural diet of the species comprises seeds, fruits, nuts, berries, insects and their larvae.

Enclosure particulars

In Nehru Zoological Park the enclosure for White Cockatoos is 5 meters in length, 5 meters in width and 3 meters in height. The enclosure is encompassed with 2" x 2" chain link fence, with good furniture of interwoven dry logs, which serve as a perching base. Canna and Pedilanthus herbs are planted inside the enclosure along with scattered clumps of bamboo and grass. Water is sprinkled inside the enclosure daily. A single wooden nest has been hung to the wall and three built-in nests on the wall. A breeding pair and their chick of 26 months old are housed in this enclosure.

Brooding and rearing the chick.

Two eggs were laid by the female one on 6 February 2000 and the other on 8 February 2000 in one of the built-in nests. Our earlier record shows no successful hatching in the wooden nests hung to the wall. The female started brooding the two eggs. During the feeding time, i.e., at 9 a.m. and 3.30 p.m., the female comes out of the nest, feeds on her zoo diet of fruits and grains, moves about freely with the male for fifteen to twenty minutes and again returns to the nest for brooding. The male is never seen brooding, although it is seen going into the nest and coming out. In the forenoon they are fed with Bananas, Apples, Sweet lime, Grapes, Gauva, Chana and Dhal. In the afternoon, they are given Sunflower seeds. On 5 March 2000 one egg hatched and the other egg did not hatch. The incubation period is 26 to 28 days.

The chick is 3 inches long. It looks like a lump of flesh with scarce, thin white feather, which barely covers the skin. Wings are bordered with short white feathers. The eyes are closed. The chick is silent and is rolling. The female is feeding the chick with regurgitated and partially digested food. 20 grams of minced meat is mixed with fruit mixture as a protein supplement. Initially for few days, the female nibbled at this mixture but subsequently, it did not evince good interest.

Dates of Observation of Chick

8-3-2000 Chick is 3 days old. It looks like a lump of flesh. Eyes are closed.
Chick is silent and constantly trying to roll

17-3-2000 Chick is 13 days old. It is 4 inches long. Eyes are closed. Squatting and is giving mild squeaking sound. Feathers are improved.

30-3-2000 Chick is 26 days old. Eyes are still closed. Chick is 5" to 6" long, and lying prostrate. Wings with short, white feathers. Body is still almost naked with thin hairy white feathers.

11-4-2000 Chick is 37 days old. It is grown up. Eyes are wide open. Feathers are fairly developed.

Patches of naked skin visible with sparse hairy white feathers. Beak and tongue are dark grey.

Chick is opening it's mouth and moving the tongue up and down, giving mild squeaking sound.

15-4-2000 Chick is 41 days old. It is quite healthy and active. It is clearly visible in the nest from outside the enclosure.

The mother is rearing the chick ardently under the general supervision of the male. During the feeding time, the male and the grown up chick always let the mother feed first. After feeding, when the mother flies to the chick in the nest, the male and the grown up chick start feeding.

Very little recorded information is available about the habits, general breeding and chick rearing activities of white Cockatoos. One recorded information shows that the young bird left the nest after two months and the other recorded information shows that the young bird left the nest after three months. Lot of observation need to be made and recorded on the breeding behaviour of Cockatoos to preserve the species for posterity.

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