

Rescue, Rearing and Rehabilitation of Alexandrine Parakeets - success story of Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh

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Indira Gandhi Zoological has been playing a great role in rescue and rehabilitation of wild animals in north coastal Andhra Pradesh since its inception. In recent years many animals and birds were rescued and rehabilitated successfully by the IGZP staff. A very successful such activity was done by rearing 200 odd Alexandrine Parakeets and rehabilitated in natural habitat.

Rescue

In an attempt to smuggle more than 200 individuals of new born Alexandrine Parakeets (*Psittacula eupatria*) by a gang of smugglers was foiled by the Police near Palakonda area of Srikakulam District and handed over them to the Forest Department (Forest Range Officer, Palakonda).

The Parakeets rescued from the clutches of smugglers were shifted and lodged at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam on the orders of the Judicial 1st Class Magistrate, Amadalavalasa, dt.31-01-2013 for veterinary care and better captive facility till they attain the age of self feeding and ability to fly swiftly.

The birds present locally along the river basins of Vamsadhara, Nagavali, Bahuda etc., which were illegally collected and packed in thatched baskets. These birds trampled and suffocated a lot were handed over to the zoo on 01-02-2013. They were counted and made into 5 groups based on plumage, age and size.

The condition of chicks was very pathetic and they were weak; most of them exhausted as they were closed in small bamboo baskets. The details of chicks are furnished below.

- One two-week old chick was having fractured right hind leg.
- Most of the chicks were weak and exhausted, under severe stress.
- Majority chicks were badly dehydrated.

All the birds were kept at Quarantine Centre in different groups as per age and health condition.

Group 1	43 Nos	15 days	The age was estimated based on size and plumage
Group 2	58 Nos	20 days	
Group 3	27 Nos	25 days	
Group 4	43 Nos	30 days	
Group 5	43 Nos	40 days	



Alexandrine Parakeets rescued from smugglers



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Very young chicks of 7 to 10 days old

REARING

The chicks were reared very carefully by the advice and involvement of experts by the Zoo staff with utmost care.

The following prophylactic and treatment measures and feeding schedule were followed.

- Disinfection by clearing the floor (housing room) with Khorsoline solution 1 ml/10 Litre water.
- Kept foot dipping baths (foot baths) at the entry of chick rearing room.
- Restriction of personnel inside the chick rearing room to avoid contamination and also human imprint on birds which will otherwise effect birds during port release period.
- Parasitological examination of faecal droppings for parasites if any and also for future de-worming by the chicks.
- Temperature regulation by

keeping Brooder lamps (2 Nos) & Room heater (2 Nos) as birds are warm blooded and were more body temperature ranging from 40 – 42°C for normal chick development and regular functioning of the body. It was also useful in reducing cold stress of winter season and shock due to

- trampling in small boxes and long transport.
- Humidity was kept at room ambient condition and the total room was kept dry and clean.
 - Floor of the rearing room was covered with gunny bags to warm them and also for easy cleaning.
 - Entire room was sterilized before keeping chicks into it.
 - Feeding schedule 3-5 times per day with syringes without needle (most of them are very young and unable to feed on their own).

Feeding: The young chicks were fed with Cerelac mixture - Wheat & Milk powder (Semi liquid food) Later on, after 10-15 days, substituted by a mixture of wheat, corn (maize), cereals (Jowar, Ragi and Sorghum), pulses-Green gram. Older birds were fed by fruits like Papaya, Guava, Grape, Pomegranate etc. and also with groundnuts.

Medicines used

- Enzyme preparation - Neopeptone, Digyton, B-Complex mixture, Vitamin and Minerals with amino acids.
- Shellcall for Calcium supplementation.
- Feed additives and Antibiotics like Oxytetracycline (chicks are easily susceptible to viral & bacterial infection).

Rearing of parakeets at secret hideouts suspected





Feeding of chicks and sub-adult birds with syringes (needleless)



Rehabilitation of birds in natural forest area- all birds (214 Nos.) were rehabilitated in Kambalakonda Reserve Forest and Wildlife Sanctuary in span of 3-4 months.

Press Clippings

Forest officials suspect poachers are rearing Alexandria Parakeets in secret hideouts on the AP-Odisha border.

Even as newborn parakeets after their rescue from gangsters near Palakonda by Srikakulam police were shifted to Indira Gandhi Zoological Park on February 2 are growing well with most of them able to feed and fly on their own, forest officials admit that catching of over 200 day-old birds from their nests in the forest was not possible to anyone.

"Hence it must be the handiwork of some groups who must be rearing the endangered birds to exploit their

demand for keeping as caged creatures in various countries," a senior forest officer said. However, some local tribals are also in the habit of catching them from the nests and selling them to fortune-tellers. "They could be encouraged to abstain from catching them by launching specific livelihood intervention programme," said another forest official.

Before arrest of two persons and seizure of 214 parakeets in small baskets near Palakonda by the police, there were a few cases in which parakeet chicks were seized. Such seizures give credence to the suspicion that the birds listed in Schedule IV of

ENDANGERED BIRD

- ▶ **A pair of Alexandria Parakeets fetches somewhere Rs.20,000 to Rs.30,000 abroad**
- ▶ **The same is available for a few hundred rupees in the local market**
- ▶ **Seizure of 214 chicks strengthens the suspicion that they were secretly reared**
- ▶ **They breed during November-April**
- ▶ **Generally, two to four eggs are laid and the incubation period is 28 days**

Wildlife Act are being reared clandestinely by people involved in their smuggling.

Talking ability

A pair of Alexandria Parakeets fetches somewhere Rs.20,000 to Rs.30,000 abroad whereas it is available for a few hundred rupees in the local market. They are highly sensitive and known for developing talking ability. They are the largest species among all parakeets.

Breeding time

They breed during November-April. Generally two to four eggs are laid and the incubation period is 28 days. After meticulous care and feeding them protein substances through syringe, the rescued parakeets kept at a quarantined room of the zoo here gained enough strength to feed on their own. Some of them are able to fly. Once the court in Srikakulam which directed their nursing in the zoo gives permission, they will be released into the wild.

214 Alexandrine parakeets rescued, shifted to city zoo

SANTOSH PATNAIK

End of an ordeal: Over 200 new-born Alexandrine parakeets rescued from smugglers in Srikakulam district being given care at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.—Photo: C.V. SUBRAHMANYAM

As many as 214 new-born Alexandrine parakeets rescued from smugglers in Srikakulam a few days ago are being lodged at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park

on court orders to make them fit for release into the wild.

After foiling an attempt to smuggle them by a gang near Palakonda, the Srikakulam Police handed them over to the Forest Department. "On court orders, they were shifted to the zoo on Friday night. We hope with utmost care by zoo officials, the new-borns will get the ability to feed on their own and fly," **Divisional Forest Officer-Srikakulam B. Vijay Kumar**, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

As the parakeets are highly vulnerable to viral and bacterial infections, they are being given semi-liquid food with syringes minus the needles. Protein substances are also given after quarantining them in the in-patient ward of the zoo.

They are smuggled out of the country to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. In the overseas market, a pair of Alexandrine parrots fetches around Rs. 20,000 to Rs.30,000.

"We will also vaccinate them and maybe in a month or 45 days, release them into the wild after obtaining court permission. Everything depends on their ability to fly," **zoo curator G. Ramalingam** said.

The cute-looking parrots, considered most sought after world-wide for being kept as pets, have life expectancy of 15 to 30 years. They like to be touched and stroked and love to play with water. They eat fruits, nuts, vegetables and greens.

They are listed in Schedule IV of the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972. The parrots, which develop exceptionally long tails and are hypersensitive like lovebirds, were named Alexandrine after the Alexander the Great as he used to export these birds from Punjab to the Mediterranean and the European countries for prized possession by the royal families.

Mr. Ramalingam said the zoo at present had two dozen parrots belonging to this species and they were not in a position to shelter more for want of space and other constraints.

The parrots once released to the wild set up nests on trees at a height of 10 to 20 feet to avoid being eaten by mongooses, snakes, rats and other rodents.

Srikakulam police arrests two parakeet smugglers.

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Srikakulam, Feb 1 (PTI) Srikakulam police caught two people while they were transporting 232 parakeets yesterday. Police sub-inspector D Nageswara Rao of L N Peta found N Gopal and N Durga illegally transporting the parakeets in a car and detained them along with the driver of the car. They were handed over to forest officials at Palakonda for investigation. After being interrogated by Forest Range Officer-Appa Rao, the smugglers revealed that purchased the parakeets from local hunters for selling them to soothsayers. The forest officials registered a case against them under Sections 9, 51, and 58 of the Wild Life Protection Act and produced them before the Judicial Magistrate's First Class Court at Amadalavalasa, which remanded them to a sub-jail. About six parakeets out of 232, died due to suffocation as they were packed in gunny bags. Forest officials handed the remaining parakeets to the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park at Visakhapatnam today. PTI CORBA.