

Book Review

Galetti, M. e Pizo, M.A. (eds). 2002. **Ecologia e conservação de psitacídeos no Brasil**. Melopsittacus Publicações Científicas. Belo Horizonte. 236 páginas, 13 capítulos, ilustrada; fotografias em cores. ISBN 85-86979-03-1

Brazil was referred to by early explorers as *terra papagallorum*, or the land of parrots, on account of its variety and diversity. This richness is seen in the brightly colored *Pyrrhura conures*, the rich yellow Golden Conure *Guarouba guarouba*, the gigantic Hyacinth Macaw *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*, in the popular pet Amazona parrots and in the garrulous *Brotogeris* that can often be seen in city parks. This diversity has seen countless books covering the groups, but such books have largely been produced outside Brazil, encompass species whose ranges often exceeds the borders of this country, deal with biology or aviculture, and have been promulgated in a language other than that which Camoens and Seragamo have so eloquently used. Now this is changing.

Very recently **Ecologia e conservacao de psitacideos no Brasil** was published by Melopsittacus Publicações Científicas (it is available through Atualidades Ornitológicas, Caixa Postal 238, 86870-000; Ivaiporã, PR, Brazil; www.ao.com.br). It is edited by Mauro Galetti and Marco Aurélio Pizo. The book is timely - just recently a new *Pionopsitta* was discovered and it will probably already be officially described by the time this review goes to press - and fills a tremendous void: a book in Portuguese on the parrots of Brazil.

The book consists of 13 chapters, each dealing with a different topic and by a different author or group of authors. Subjects range from field studies on the diet of *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus* to the reproductive biology of the Blue-fronted Amazon *Amazona aestiva* in the pantanal. The book is geared towards a conservationist/ornithological market but aviculturists can derive tremendous benefit by learning more about the wild habits of parrots, the diet which these birds consume, or about their reproductive biology. As an example, the principal nesting tree of *Amazona aestiva* in the pantanal are palms of the genera *Acrocomia*, *Scheelea* and *Copernicia*. The palms chosen were invariably dead and yet these did not produce a higher success rate than cavities in other trees and which were alive. This in itself has little significance but when all of the trees are examined, it becomes apparent that this species shows a broad array of acceptability of nests - and that in captivity finding a proper nest may not be significant; this may be the reason why this species reproduces so well compared to other congeners which have more restricted nesting requirements. *Amazona brasiliensis*, in contrast, seems

to have a more defined nest preference and this may be the reason why so many birds in captivity are reluctant to nest - perhaps the nests the pairs are given are inadequate. Dietary studies on *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus* confirm the specialized diet and also the adaptability of this species; birds prefer the drupes of palms regurgitated by cattle. This demonstrates that this species has adapted to living with a foreign animal - cattle were introduced by European colonists - and at the same time how quickly they have learned to take advantage of a resource. The seeds of palms are fatty. This fact is well known by aviculturists who stress a fatty diet for this species, yet dietary protein is often overlooked. The study found that signs of protein deficiency occur in wild chicks. For aviculturists this means that fat is important - but so is protein. This may mean that some diets currently used for hand-rearing should be reviewed so that protein is not excessively low. The book offers insights that can either directly or by extrapolation apply to captive birds and help increase the reproductive potential, well being and perhaps overall health of these. The book contains a wealth of knowledge.

If the book has a pitfall it is that the language it is written in will exclude many readers. This is a major problem that could have been overcome by offering at least a summary in English. Doing so would have opened the book for broader dissemination. Perhaps this is something that should be considered by the publishers.

The photos are limited in number but that of the Spix's Macaw *Cyanopsitta spixii* in the wild alone makes the book a buy. This depicts perhaps the sole survivor of the species in the wild. This bird disappeared but the photo remains and it is a reminder of what can happen. Sadly it was not the sole species of bird which became extinct in Brazil in recent decades - the currawong *Mitu mitu* also vanished - but there is hope for both in aviculture; populations exist in captivity of both taxa.

My recommendation is to acquire the book and value it for the photos; if you can read the text, then a real gem will become polished and its value will become evident.

Derian A. L. S. Moraton

Arquitetura + Biologia. 1556, 71th. Street. Miami Beach,
FL. 33141. USA.