

Interview with a Brazilian aviculturist and a parrot breeder Márcia Weinzettl. PART I

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Márcia, tell us what's your relationship to parrots? Just a hobby, full time job, ...?

I'm a biologist and studied for that because I've always loved birds and mammals. In 1996, I graduated from wild animals, breeding and management. However, I started working with birds and mammals in two different zoos in 1990. Since 1994, I have been working as "Biologist Technical Responsible" in several different bird farms in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Working with parrots is my full time job for 25 years, since I finished my degree. You can find more information about me visiting my website www.marciaweinzettl.com.br.

(my web is almost ready and will be on line in a few weeks!)

These bird farms are private or public facilities?

All bird farms here in Brazil are private facilities. These people are bird lovers, but usually earn money in different ways, so they form a team to work for them. In general, they want to invest in technology and knowledge, so we can achieve better breeding results.

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Márcia Weinzettl working on the Brazilian parrot farm Papagaios Urbanos

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And what about your breeding? Do you have any parrots at home?

For my whole career I have been curator of 11 bird farms in Brazil. The problem is that all facilities need to be legalized by our government and follow their laws. Some are commercial, some scientific, and some only owned by bird collectors. Eight of them, that I was a curator of, were commercial ones. Unfortunately, I have never had my own facility, because here in Brazil, we need a lot of money to open and maintain this kind of farm. So it isn't easy to have a breeding farm in Brazil.

Can you describe us the facility your work for?

I am responsible for different facilities. The bigger ones accommodate about 1500 birds, medium ones about 400 birds and there are also the smaller ones with less than 100 birds. The design depends on the purpose of certain facility. Most of them are commercial ones, so in this case, we usually use suspended cages for each pair. But for some brazilian species we use bigger aviaries for large groups of parrots. It always depends on the species and the strategy of breeding.

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A group of young Amazona parrots – Red-browed Amazon (*Amazona rhodocorytha*) and Blue-fronted Amazon (*Amazona aestiva*) from the parrot farm Papagaios Urbanos.

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In several facilities we prefer artificial incubation and hand rearing of chicks because these birds are intended for the pet market. There are many more pairs of native species, exotic species are rarer. It's common to find here pets of following species:

Amazona aestiva, *A. amazonica*, *A. ochrocephala*, *A. vinacea*, *A. rhodocorytha*, *A. festiva*, *A. pretrei*, *Alipiopsitta xanthops*, *Pionus maximiliani*, *P. menstruus*, *P. tumultuosus*; *Araararauna*, *A. macao*, *A. chloroptera*, *A. severa*; *Anodorynchus hyacinthinus*; *Propyrrhura maracana*, *P. auricollis*; *Diopsittaca nobilis*; *Aratinga acuticaudata*, *A. aurea*, *A. auricapilla*, *A. jandaya*, *A. cactorum*, *A. leucophthalmus*, *A. mitrata*, *A. solstitialis*, *A. weddellii*; *Deroptyus accipitrinus*; *Forpus xanthopterygius*; *Guarouba guarouba*; *Nandayus nenday*; *Pionites leucogaster*, *P. melanocephala*; *Pyrrhura cruentata*, *P. frontalis*, *P. leucotis*, *P. perlata*, *P. lepida*, *P. picta* and so on, but we work with many other species too.

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Laid eggs which are incubated artificially. FreePower parrot farm

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FreePower parrot farm

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What is your normal working day? Is it a routine for you after 25 years in aviculture?

It can't be a routine because every day is different. Also the time of the year differs in the activities we have to do. In spring and summer it's the nesting season, so we need more time to observe the couples, manage eggs and youngers. In autumn and winter we need to manage the couples, analyze gained data, set new goals, prepare the enclosures and so on. Brazilian species differ from other species because we they breed mostly during spring and summer.

There is still something to do. Constantly, you have to develop breeding management, set up new pairs, observe the parrot behavior, monitor eggs and youngers (under artificial conditions or with their parents), analyze gained data, train your staff, build new enclosures and make scientific papers and presentations of lectures or courses.

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Freshly hatched Blue-throated Macaw (*Ara glaucogularis*)
at FreePower parrot farm

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What parrot species do you keep and breed?

Mostly I manage and breed our native species as I wrote before, but we manage some exotics species too. As for exotic species, recently I have bred *Amazona albifrons*, *A. autumnalis* A., *barbadensis*, *A. finschi*, *A. leucocephala*, *A. ventralis*, *A. viridigenalis* (only unfertile eggs unfortunately), *A. ochrocephala*, *Psittacus erithacus*, *Ara ambigua*, *A. glaucogularis*, *A. militaris*, *A. rubrogenys*, *Aratinga mitrata*, *A. nana*, *A. wagleri*, *Cacatua*, *Cyanolyseus*, *Eclectus*, *Eopholus*, *Eos*, *Forpus*, *Lorius*, *Poicephalus*, *Psittacula*, *Pionus chalcopterus*, *P. senilis* etc. All of them are in suspended cages and with only a pair in each enclosure. The cage size differs with each species, but all of them are outside. We live in tropical zone, so we don't need to build inside aviaries.

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Handfeeding time, FreePower parrot farm

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You are really good in handfeeding of parrots. Do you hanfeed all the chicks?

Thanks, but we always need to be improving and use new technologies!

Within the past 8 years we have reared about 600 golden conures, 50 hyacinth macaws, 450 other macaws, 150 caiques and approximately 600 youngers of various amazon parrot species. As I said before, each farm has different strategy and so the purpose. That's why the management is very different among them. Usually, if the facility is commercial and we need tame pets then we hand feed them.

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Photos: (c) Márcia Weinzettl. Title photo: Rostan parrot farm