

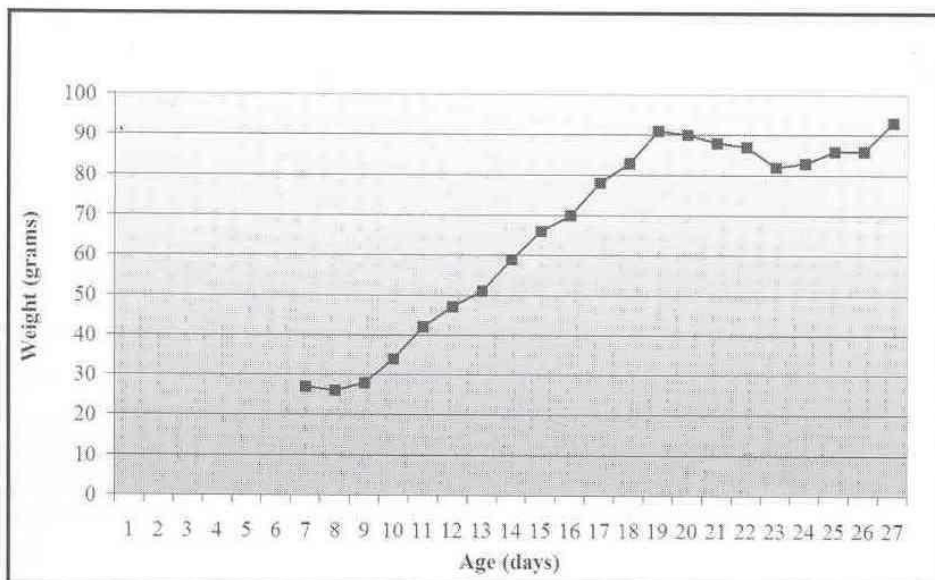
HAND-REARING A WHITE-BROWED COUCAL *Centropus superciliosus* AT EXMOOR ZOO

by Derek Gibson

Our White-browed Coucals having successfully parent-reared their offspring over the past two years (see *Avicultural Magazine* Vol.112, No.2, pp.49-52 (2006)), it came as somewhat of a surprise when we found a three or four day old chick lying dead on the aviary floor. Up until then we had found the coucals most obliging parents that took great care of their young. When we inspected the nest, however, we found a further two chicks, very cold, but still alive, a clear egg and a second dead chick. The two surviving chicks were transferred to the zoo's Incubation and Rearing Station.

The first chick weighed 27g whereas the second chick weighed only 7g. Both were placed in a small pot lined with kitchen towel and small twigs to prevent any problems with splayed legs, and then placed in a brooder set at 33°C (91.4°F). The larger chick's eyes had started to open. We quickly pooled ideas with staff at the Cotswold Wildlife Park, where the White-browed Coucal had previously been successfully hand-reared. The chicks were offered pinkie mice, rat pups, waxmoth larvae, mealworms and papaya, plus a vitamin supplement, Ace-High, a Vetarc product that has been used at the zoo over the past three years.

Fig. 1. Growth rate of hand-reared coucal.



Unfortunately, the second chick died almost immediately, but the first chick went from strength to strength (as can be seen from the accompanying growth rate graph and hand-rearing record) and by day 21 was observed feeding itself and by day 27 was weaned

Table 1. Hand-rearing record days seven to 27.

Age (days)	Date	Weight	Observations
7	04.05.07	27g	Placed in brooder set at 33°C (91.4°F), along with a bowl of water to increase the humidity.
8	05.05.07	26g	From 7.30am – 5.30pm fed on pinkie mice soaked and cut into quarters and waxworm larvae (killed).
9	06.05.07	29g	Eyes three-quarters open.
10	07.05.07	34g	Fed crickets and mealworms.
11	08.05.07	42g	"
12	09.05.07	46g	"
13	10.05.07	51g	"
14	11.05.07	59g	"
15	12.05.07	65g	"
16	13.05.07	70g	Rat pups and minced (ground) meat added to diet. Feathers developing on the breast.
17	14.05.07	77g	Stopped continual begging and started to make more characteristic coucal sound.
18	15.5.07	83g	Transferred to exercise cage and given fruit, insectivorous food and minced (ground) meat.



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Eleven days old.

Age (days)	Date	Weight	Observations
19	16.05.07	91g	Food no longer placed in chick's mouth, instead we wait for the chick to make the first move.
20	17.05.07	90g	Soaked Zoo A given at feed.
21	18.05.07	88g	Started to feed itself, taking mealworms and locusts.
22	19.05.07	87g	"
23	20.05.07	82g	"
24	21.05.07	83g	"
25	22.05.07	85g	"
26	23.05.07	85g	"
27	24.05.07	93g	Weaned.



Fifty days old.

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Upon being weaned it was housed in a large flight cage and upon determination of its sex will, it is hoped, go to make up a second pair here at Exmoor. At the time of writing (summer 2007), the breeding pair is incubating a further three eggs and, hopefully, this time will successfully rear the young and take us a few steps further forward in establishing a self-sustaining captive-breeding population of White-browed Coucals.

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