

Crimson Bellied Conures as Pets

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We've seen enough of these gorgeous little Pyrrhuras, the Crimson Bellied (CB) Conure [*Pyrrhura perlata perlata*], to know we love the looks of them. But beauty is as beauty does. Preservation and proliferation of these gems are excellent avicultural goals, but there are a limited number of aviculturists who can keep a breeding "collection" without needing some return on investment. Plus, when a species is as special personality-wise as these guys are, more people need to experience them!

CBs have been in the U.S. for less than 10 years, but they are becoming more known all over the country. The time has come when the burning question must be answered for breeders who are considering marketing to pet homes: "How



do these guys compare as home companions to other Pyrrhura conures and other small parrot species?"

While they have the Pyrrhura traits that endear them to Py people—spunkiness, territoriality, playfulness, touchy-feeliness, emotive expression of likes and dislikes, flock mentality, aerial agility,

etc.—CBs also have some traits that I think are unique to them in comparison to many other companion Pyrrhuras.

Now, any of the pys can have endearing qualities, but anyone who has thrown a bunch of green cheeks in a flight knows that you have to watch them for a while to be sure they don't take on the gang mentality and stalk and pounce. CBs are less that way—more easy going, like sun conures.

Suns in Christmas Drag? What CBs are NOT are green cheeks in Christmas drag, but suns? Maybe. To me, they have almost a sun conure disposition as youngsters—extra



CBs and parrotlets raised together were very compatible. The CBs were very good at ignoring the parrotlet "chatter" and literally shoving them out of the way if it suited them. That actually helped the parrotlets curb that natural "Napoleon complex" that they seem to express with other, larger birds. The parrotlets were not nippy, but then, they were not having to defend themselves against that action from the CBs.



This young mature pair of CBs befriended a young cinnamon GC female. There was lots of mutual grooming and they hung together in the evenings when everyone was out. I watched at first with concern because of the difference in age and the fact that the CB pair were bonding with each other, but the cinnamon GC just got in between the two of them, and they “worked on” each other.

sensitivity, sociability with less territoriality than many other pys, and cuddliness that can rival suns.

CBs seem to be “gentler” in nature than GCs—more like what I’ve seen with sun conure youngsters. Of course, the “spiciness” of the Pyrrhuras is what attracts many people to them, but mellowing that a bit with the CB is welcome also.

Mixing Species—From my experience with mixed flocks in a home, young CBs seem to be more easy-going when it comes to accepting other species than green cheeks (GCs) or black-capped (BCs). Now, if any of them are going to nest, or in that time of year when hormones flare, they would be typical parrot-defensive. I don’t think we could expect any less! What I don’t see with the CBs is the extent of py-bluffing that I do with GCs.

In fact, what I’ve seen is that if another species is not aggressive, the young CBs aren’t either. The clutch of CBs raised with parrotlets were very accepting of them—but then, so were the GCs that were raised with

parrotlets (different clutch). It may be a good early experience for these birds to be around other species, as they may be more adaptable to “different” types of birds in a pet home. That said, just as with ANY parrot, caution should be used in introducing new birds to a flock and in mixing CBs with bird of greater or lesser size than they are.

Talking and Mimicking—More so than GCs or BCs, I have heard CBs mimic sounds of other species, like the tiny whistle of the parrotlet and the raspy call of the sun (in a much less strident tone). I have not noted that CBs are exceptional talkers, but they do learn a few phrases. If they are more isolated with people and less as in a communal flock environment, I’d think they would be somewhat better talkers than suns, GCs, or BCs.

Acrobatics and Playing—Perhaps because they are heavier-bodied than GCs—more like the cobby-bodied



The CB and white eared (WE) conure in the picture have been out in the same area, but not caged together. Both are from spring. Since the white eared is not aggressive, this particular CB male is friendly—and he is a pretty territorial little guy around his own cage.

suns—while they can swoop through the air, their flight patterns are more sun-like rather than jet fighter-like.



Like GCs and other Pyrrhuras, the CBs like to hang upside down in their cages.

CBs LOVE bells—they will ring them over and over again. They also love the long hanging plastic chains. I've seen them get about 2/3 of the way down the chain, flap their wings, and fly in circles around the chain (in the middle of the cage). Indoor calisthenics.

Sociability and Cuddling—Similar to suns, the CBs seem to be little social butterflies. When out, they are also constantly checking in with the resident human caretaker. CBs are also incredibly curious. They want to know what you are doing, what you just did, and to explore any place you might have been!

The youngsters do not seem as prone to gnawing on flesh as some Pyrrhuras, more like gentle tasting (similar to suns).

Like most Pyrrhuras, they love to be snuggled up to your chest. And unlike a typical Pyrrhura which cannot be still for long, a CB will quieten down and snuggle for long periods, e.g., for a nap with a favorite person.

Future Potential as Pets—I think their future as companion birds is EXCELLENT! CBs are a bit larger than the typical Pyrrhura conure, which means they have more “substance” to them, which is important to some people. CBs are beautiful, expressive, and affectionate, and although they can get “noisy,” the decibel level and stridency cannot remotely approach a sun's, for example. Insofar as breeding for the future, it must be noted that the gene pool is somewhat limited, so it will be important to keep records and not cross closely too often. Also, these birds do not seem to be quite as prolific as the popular GCs or suns, for example, so the availability may not be quite as good. However, that probably means the price will continue to be higher than some other companion conure species.



More information about and pictures of these gems may be found at the following sites:

<http://www.birdcompanions.com/conures.htm>

http://www.hillcountryaviaries.com/special_breeding_prog.htm

<http://www.flatratewebsites.com/sites/outback/conurespecies/pearly.html>