

## The Advantage of Complimentary Breeds

By Bob Bollinger

Over the years, some of our most striking and desirable show breeds have become less productive than many of us would like to see. There are a number of possible solutions for dealing with less than perfect breeders. Some people hand feed, many use feeder pairs, and others just let the pairs struggle though with low productivity. My preferred strategy is to keep complimentary breeds where I can swap eggs and have the opposing pairs raise each others' babies.



By using other nice show breeds I get the advantage of feeders without necessarily wasting space for pairs whose sole purpose is to be foster parents. With the complimentary breeds I show my feeders, enjoy other clubs and have nice birds to look at in the loft.



MFC - 5 days old

My passion is medium face helmets. I have found that the helmet babies are more small and delectate than other breeds. It seems that they require more care than the helmet parents are capable of providing. To increase productivity I routinely swap their eggs and babies with others in the loft. Along with the helmets, I also keep brunner croppers, horseman pouters, and other breeds. I have found that the helmets will raise the other breeds' babies as they tend to be more robust and tolerate the sub-optimal parenting of my helmets.

When choosing a complementary breed I pick birds that have a reputation for being great feeders. I try to match size and temperament to the birds I am working to foster. I pair the birds at similar times to match the timing of the eggs. I have found that some pairs tend to be a little bit faster or slower than others. I just account for that when I pair them so they match timing. I have found that eggs can be swapped +- 3 days and babies can be swapped any time as long as they match size and color. It is acceptable to move babies from pair to pair as they grow.



Good Adoptive Parents



Simple Records

Record keeping is important when swapping parents. However, the process does not need to be complicated. I use a simple white board with blocks that represent my nests. I record when eggs are laid, when they hatch and the band numbers of the parents. I typically fill in the pertinent data when I actually make the egg swap. The same records can be kept in notebooks, on cards attached to the boxes or even on scraps of paper.

Helmets and other show breeds can often be frustrating. There is no point in getting stressed and leaving a breed you really enjoy. By adding and utilizing a complementary breed you get to enjoy both!