

Kingpin of Parrot Smuggling Ring Sentenced to Nearly 7 Years Without Parole

On November 18, a Federal court in Chicago sentenced Tony Silva, an internationally recognized expert and outspoken protector of exotic birds, to nearly 7 years of imprisonment without parole for leading an international parrot smuggling conspiracy and a related income tax violation.

In addition to the 82-month incarceration, U.S. District Court Judge Elaine Bucklo fined Silva \$100,000 and ordered him to perform 200 hours of community service during the 3-year supervised release program following the prison term. This is one of the most severe sentences ever imposed for bird smuggling.

Also sentenced was Gila Daoud, Silva's mother. She will serve a 27-month prison term to be followed by a one-year supervised release program with concurrent 200 hours of community service.

As she handed down the sentences, Judge Bucklo said, "The real victims of these crimes were the birds themselves and our children and future generations who may never have the opportunity to see any of these rare birds."

On January 30, 1996, Silva pleaded guilty to a far-reaching conspiracy to smuggle or attempt to smuggle into this country some of the world's most endangered, beautiful, and highly protected wild birds. The value of the smuggled wildlife totalled \$1,386,900. Included in these illegal shipments were substantial numbers of extremely rare Hyacinth Macaws. Silva also pled guilty to filing a false income tax return in connection with his sale of the birds.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of Law Enforcement's Branch of Special Operations spearheaded "Operation Renegade," a 3-year international probe to stem illegal trade in wild birds. "The severity of the sentence in this case sends a clear signal that the United States will absolutely not tolerate the depletion of irreplaceable natural resources for personal gain," said John Rogers, acting Service Director.

The Hyacinth Macaw, found primarily in Brazil, has a wild population numbering between 2,000 and 5,000. One of the birds can command a price of \$5,000 to \$12,000. Because of this and the bird's precarious status in the wild, the Hyacinth Macaw has been accorded the highest level of protection provided under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), an international wildlife treaty to which the United States and 131 other nations are parties. Worldwide, the illegal wildlife trade is a multi-billion-dollar-a-year business, second only to illegal drug trade. "The United States takes its obligations and responsibilities under CITES very seriously," said Rogers. "This case reflects the Service's deep commitment to safeguarding the global community's natural resources."

The prosecution was lead by the United States Attorney's Office in Chicago and assisted by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and the Wildlife and Marine Resources section of the Natural Resources Division of the Department of Justice. ●



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The Little Red Siskin Soars to New Heights

It was a wonderful day when *Bird Breeder's* Contributing Editor Elizabeth Anderson phoned Yvonne Patterson to do an article on breeding Red Siskins. This "concise and informative" material will hopefully help breeders, within the project and outside the project, produce greater numbers of Red Siskins. If you have not yet read this article in the September '96 issue, please do so. The "Bird's Eye View Into the Red Siskin Recovery Project" details the studbook, caging, diet, breeding, pathology, and so much more.

Bird breeder Kathleen Samuelson has shown a great interest in AFA projects. She and her husband Phillip (Editor-in-Chief of *Reptiles*) have been to several AFA conventions through the years and we wish to express our thanks to them, for being so supportive.

The following month, North Carolina based Smoky Mountain Cage Bird Society donated over \$2,000 for the Red Siskin Project. These funds were used for shipping Red Siskins between breeders. Shipping and necropsy costs are the only reimbursed expenses project breeders receive from AFA.

Smoky Mountain Cage Bird Society asked that the money be used in honor of Dr. Bob Dyer and his work with the Red Siskins through the years, especially in the beginning stages of the project.

It takes a lot of voluntary effort, to make a project like this soar. The Director, breeders, breeder coordinators, membership committee, studbook keeper, are only a few directly responsible for the Project's success. Articles and donations such as these, produce the wind beneath our wings.

Thanks to all who help make the Red Siskin Project a success. ➤