

AFA President's Column

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The California Condor is not an exotic bird, it is a native bird, and certainly not a companion bird. However, we are all interested in the good news about this majestic winged creature from the ancient past. To date, 120 condors have been captive bred at the Los Angeles Zoo and San Diego Wild Animal Park. This bird, when flying free, was reduced to a total of seven wild birds, due to deaths from hunting, but primarily from eating lead lodged in the flesh of animals shot by hunters.

The young captive bred condors are now being prepared for life in the wild by training them to be wary of power poles and humans. Since the young birds are curious and without adults to model behavior for them, they tend to get into trouble. Some have been electrocuted on power poles and others have been poisoned on pools of antifreeze on roadways. There are now 27 California Condors living in the wild. There are another 92 in captive breeding programs. This is a wonderful example of the importance of captive breeding for rare species. The wildlife biologists and zoo personnel are to be congratulated on this great success. How remarkable that many of us and future generations will now have the opportunity to see California Condors flying in the wild.

In June of 1997, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) will be meeting in Zimbabwe, Africa to discuss proposals regarding trade in endangered species. Policies put in place at CITES meetings have an effect on aviculture world wide. When changes are made in CITES listings on the Appendices, it provides an opportunity for officials within each country to change regulations or propose new laws.

At present, the AFA is the only non governmental organization (NGO) representing aviculture at CITES. There are many representatives of animal rights and humane groups who attend CITES conferences and also attend the CITES Committee meetings which are held during the interim between the CITES conferences. It is important that CITES officials understand the interests and concerns of aviculture. The AFA CITES Chairman, Al McNabney, has attended the two meetings of the CITES Animals Committee where he participated in discussions regarding the importance of captive breeding. The AFA CITES Committee prepared documents which were submitted to CITES in preparation for the upcoming meeting. In addition, the AFA will be preparing a special CITES publication of the AFA Watchbird Journal for the May/June issue. This is one of the important projects on which AFA works for the general benefit of aviculturists. This is a costly project for the AFA. Your donation to support the CITES work will be greatly appreciated.

In August of 1997 the AFA will be holding its annual convention in San Antonio, Texas. Convention attendees will find a new and exciting format for the presentations. Speakers will present slide lectures in the mornings, and in the afternoons special workshops will be held. For instance, a special segment will be presented on Flock Management. Each morning one or more speakers will present subjects including Incubation and Hatching, Pediatrics, Marketing and Sales, and many other topics of crucial interest to U.S. aviculturists.

During the afternoon session, workshops on each topic will take place. This flock management segment, for instance, is designed to improve production of quality young birds.

Have you ordered your copy of the *Bird Breeder's Legislative Handbook*? If not, why not? The information in this booklet is extremely valuable and you need it ahead of time, not after the knock on the door. Many of the calls received at the AFA Business Office are from frantic bird owners asking what they must do because:

- Animal control has knocked at the door and wants to see their birds.
- Animal control has demanded that they remove all the birds from the premises within 15 days,
- Animal control has been informed they are keeping birds "in dirty crowded cages."

Most of the time these complaints have no foundation in fact but have originated from some aggravated neighbor who seeks to use the animal control officer as a means to punish the bird owner. Do you know your rights when that knock comes at the door? Do you have to let the animal control officer in to see your birds, or into your aviary or your bird farm? Order the *Bird Breeder's Legislative Handbook* and be prepared.

As you can see, we are making some wonderful changes and additions to the *Watchbird*. Please let us know how you like them. There is a lot of new information about exotic bird behavior, bird buildings and equipment and bird care and health. Feather plucking in both companion birds and breeder birds has been a problem for many owners of exotic birds. The answers are complex. There is an article touching on featherpicking in this issue and there was one in the last issue. Look for additional articles on this problem in upcoming issues.

Are you prepared for natural disasters? Are you ready to move birds quickly out of their aviaries, into a vehicle or a building? Do you have the crates or carriers to accomplish this? Do you live in an area which can be flooded? Hit by wild fires? Ravaged by a hurricane or tornado? What about winter temperatures in the twenties or lower? Do you have a reserve of water and food supplies? Could you need a back up generator if the electricity were out for several days? Do you have an evacuation plan if you had to leave the area? Do you have a disaster plan?

If you do not have a plan, why not sit down and make a plan today? We would all like to assume that these problems will never happen to us, but if we are prepared, we will certainly reduce the impact of the disaster. This is a part of our responsibility to our birds. ➤