

Q & A

ASK THE EXPERTS....

Have a question? Need an answer? Want some advice? Ask the experts!

We are inviting AFA members to submit questions about ANY aspect of aviculture to our panel of experts.

Our experienced professionals are ready to respond to your inquiries about General Husbandry, Cage Set-ups, Breeding, Incubation, Hand-rearing, Behavior, General Veterinary Concerns and much, much more.

Our panel includes some of the most respected and knowledgeable Veterinarians, Breeders, Bird Trainers, Bird Behaviorists and Zoo Professionals in aviculture and they are available to answer your questions.

The opinions and views expressed in this column are solely those of the "Ask the Experts" panelists and do not necessarily represent those of the American Federation of Aviculture or the Watchbird Staff.

Ask The Experts will answer and publish as many questions as space allows.

Q: I recently purchased a Cockatiel which has an AFA leg band. Can the band be traced to the breeder for me? – Sue

Hi, I have a Hahn's Macaw with a leg band that reads _____ (band information deleted for privacy). Is there a way for me to track down where my bird came from? Any help would be greatly appreciated. – Brian

I have read it is easy to trace the heritage of a bird by the band information. Like where it was bred, how old it is and more. I haven't had any luck finding anything on a parakeet that flew into my backyard. His band is _____ (band information deleted for privacy). Are you able to fill me on how I can trace info on the bird and perhaps find its owner? Thank you – Linda

A: There are several methods that might help you trace the origin of your bird. Birds banded with bands purchased through the American Federation of Aviculture can be traced by completing a Traceable Band Form and forwarding it to the AFA office. This form may be accessed from the website, www.afabirds.org. The AFA office will contact the breeder and request that he or she contact the individual making the inquiry. These bands will have the letters "AFA" stamped on them. There is also a national leg band registry begun by Jeff Keyes that may be accessed at <http://buddysfriend.com/>. Many breeders have registered their names with this site to help owners track the origin of their bird. There is also a yahoo email list, LegBandNumbers@yahoo.com which may be of some assistance in tracking the origin of a bird. – Nancy Speed.

Q: I have recently obtained a pair of Greater Patagonian Conures. I understand they are endangered in the wild, what about in the US? If they are that rare, I would rather see them in a breeding program instead of me breeding them for pets. Any help you could give me would be very helpful. –Yvonne.

A: Internet searches and printed data on the three subspecies of Patagonian Conures found in aviculture seem to be marked with misinformation. The most commonly kept subspecies of this bird found in U.S. aviculture today is the nominate race *Cyanoliseus patagonus patagonus*, sometimes called the "lesser Patagonian conure". The subspecies called the Greater Patagonian Conure is quite rare, even in the wild. This subspecies is *Cyanoliseus p. byroni*, found in small populations in central Chile. The most distinctive differences between the two would be that *byroni* is a much larger bird, sometimes reaching twenty-four

inches in length, and body weights upward of 350 grams. Additionally, byroni most often has an almost full white collar extending across the chest from one side to the other. In both of the smaller subspecies, the white on the chest is restricted to areas near the shoulder and do not connect across the front of the bird.

Subspecies patagonus (lesser) used to be quite common in aviculture even as recently as the late 1980's and early 90's. However, due to its extremely loud voice, and other rumors that this species is often a carrier of "Pacheco's disease", it has fallen into disfavor and is not well established in the captive environment. Today you might find patagonus in collections of conures around the country, but for sure it is no longer considered a "common" companion bird species. – Rick Jordan.

Q: What books would you recommend for someone new to breeding birds? I have been adding to my library but would love to see a listing of "must have" books!
– Cyndi

A: It is difficult to recommend certain books without knowing what species you are interested in keeping and breeding. For breeding, I believe every aviculturist must be prepared in the event of an emergency. Two of the most important books in my library are Parrot Incubation Procedures, written by Rick Jordan and Parrots—Hand Feeding & Nursery Management, written by Howard Voren and Rick Jordan. These books are a very important part of an aviculturist's library even if there is no plan to incubate eggs artificially or hand feed from Day One. I also enjoy the Lexicon of Parrots by Thomas Arndt when I am studying the natural range of a certain species. – Nancy Speed

Q: How much money did Americans spend in 2004 on pet bird supplies? - Rene

A: Figures for 2004 are not yet available. In 2003 there were 17.3 million pet birds in the United States. Seventy percent of all bird owners purchased treats for their birds. Most bird owners purchased at least two packages of treats during the average month. The average customer transaction per pet store visit in 2003 was \$26.64, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association and the 2004-2005 PET AGE Retailer Report. – Nancy Speed.

Q: Do you have a chart for band sizes? You used to post species with sizes, now you don't. Thanks in advance. – Tammy

A: The AFA website, www.afabirds.org, has a closed leg band size guide. It can be found in the AFA Store section of the website. The direct URL for the size guide is http://www.afabirds.org/AFA_Store/band_size_guide.shtml - AFA webmaster.