



## AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE

Dedicated to conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public.

### MEMBER NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

African Love Bird Society  
American Cockatiel Society    Avicultural Society of America  
American Pigeon Fanciers Council

### MEMBER CLUBS

#### ARIZONA

Arizona Avicultural Society

#### CALIFORNIA

Aviary Association of Kern  
Butte County Bird Club  
California Game Breeders  
Capitol City Bird Society  
Central California Cage Bird Club  
Exotic Bird Breeder's Association  
Finch Society of San Diego County  
Fresno Canary & Finch Club  
Golden Gate Avian Society  
Golden West Game Bird Breeders  
Great Western Budgerigar Society  
Hookbill Hobbyists of Southern California  
Long Beach Bird Breeders  
Norco Valley Bird Breeders  
Nu-Color Bird Association  
Orange County Bird Breeders  
San Diego County All Bird Breeders Association  
San Diego County Canary Club  
Santa Clara Valley Canary & Exotic Cage Bird Club  
South Bay Bird Club  
South Coast Finch Society  
Southern California Bird Club  
Southern California Roller Canary Club  
Valley of Paradise Bird Club  
West Valley Bird Society  
Western Bird Breeders Society

#### COLORADO

Rocky Mountain Cage Bird Club, Inc.

#### CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Association for Aviculture

#### FLORIDA

Aviary & Cage Bird Society of South Florida  
Gold Coast Exotic Cage Bird Club  
Greater Jacksonville Avicultural Society  
Gulf Coast Cage Bird Breeders Association

#### GEORGIA

Georgia Cage Bird Society

#### HAWAII

Honolulu Canary & Finch Club

#### ILLINOIS

Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club  
Illinois Game & Pet Breeders Society  
Piasa Cage Bird Club

#### INDIANA

Indiana Bird Fanciers

#### IOWA/NEBRASKA

Mid-America Cage Bird Society

#### MARYLAND

Baltimore Bird Fanciers, Inc.  
Maryland Cage Bird Society  
National Capitol Bird Club

#### MASSACHUSETTS

Northeastern Avicultural Society  
Western New England Cage Bird Society

#### MINNESOTA

Minnesota Cage Bird Association

#### MISSOURI

Missouri Cage Bird Association

#### NEBRASKA

Greater Omaha Cage Bird Society

#### NEVADA

Las Vegas Avicultural Society

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Cage Bird Association

#### NEW YORK

American Singers Club, Inc., Chapter 1  
Long Island Cage Bird Association

#### OHIO

Central Ohio Bird Fanciers, Inc.

#### OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma Cage Bird Society

#### OREGON

Columbia Canary Club  
Exotic Bird Club of Oregon

#### PENNSYLVANIA

Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society

#### TEXAS

Alamo Exhibition Budgie Club  
Dallas Cage Bird Society  
Fort Worth Bird Club

#### UTAH

Avicultural Society of Utah

#### VIRGINIA

Tidewater Cage Bird Fanciers of Virginia

#### WASHINGTON

Washington Budgerigar Society

#### WISCONSIN

Wisconsin Cage Bird Club

## BIRD CONSERVATION THROUGH CAPTIVE PROPAGATION

### — A Breeding Registry —

by Richard E. Baer, D.V.M.  
President, A.F.A.

The keeping and raising of birds is the most rapidly growing avocation in this country. Birds are now selling in greater numbers than dogs and cats combined. They are fast becoming the most popular companion animals. This phenomenal interest in birds has been the subject of T.V. shows and has been featured in reports in our newspapers and national magazines. NEWSWEEK in a recent article estimated that over 20 million people now breed birds and that more than 40 million own at least one.

Fortunately, most bird keepers confine their interests to the owning of canaries, budgerigars and other domesticated species that are in plentiful supply. There is, however, an increasing demand for the more exotic birds. Herein may lie a problem.

So long as the exotic species imported are in ample quantity and readily replenishable in their wild state, no problem exists in their being sold in the pet trade. (Some of the most desirable exotic birds are even pests in their land of origin but, lamentably, are all too often ruthlessly exterminated rather than harvested in an ethical, humane manner for export to the benefit and pleasure of those who would enjoy and cherish them.) It is when rare or endangered species are imported for sale as pets rather than for captive propagation by our zoological parks and serious aviculturists that there may be conflict.

There is controversy as to how much of the decline in numbers of our rarer bird wildlife is actually due to the pet trade. There is no controversy, however, that the single greatest cause of the decimation of all of our wild bird populations is the result of their loss of habitat. The habitat of most of our bird wildlife is the tropical rain forest. In 1976 the Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. put the minimum destruction rate of the earth's tropical rain forests at 27 million acres per year, or 50 acres per minute. At this rate these forests could reach depletion in a single human generation. A single human generation could find us without much of the avian fauna we now take for granted unless measures are taken to protect or propagate them.

This loss of habitat is the ultimate threat to our wild birds, but it appears that there is little we can do to prevent the inroads of civilization. As man increases his own horizons and expands into new areas our

fauna and flora are bound to suffer. As the tropical rain forests are cleared and grasslands are converted to farms, less and less remains as home for our wildlife.

Modern machinery can clear an acre of forest per hour. Up to 400 or more birds can and do make their homes in one acre of rain forest. The rain forest is home to one-half of all of the earth's bird species, and to three-fourths of those that inhabit trees.

One tenth of the earth's land area is now in tropical rain forest. At the present rate of removal, all that will remain will be that forest set aside in the national parks and reserves. Only 3% of the earth's rain forests and savannahs are so set aside as national parks. Without a home there will be no more birds in the wild.

We who cut down our own great forests and turned our own prairies into wheat farms can do little to deny the undeveloped countries their right to a better life. Indonesia, for example, receives one-fourth of its national income from denuding its tropical forests; and in Costa Rica alone, grazing land for livestock has doubled in the last twenty years, all at the expense of its tropical forest. For much of our wildlife, their habitat is doomed to destruction and they face the danger of extinction.

With the loss of the protection provided by natural refuges or with their reduction to a minimum, the only salvation from extinction for many of the birds we now import will be through their conservation by captive propagation.

The American Federation of Aviculture recognizes this and is intent upon sponsoring the most ambitious program it has undertaken since its inception. The Federation proposes to establish and maintain a national breeding registry of birds not commonly bred in captivity, to actively promote their captive propagation, to educate the aviculturist in the proper care and in the breeding of these species, and to maintain records of these breedings.

Such an aspiring program will require funding and we look to our members and to the millions of bird owners and to the bird industry for support in this undertaking. Success in this plan needs expert supervision; we call upon the bird curators of our zoos and upon the advanced aviculturists for this direction.

There may be some skepticism as to whether the private aviculturist can contribute significantly to the preservation of wildlife through captive propagation. A relatively small number of our group have already demonstrated that it can be done. We need only to stimulate and encourage greater numbers of bird breeders to specialize and become avicultural conser-

vationists. Given the needed support, the proper direction, and the necessary involvement of breeders, the A.F.A. is confident that it will succeed.

The Federation appreciates the pet owner and the bird keeper. From their ranks come our aviculturists. Most aviculturists started as pet bird owners and progressed into breeding, first as amateurs then as serious breeders. Many of our outstanding aviculturists and bird curators began in this fashion. We are optimistic that all bird lovers will support us.

To implement a successful captive propagation program on a national scale, the non-specialist breeder must be encouraged to specialize. The non-productive luxury of maintaining a bird collection, of keeping a menagerie, will have to be exchanged for concentration upon a particular species or upon a few related species of birds. The species selected must be dependent upon the limitations of available facilities and the abilities of the breeder. Successful captive propagation does not necessarily require large and elaborate investments or buildings. Witness: one successful aviculturist alone raised over two hundred Black Hooded Red Siskins (*Spinus cucullatos*) a year in a home aviary — this, an endangered species! Some private aviculturists are far more successful in raising the smaller rare birds than are our major zoos, all because they are able to devote more intimate care and time to their interest.

Dedicated game bird breeders are right now breeding and raising many species of endangered pheasants and water fowl in abundance.

We need only to stimulate many more non-specialist breeders to become avicultural conservationists.

We want the importer to continue to be able to supply the avicultural conservationist with the breeding stock necessary to develop our program.

Both the bird collector and the bird industry should look with favor upon captive propagation for it will only be from a good captive raised supply of birds that the former will be able to find replacements for his collection and the latter will be able to purchase stock when birds from the wild are no more.

For government regulatory and health agencies, captive propagation assures a supply of healthy birds, decreases the menace of the disease threat to our poultry industry; and, hopefully, eventually will curb the trafficking in smuggled birds.

The response of the bird breeder and the enthusiastic support of the millions of bird owners and industry will make certain the success of this conservation program. Success or failure depends upon you and how you react to this opportunity.



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