

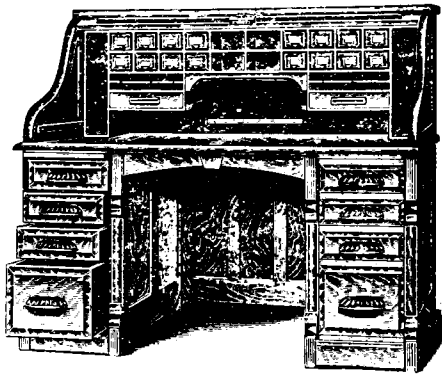
NOTICE

All correspondence intended for the editor of the Watchbird should be mailed directly to his address.

Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 340
Norco, CA 91760

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



Dear Editor

Having been a member of the A.F.A. for some time now, I want to repeat what I said in a previous letter...“your magazine is outstanding and I enjoy it more than I can say”. Also a big thank you for all the work the A.F.A is doing on our behalf.

Having felt, like most of us, that this could not happen to me, you can imagine the horror and heartbreak I felt a few weeks ago when upon going out to feed my birds I found the lock cut on one aviary. I stood stunned for a moment, then dashed into the walk-in area. The doors to the various compartments were standing open. Nothing was left except some very young cockatiels. The thief knew just what he wanted.

Of course I called the police at once. My heartbreak changed to frustration as I talked to them. First I was told to forget it — that one bird looks just like another so how could I prove which ones were mine. They also said that even if the bird was banded the thief could cut off the old band and put on his own. I had a suspect in mind but the police said there was not enough evidence to get a search warrant. In other words, it was hopeless. I am out a large sum of money plus some birds I raised from chicks — birds that would come to my shoulder in the aviaries. I can not express my feelings.

I know that there has been talk, by the A.F.A and by the government, on ways to mark birds for positive identification

but I now know that leg bands are out. Perhaps some sort of tattoo would work. I'm writing this letter as a warning to others who think it can't happen to them — that their birds can't be stolen.

I hope the A.F.A will take on the problem of identifying birds. Just now I find myself afraid to replace my stock for fear the same thief or someone else will return. I can not afford it, to say nothing of the unhappiness it brings. I love my birds, each and every one.

M. M. Menser
Plantation, Fla.

My dear young lady, please accept my deepest sympathy for the loss of your birds. I know all too well the terrible jolt it is to walk out to your aviaries and find that your sanctuary has been physically violated. I once had the horror of finding an aviary door swinging open and a pair of blue Ringnecks missing. Rather upsetting, that.

Since then I have been extremely aware of the security factor that has become a sad but necessary part of aviculture. It is hard enough to get aviaries up and to get birds in them. It seems to be even harder to keep the birds in them. There are however, several rules of security that one can follow.

First, of course, make your place as physically secure as possible. The aviaries should be fenced in — preferably with a high block wall or solid wood fence that hides them from the view of passersby. The fence should be activated with

something as simple as an electric wire or as sophisticated as an electronic intrusion system.

Second, one should secure the aviaries proper. Keep them locked except when you are working in them. Employ spotlights in such a way that a thief can not approach the cages under cover of darkness. An intrusion detection system should protect the aviaries as well as the outer perimeter of the property.

Third, the use of watchdogs is quite effective against about 80 to 90% of the ordinary bird thefts. The casual crook is not given to fighting it out with a pair or more of junkyard dogs. My own dogs escaped a while back, bit seven people and cleared the whole area. The beasts are a cross between Pit Bulls and the wild Australian Dingo. It is true that a very serious thief who knows what he is after will kill or sedate watchdogs and go on about his burglary, but that sort of crook is quite rare. And this brings up another, most unhappy aspect of security.

As is probable in your case, many, many birds are stolen by aviculturists and bird people who are very familiar with the birds they want. A few years ago a friend had his aviaries broken into while he was attending a bird meeting in broad daylight. Many mutation Indian Ringnecks were stolen, and so were the splits. The normal birds were left. The thief was very intimate with the birds he stole. The blue Ringnecks stolen out of my cages were taken by some one who had been on the property and who knew a bit of my comings and goings.

It is a moral outrage that one can not trust other bird people. A great deal of joy is connected with sharing the pleasures of one's collection. But it can not be done lightly. I personally know hundreds of fine aviculturists whom I respect and whose company I enjoy, but so far only five souls have been to my new place. One of the hazards of having lots of friends over, even though they be perfectly pure and innocent, is their innocent blabbing. The right fellow may unwittingly tell the wrong fellow just what he needs to know. Of course, the tighter one's physical security is the more one can relax the above precaution. As it happens, neither I nor my beautiful lady are very socially inclined. Be careful about passing your address around. Be cagey while on the phone. I'm sure you have all noticed that I can speak or write for hours without telling anyone anything.

Again, madam, my condolences for your loss. I do hope your letter will serve as a warning for others.

Ed.



CLASSIFIED ADS

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Dear Mr. Dingle:

Upon reading my July, 1979 issue of **AGAPORNIS WORLD**, I find that A.F.A. is "trying to bring pressure to bear...so far no tangible results", with regard to the Seattle Symposium Papers fiasco!

Well, here is one more person who sent \$26.50 to IECF — way, way back on August 27, 1978. Since I had responded to an ad for these papers in *American Cage-Bird Magazine*, I wrote ACBM a letter on Dec. 19, 1978 telling them that I did not have my papers and that I got no response to my follow up letter to IECF on November 18, 1978. ACBM wrote to me on Jan. 4, 1979 giving me a phone number for the IECF office and saying that mine was the only complaint they had received about non-delivery of the paper. To sum up: I called IECF office 1-12-79 and left message; Mr. van Oosten called me 1-16-79 and said papers would be mailed by end of February. Sent post card to Mr. van Oosten 4-4-79; he returned it with a note "Book at publishing right now — about 3 weeks till mailing". By then he was signing himself "Jan" as we had approached a first-name calling relationship.

Several of my friends had attended this symposium last March (1978) and came home with glowing reports and indications that this outfit was the "Cadillac of bird organizations". I can see how this could be — if enough people sent them \$26.50 and got nothing in return, their bank account must be very fat!

My puny little breeding "farm" operates on the proverbial shoe string and I cannot afford too many losses like this. Unfortunately I have not hit upon such a wonderful, easy money making scheme.

Just wanted to add my gripe to your long list.

Sincerely,
Martha Ann Medlar

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I'm writing an article on talking birds and want to include your experiences. Especially interested in humorous or interesting anecdotes, unsuccessful as well as successful taming and training methods or any tricks you have discovered that helped. Write or phone Don Pardoe, 1581 Life Sciences Bldg., University of California Berkeley, Ca. 94720. (415) 527-5228 evenings.

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FOR SALE: Stanley, Blue, and Pennant Rosellas. Princess of Wales, Barraband, Rock Pebler, Parrakeets. Red Capped Parrots (Australian), Red Fronted Kakariki. **WANTED:** Swainson's Toucans. Banded Aracariz. Rodney Barth, P.O. Box 1162, Yorba Linda, CA 92686 (714) 528-7926.

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