



# FALCONS FOR GRAPES PROJECT TAKES OFF

By Dr. Nick Fox  
Photos by Colin Wynn

The annual cacophony of bird bangers and shotguns used to deter birds from fruit and grape crops in Marlborough, New Zealand, may soon be a thing of the past. An ecologically sound solution to the annual damage done to New Zealand's grape harvest by fruit eating birds may soon be achieved thanks to a ground breaking initiative. Following extensive cooperation between government agencies, Forest and Bird, growers and a UK based consultancy specialising in 'green' solutions, the 'Falcons for Grapes' project is now set to start this spring.

Although the endemic New Zealand Falcon winters on the Marlborough plains, coming from nests in the ranges nearby, there is nowhere on the plains where they can nest safe from introduced predators. The project aims to provide nest barrels and a 'seed' population of falcons in order to expand the population back from the hills onto the plains. An intrinsic part of the programme is to study the falcons both in the hills and on the plains in order to understand what is limiting their numbers and what can be done to halt their decline. The Falcon is New Zealand's last endemic bird of prey; the Haast's Eagle became extinct



with the moas, and the Laughing Owl has not been seen for 30 years.

The Marlborough falcons are the longest-studied population in the country. Project leader from International Wildlife Consultants, Dr Nick Fox said: 'I first started studying the falcons here in 1974 as a raw PhD student and have worked on them ever since. However, little is known about the populations in recent times. With the need for farming to be competitive in the

international markets there is increased pressure on habitats and on farmland. This project is aimed to help both the falcons and New Zealand farming, especially the new wine industry. For Marlborough wines to succeed, the problems of reducing bird damage whilst maintaining a landscape that is pleasant both for people and wildlife have to be faced. By supplementing their food we hope the falcons can deter pest birds rather than catch them. It is also an opportunity for the wine industry to contribute to understanding the ecology of this native bird, potentially providing a win win result to all parties'.

'Falcons for Grapes' will be undertaken in close collaboration with the Department of Conservation which has issued the necessary permits to move up to 15 baby falcons from nests in the surrounding hills to nest boxes in selected trial vineyards. The project has now received a grant from the Sustainable Farming Fund which will cover 41% of the costs for the first three years. A further 30% will come from International Wildlife Consultants (UK) who will also provide a base for the project in Marlborough. The Wine Industry is

funding 14% of the project at this stage, with a view to providing further funding if the first three years of development are looking positive. A further 15% of the funding will be sought elsewhere to fund a PhD student studying the falcons.

The project has already received a number of inquiries from people wishing to assist in monitoring falcons. The Raptor Association of New Zealand has many members in the area and those wishing to participate in conserving falcons should contact the Falcons for Grapes Manager, Mr Colin Wynn [wynncoli@snap.net](mailto:wynncoli@snap.net).



# Call for Papers

American Federation of Aviculture Annual Convention  
August 2-5, 2006, Dallas, Texas  
Celebrating "The Beauty Of Birds"

The American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) is a nonprofit national organization established in 1974, whose purpose is to represent all aspects of aviculture and to educate the public about keeping and breeding birds in captivity.

We invite you to submit an abstract to present a paper during the Convention. Please consider submitting multiple abstracts as you may be asked to give more than one presentation. Proposals should be submitted in the form of an abstract, not to exceed 250 words accompanied by a brief biographical sketch identifying the author's experience with the topic to be presented and other relevant information.

- Abstracts will be accepted from September 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005.
- The speaker committee will send out acceptance and rejection notifications.
- If accepted, you will be required to sign a speakers' contract and provide the AFA with a short bio, a current high resolution photograph and to submit a paper to be published in the convention proceedings and in the *Watchbird*, the official publication of the AFA. In return, the AFA will provide you with a complimentary convention registration and a banquet ticket. All other arrangements, including transportation and hotel accommodations are the responsibility of the speakers.
- A contract will be sent by January 31, 2006.
- Final papers must arrive no later than April 1, 2006, to be included in the printed proceedings.

## Abstracts

Abstracts are short, 250 word summaries of the paper you wish to present. They must include the name of the author(s), mailing addresses, e-mail and all phone contact information for the author(s). If there is more than one author, please indicate which one will present.

## Presentations

Presentations will typically be 40 minutes in length plus a brief period for questions.

## Equipment

AV equipment will be provided and will be specified in the contract.

## Submission

We prefer to have abstracts and final papers submitted electronically to [birdbrain@mindspring.com](mailto:birdbrain@mindspring.com). Please send as e-mail or as an attachment in MS Word. Abstracts may also be faxed to 901-853-8452. Please identify it as "AFA Convention Abstract". They may also be mailed to: 'AFA Convention Abstracts', PO Box 159, Rossville, TN 38066, USA.

## Publication Rights

The convention requires non-exclusive publication rights to submitted papers including the publication of proceedings. The author retains copyright.

## Contact information

For questions specifically regarding speaker topics and issues, contact Speaker Committee Chairs Margrethe Warden, 770-277-6782, [birdbrain@mindspring.com](mailto:birdbrain@mindspring.com) or Sandee Molenda 831-688-5560, [sandee@parrotletranch.com](mailto:sandee@parrotletranch.com). For general information or questions regarding the convention, please contact Convention Central at 901-853-6079.

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## 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 have been searching for two days trying to find out what the government regulations are for housing and keeping birds. I need to know the dimensions for their primary housing facilities as well as lighting requirements, ventilation, and temperature. I am working to make sure that a dove act is following all government regulations. – Heather

A: I assume your inquiry is regarding federal legislation. At this time, there is none regarding primary housing facilities as well as lighting requirements, ventilation, and temperature. These issues will most likely be written into future regulations under the Animal Welfare Act, in which the regulations for birds are currently being written. USDA has requested input from a variety of sources to help formulate these regulations, but at this time the final rules have not yet been completed and are not available.

The American Federation of Aviculture has been working for years with USDA on these proposed regulations. The USDA representatives will be advising on the proposed Rules and when they expect to them available. AFA will keep its members posted through its many publications as well as through their website ([www.afabirds.org](http://www.afabirds.org)) so please check these resources in order to stay informed.

Thank you so much for your question – it is very timely and important.  
– Sandee Molenda

# Q & A

Q: I was wondering how to become a licensed breeder of lovebirds? – Chris

A: At this time, there are no federal requirements for the licensing of bird breeders in the US. The Animal Welfare Act was recently amended to include birds, rats and mice, however, at this time, no regulations have been instituted by USDA for breeders of exotic birds. See the above related question and answer.

It is possible that you may live in a state that requires permitting for breeding exotic birds – FL, GA, NJ, NY and CO are states that may require permits in order to breed birds. I can help you find out that information if you live in a state that has such requirements.

I hope you find this information helpful. Remember, as a member of AFA, you will be kept apprised of various legislative issues that may affect you as a breeder of birds. AFA is the leader in both keeping its members informed of various legislative issues as well as protecting the rights of bird owners and breeders. – Sandee Molenda

Q: I am wondering how to get involved with breeding programs for rare parrots? I am interested in the Blue Throated Conure and was wondering if there is a breeding cooperative in place for these birds? - Michelle

A: Currently, there are no programs for this species. Only one or two private collections are currently reporting this species under the US Endangered Species Act-Captive bred wildlife registration, and only a few zoos now maintain this species as well. To date there are no approved WBCA cooperative breeding programs approved for import of new bloodlines, even though this species is now quite common in aviculture in Australia, Canada, and other countries. – Rick Jordan

I am a beginner breeder of ring neck parrots in Australia, and there is not much information on how to breed the violet or cobalt colours and I have been searching for information on how to do this, could you please e-mail me with any suggestions, I would be most grateful for your help. - Susan

Many people new to breeding mutations ask how they can breed to get a particular color. In most cases, you will need to purchase the color mutation you wish to work with. In certain cases you will be able to purchase “splits” which are birds that do not exhibit the color mutation you may want, but which carry the genes to produce the desired mutation. This of course is accomplished with careful planning and choosing the correct mate in order to reproduce the mutation in the future.

As for the visual colors you mention, the violet and cobalt were merely dreams until the mid 1980's. The original mutation is actually a "dark factor" green bird. When the first mutation bird appeared it was one of four in a clutch of babies produced by a bird that looked like a Greygreen which was paired with a blue hen ringneck. All four chicks produced in that first breeding were a different color. The darkest green bird was sold to a breeder in Southern California. It was paired up with a blue hen and produced the mutation we know today as the "double factor violet". This bird was originally and mistakenly dubbed "cobalt". Shortly after the double factor violet bird appeared in America, there was a European breeder who produced a lighter colored bird and immediately called theirs "cobalt". The breeders compared notes and over the years it was determined that the European cobalt was a related mutation and is really the "single factor" violet. As more and more of these birds were bred, American breeders began to see light and dark versions of the violet as well, confirming the single and double factor genetics. The dark factor green is the original mutation as previously stated. In genetic terms, this mutation is a co-dominant one. Meaning that it appears in the two different forms, and neither is dominant over the other. It is best shown in combination with other mutations, especially blue.

To determine the best pairings, you need to look at how a co-dominant mutation works. This is quite similar to how basic dominant mutation calculations are made. In all cases with dominant and co-dominant inheritance, we assume that all clutches of offspring are 50% female and 50% male, because the genes are not sex-linked. Also, there are no splits with these inheritance modes. You must have at least one visual bird to reproduce the mutation. A single dark factor green bird is a lighter shade of green than the double dark factor. Again, this difference is not as easily seen as when the mutation is crossed with blue. To get a basic understanding of how the mutation works, study the combinations with the original form of the mutation, and visualize the colors. It may help to look at the photograph accompanying this article and compare the normal green bird with the "double dark factor" green bird. This will help you visualize the other colors even though there are no photos. Take your time with each set, and be patient with yourself. This is pretty complex stuff if you are new to genetics. There is a lot to learn.

Potential Offspring with the Single Dark Factor and Double Dark Factor Green birds:

1. If you pair a "single dark factor" green bird with a normal green ringneck, 50% of the offspring will look like the normal parent and 50% will look like the other parent and will actually be "single dark factor" green birds.

2. Pairing a "single dark factor" green bird with a "double dark factor" green bird will produce 50% of the offspring that look like one parent and 50% that look like the other parent. In other words, you will have 50% each of single dark factor and double dark factor chicks.

3. If you pair a "double dark factor" green bird with a normal green ringneck, you will get 100% "single dark factor" green offspring.

4. If you pair two "double dark factor" green birds, 100% of the offspring will be "double dark factor" green.

5. Pairing two "single dark factor" green birds will produce a different and more complex outcome: 25% normal green chicks, 25% "double dark factor" green chicks, and 50% "single dark factor" green chicks.

The next combinations to look at and mentally visualize are the single and double dark factor green split blue birds which will be paired with a visual blue. Only two samples appear below. There are many more combinations possible of course, but that would fill a book!

Potential Offspring with the Single Dark Factor and Double Dark Factor Green split blue birds paired with blue:

1. If you pair a "single dark factor" green split blue with a blue bird, you will get the following offspring: normal green split blues, blues, "single dark factor" green split blues, and "single dark factor" violets.

2. If you pair a "double dark factor" green split blue with a "single dark factor" violet bird, you will get the following offspring: "single dark factor" green split blues, "single dark factor" violets, "double dark factor" green split blues and "double dark factor" violets

If you are interested in learning how to calculate potential offspring and choosing the best pairings with mutations not listed here, you might want to look into learning how to work Punnett Squares. This method has the least amount of mathematics involved and is actually quite fun. Dr. Terry Martin, BVSc has written a wonderful book on the subject that you might find helpful too. The title is *A Guide to Color Mutations & Genetics in Parrots*, by ABK Publications, NSW, Australia. - Lyrae Perry

# Insectivorous Feast already helping endangered species

Tony Blackler, from the UK, has been having trouble raising Bali starlings to maturity. But as soon as he used *Insectivorous* Feast he produced his first fully weaned chick.

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photo: Tony Tilford

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