

# *AFA in action...* **NEWS and VIEWS**

OCTOBER 1993

## **There is Work to be Done**

*by Jean Thorpe  
New Port Richey, Florida*

My husband, Paul, and I retired to Florida to enjoy the sun, sand, and leisurely lifestyle of retirement. It was a radical change from working and living in New York state. We bought a cockatiel, which sparked our interest in birds. Shortly thereafter, we joined a local avian club affording us the opportunity to meet other bird lovers and began to acquire a novice degree of knowledge about birds. Gradually we expanded our family of feathered friends and became submerged in the world of aviculture; thus ending the leisurely lifestyle.

During the past ten years we have been involved with birds, there have been many avicultural advances in research, feeding programs, avian medicine, and most notably legislation. Government agencies on local, state and federal levels are all taking a serious look at various aspects of bird ownership, breeding, and transporting. Recently, federal legislation was passed that will greatly affect our breeding programs by imposing restrictions on various species being imported and requiring breeding accountability. The mechanics for administering this legislation are not yet in place, but will be shortly. In addition to current federal legislation, we can surely expect that further regulations will be generated to govern our activities.

I believe it is now time for avian clubs to take a serious look at their purpose and re-think their responsibilities to the industry, the membership and, most importantly, the birds. There are professional organizations that establish and maintain operating standards; thus are regulated from within. I propose that avian clubs establish and maintain a set of standards for membership.

Initially, a group from your club, or group of clubs in an area, would set forth written standards for bird owners and breeders. This should include minimum cage requirements, feeding programs, record keeping, isolation, incubation, baby care procedures, banding, sanitation, and safety requirements. Where State avian federations exist, it may be possible to solicit their help in order to establish uniformity for all clubs within the state.

All current members and new applicants would be required to submit to a membership team's inspection to certify that standards are being met, with reinspections on an annual basis to insure that these standards are being maintained in order to retain club membership. Once the team feels that birds are being adequately taken care of, certification of membership and compliance can be issued. Persons not meeting standards would be advised of the deficiencies and given a time frame in which to correct the problems and re-apply. Naturally, owners of an occasional pet bird would fall into a separate category requiring unique standards. This program would require a paid membership committee with funds being obtained from a percentage of membership dues.

It may very well become necessary to take such steps in the near future, so starting now could be very advantageous. Primate breeders are currently subjected to inspections from outside, therefore, it is not improbable to assume that aviaries may become subjected to similar regulations. Clubs that set precedents by establishing standards will be in a viable position to negotiate with other agencies and to cope with the outcome.

This is an ambitious program and one that would require a lot of work and money, but would constitute a valuable accomplishment in the avian field, one that would earn the respect of local, state and federal officials. Such a program would be educational for the bird owners and definitely beneficial to the birds. Club membership should be an earned privilege.

All of your members will not be willing to participate in this program. Therefore, a "Friends" program should be in place to continue generating the necessary revenue to run the club. Friends could continue to enjoy club activities in the same manner as today. The primary difference might possibly be their inability to purchase or sell birds depending upon the extent of future regulations that may be imposed on aviculture.

The regulations being imposed on the avian industry are primarily for the purposes of insuring humane treatment of birds and preserving endangered species. We have all seen conditions that are less than desirable. Ultimately, those of us who love birds want the best for them. Clubs are in the best position to reach the majority of bird owners. Therefore, it should be our responsibility to act as role models by setting precedence. Is there a better way to advance our cause and truly protect our interests?●

## **Conservation Update**

**Black-breasted Puffleg found.** In February of this year, an international team of ornithologists observed an adult male and two females of this threatened hummingbird endemic to a single volcano in northwestern Ecuador. The birds were discovered at 3,300 meters on Loma Gramalote, an old collecting site for the species. The hummingbird is seriously threatened by clearing for pasture and firewood.

**Chilean corporation to aid Andean Condor.** The Andean division of the National Copper Corporation, Chile, through its unit of Environmental Engineering, is supporting a research, conservation, and education project on the Andean Condor in the Blanco River Basin, Los Andea Province, approximately 70 kilometers northeast of Santiago.

The project, whose research is carried out in a study area of 400 square kilometers, started in 1992 and will last three years. Its main objectives are: general evaluation of the study area and its condor population, capture and marking of condors, species biology, experimentation with artificial feeding sites and outreach of the results.

**St. Vincent Parrot.** The wild population of the St. Vincent Parrot continues to remain stable at approximately 500 birds, and the captive population is increasing slowly due to continued success of the captive breeding program in St. Vincent. The major problem for the captive population remains the lack of participation in the Species Survival Plan (SSP) by several holders of St. Vincent Parrots.

**Eurasian Griffon Vultures released in Italy.** The first release site for Eurasian Griffon Vultures has been created in northern Italy near Udine. This center is directed by the father of raptor studies in Italy, Dr. Fabio Perco and Dr. Fulvio Genero. Six Eurasian Griffons have been released successfully from the center and they are regularly seen at the nearby feeding station in the surrounding area. There are a number of birds in aviaries waiting for future release should this initial project prove successful. The team is using radio tracking to ensure that all possible data related to the foraging of the griffons is procured. Doctors Fabio and Genero hope to reintroduce a viable breeding population of these beautiful vultures in the Italian alps.

**Bellbird migration.** Last summer, George Powell, RARE Center's director of Conservation Biology, and Carlos Guindon, a local biologist, outfitted 16 bellbirds with radio transmitters at Monteverde, Costa Rica. They planned to track the movements of these birds throughout the year. Although the bellbird is an altitudinal migrant, its migratory route and use of habitat and food resources along the route are largely unknown. ●

## Red Siskins, Arcades and Dancing Birds

by Jack Clinton-Eitniew  
 Director of Advertising and Promotion  
 San Antonio, Texas

It was 4 a.m. when I crawled out of bed on Saturday, August 21st. Pouring a couple of cups of coffee down, I made my way to San Antonio's airport. By 8:30 a.m. I would be arriving in Kansas City, Missouri and Cool Crest (Family Fun Center), the site of the first AFA Red Siskin Summit.

My dictionary defines summit as a "meeting of individuals of the highest level." Certainly the red siskin summit fit this description well. The day began with a welcome by hostess Yvonne Patterson proceeded by an introduction to the project by Kevin Gorman. Kevin was handed the red siskin "baton"

Photo by Jack Clinton-Eitniew



Griffon Vultures (*Gyps fulvus*) have been successfully reintroduced to southern France and are now the subject of an exciting release project in Italy.

**Green-cheeked Amazons to be released.** Seven Green-cheeked Amazons are planned to be released at a yet to be announced site in northeastern Mexico. The birds were captive bred and parent reared by Dan Bruce of Speedwell Sanctuary - Canada. The birds will undergo medical screening prior to their relocation in the field enclosure. The release is part of "Proyecto Loro", a comprehensive conservation program for parrots of northeastern Mexico by the Center for the Study of Tropical Birds, Inc. and the Universidad Autonoma de Tamaulipas.

Sources: RARE Center News, QYPS Snips, AAZPA Com-muniqué, Birdlife International, Noticias Psittacidas.

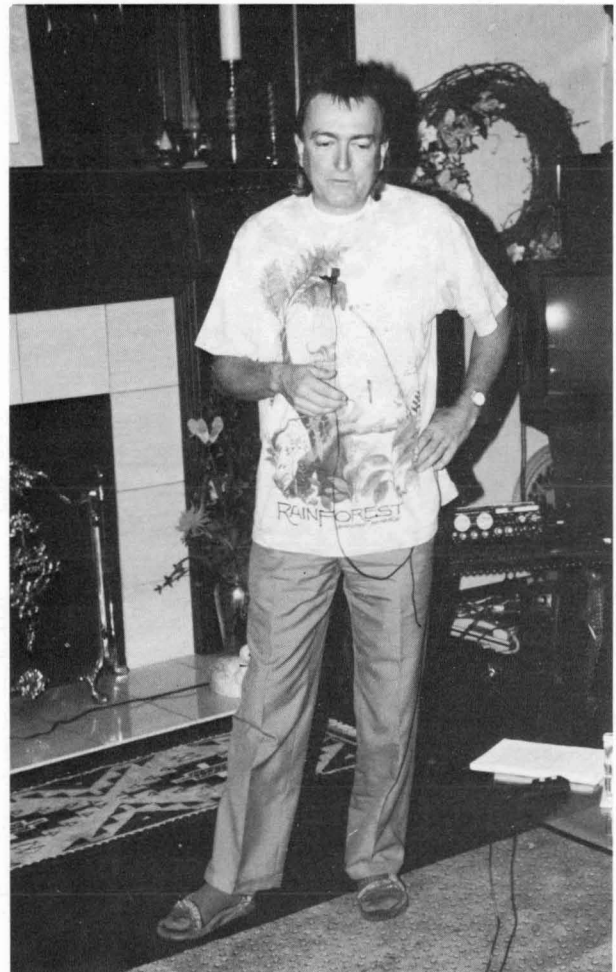


Photo by Jack Clinton-Eitniew

Steve Fowler spoke on disease transmission in siskins.



*Professor Jim Hardin discussed  
"Keeping the Wild in Our Siskins."*

by Ed Diebold of the Milwaukee County Zoo several years ago. Taking this proverbial "tiger by the tail", he has set into place a most impressive group of red siskin enthusiasts.

If you happen to be on the streets of Barquisimeto, Venezuela on August 17th, possibly sitting in "el centro" with a cup of "cafe negro" and a piece of "pan dulce," and picked up the local paper *El Impulso*, your attention would undoubtedly be attracted to an article on "El cardenalito" (red siskin). Why did the red siskin make the paper anyway? The flame red bird has been trapped for hybridizing with canaries since the late 1800's. As the article would elaborate upon Venezuelan biologists Robert Smith and Antonio Rivera, they were to travel to an international meeting in Kansas, U.S.A. of aviculturists and other individuals concerned for the future survival of the red siskin.

After a few words from Kevin Gorman, the floor was given to Antonio Rivera. With the aid of Alberto Barrios as translator, the participants were updated as to the current status of the siskin. The news wasn't good. Recent efforts to determine the numerical status of the bird were able to locate only seven birds in one of the two areas they are known to inhabit. No birds were observed in the second area. As Alberto translated the "bad news," I pondered over the thought that the last red siskin in the wild might, in fact, be being trapped at this very moment! A bit of good news was also communicated. A newly declared wildlife reserve, encompassing an entire mountain range, may be the siskin's last hope. While habitat destruction was never the cause of the species' demise, suitable "safe" areas have thus far been unobtainable. With limited entrances, some of which appear from the slides as "mule trails on stream beds," it is hoped that access to the area can be controlled. The final determining factor as to whether the area supports siskins lies in the attitudes of the humans that inhabit the reserve. Even Prof. Rivera admits that the reaction to the siskins is totally unpredictable. They could co-exist nicely or

all be trapped by local people in one hour.

Rivera's talk was followed by Robert Smith, a California native who has lived in Venezuela for the past 20 years. As a plant ecologist, he admitted total ignorance about the bird but felt knowledge of the bird's habitat would not only aid in captive breeding but was totally necessary in choosing suitable areas for releasing siskins. After both talks, it became apparent that the siskin was actually a very versatile seedeater that benefited by habitat destruction as it flourished upon the plants emerging in disturbed areas. Unfortunately, bright coloration and a pleasant song have worked towards the detriment of the species.

After an awards luncheon (a future article will feature those receiving awards at the summit), with enough food to feed all of Bangladesh, a final series of talks dealt with various aspects of the captive management and husbandry of siskins. Jim Hardin, Ph.D., spoke on "keeping the wild traits in captive bred flocks of 'wild birds.'" In short, "Keeping the *wild* in your birds." The talk certainly provided participants with a great deal of "food for thought." Mary Cahow, also of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, gave an interesting overview of her Master's Thesis research on siskin vocalizations. Last, Steve Fowler of New River Arizona, having just recovered from a tragic "tumble" from his horse, detailed his personal efforts to establish a colony of red siskins at his facility. His dedication to breeding siskins was evident as he discussed his dealing with a group of siskins infected with avian tuberculosis.

A short talk on the "History of the Red Siskin Project" by yours truly and a "pep talk" on how one can promote the project by Gail Gatewood Coldwell led to the question and answer period and the summit's end.

The "icing on the cake" was, in fact, the cake! A siskin cake and all the trimmings provided so generously by the Cool Crest



*Mary Cahow put some enthusiasm into her talk on "Siskin Vocalizations."*



Left to right: Kevin Gorman, Robert Smith, Antonio Rivera and Alberto Barrios. All addressed red siskin enthusiasts at the Red Siskin Summit.

and local volunteers. My hats off to John Ulrich of Kellogg's Seed as he sat side by side with the siskin cake and never touched a piece . . . or not a *big* one, anyway! It was certainly the meeting of meetings. Everyone left with a feeling that they knew a bit more about the plight and husbandry of the siskin. A great deal of the credit goes to Yvonne Patterson and the "Cool Crest" bunch. Even though it was Yvonne, not the birds, who danced and sang during the bird show, she was the perfect hostess. In all, it was definitely worth getting out of bed at 4 a.m. on a Saturday. I can only hope that the siskin remains in the wild long enough to benefit from the hard work of the Red Siskin Summit.●

## Pet Care Trust Sends Out Plea for Industry to Help Flood Victims

Aug. 5, 1993 — For the second time in a year, the Pet Care Trust is rallying the pet industry to come to the aid of victims stricken by nature's ravaging forces. Through its foundation, the Pet Care Trust, the pet industry will help people and animals affected by the massive flooding throughout Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri, the three states hit hardest.

"We're sending out an urgent call for cash donations to send to the agencies in these three states that are in desperate need of help to buy necessities for both the human and animal survivors of this great disaster," explained Edward Brandt, executive director of the Pet Care Trust.

"We learned in our last disaster relief program set up for Hurricane Andrew victims in south Florida that cash is the most important thing we can get to people immediately,"

Brandt said. "The agencies working on site, including the Missouri and Iowa State Humane Societies with whom we're in contact, have the best knowledge of how to distribute the money to help those in greatest need."

According to the National Weather Service, the flood has touched the lives of people in a meandering area covering 16,000 square miles near the swollen rivers and creeks in the Midwest. The Great Flood of '93 has contributed to the deaths of 47 people and caused an estimated \$11 billion in damage. Federal disaster areas have been declared in nine states. Brandt pointed out the overwhelming response received as a result of the plea for donations during last year's disaster in south Florida. "We were able to touch many lives and make a real difference in their recovery. We need to rally once again to do our share in helping the families and pets who lived in the 38,000 homes affected by the floods," Brandt said.

All pet industry members are urged to send a contribution in the form of a check to: The Trust Flood Relief Fund, 1710 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20036.

For those manufacturers who can only send product, rather than cash donations, the Trust is instructing them to directly contact the Iowa, Illinois and/or Missouri Humane Societies to determine what they need and where to send it (Iowa: (319) 324-3960; Illinois: (312) 704-0911; Missouri: (314) 647-8800). Please let the Pet Care Trust know if you donate any product so that a tally on contributions can be kept.

The Pet Care Trust is the pet industry's education and research foundation dedicated to promoting the benefits of an right to have companion animals as well as demonstrating the positive aspects of companion animals and the responsibility and professionalism of the industry that serves them.

For more information on the Trust's Flood Relief Program, contact Edward Brandt at (202) 466-5058.●

# The Club Connection

## Buffalo Hookbill Association

by Nancy L. Vigran

**Meeting Location:** West Seneca Senior Citizen Center, 4620 Seneca Street, West Seneca, New York.

**Meeting Date:** Third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m.

**President:** Diane Egressy, (716) 496-6046.

**Club Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 61, East Concord, New York 14055.

**General Information:** The Buffalo Hookbill Association was formed five years ago as the need arose for a local group of aviculturists who could not attend meetings of other clubs further away. What started with a few large hookbill fanciers has risen to a club of over 75 family memberships with a common interest in hookbills, large and small.

**Activities and Special Events:** From pet owners to large commercial breeders, BHA's main interest is good husbandry and care for their avian friends. Speakers range from veterinarians on nutrition and disease control to experiences of breeders in care and propagation to an aviculturist's experience in transporting exotic geese eggs from Alaska.

Some BHA members belong to the Chipper Cherpers Adoption Link. This group of dedicated aviculturists not only help people with questions on the care of a newly acquired pet, but also work as an adoption agency for birds that need to be placed into new homes.

BHA has a bird display in the Botanical Gardens in Buffalo in September and hosts a bird fair and expo at the Erie County Fair Grounds in May. At each event, displays are set up with a wide variety of avian species to educate the public on different traits and requirements of birds.

BHA holds an annual picnic for members during the summer and an annual Christmas party. Any extra monies earned during the year are donated to worthy causes such as the AFA Disaster Relief Fund.

**Editorial Note:** The Club Connection is designed to let members of A.F.A. know what regional clubs are available to them, and to give clubs ideas and a chance to learn from what other clubs do. If your club is a member club of A.F.A. and would like to be highlighted in the Club Connection, please send information with a contact person's name and phone number to: Nancy Vigran, c/o A.F.A., P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85017. ●

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Photos by Sheldon Dingle



*L to R: Laurella Desborough, Roddy Gabel and Jerry Smith at the recent AFA Convention, Salt Lake City, Utah.*

*The room was packed and discussion was lively for the "roundtable" meeting with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service reps — Roddy Gable, Office of Scientific Authority, and Jerry Smith, Division of Law Enforcement.*