

Letters to the Editor

I read with horror and sympathy the story of Mr. and Mrs. Ragain and Stacy, the macaw in the Aug/Sept 1993 issue of *Watchbird*. It was a real heartbreaker to lose a bird like that. In my opinion, as an avian practitioner, the real culprit in this story was the breeder. This is symptomatic of what I perceive as a big problem in the bird business, and one that is controversial among avian veterinarians, breeders and shop owners.

I truly believe that selling an unweaned bird (and a large one at that) to a novice bird owner is immoral and borders on criminal. State and local laws prevent sale of unweaned puppies and kittens, at least here in Maryland (as the animal control officers that inspect pet stores can tell you), but anyone can sell an unweaned bird to a novice, with sometimes tragic results like this particular case. This is a common practice in my area, too, and when I am consulted for pre-purchase advice I *always* tell clients to purchase weaned birds only. Some sellers in my area only sell weaned birds and, when possible, I encourage prospective parrot owners to patronize these folks. I have seen countless new birds on first time exams that have new owners that are absolutely clueless as to how to handfeed and wean their new pet. Many don't even know what brand of handfeeding formula they have, it just "came with the bird." Of course, the avian veterinarian is the one who sees the end results of many of these situations with crop burns, malnutrition, improper weaning, etc. I have seen birds at 9 to 12 months of age that are still being handfed because the novice owner doesn't have the expertise or intestinal fortitude to wean the bird.

I know that this is a topic on which there is some disagreement, and I encourage an open forum of discussion because I feel it needs to be aired in "public."

Sincerely,
Edward L. Spencer, M.S., D.V.M.
Rockville, Maryland

Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter on behalf of the AFA Red Siskin Project participants who are attending the Siskin Summit at the 1994 AFA convention; we wish to express our support and appreciation for Project Director Kevin Gorman. We would be honored if you would print this letter.

We have found Kevin to be a skillful aviculturist *and* a talented organizer of people. The genuine enthusiasm and gentle perseverance with which he integrates novices and experts alike is wonderful. As a professional psychologist, I can add my admiration for his abilities!

Project members seldom speak among ourselves without remarking about our affection and admiration for Kevin. Thanks to the AFA for the opportunity to work with him in pursuit of the project's goals.

We believe that conservation is the highest aspiration of aviculture; we feel that Kevin is an example of the highest aspiration of leadership. Thank you, Kevin!

Very sincerely,
Gail Gatewood-Colwell
and Red Siskin Project Participants

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Dear Mr. Dingle:

Thank you for your kind words concerning Kakapo Rescue in your article about the '93 convention.

However, there is one thing that needs to be made clear. Kakapo Rescue was not formed with the purpose to aid Don Merton in his efforts to save the Kakapo.

Our purpose is to help in the survival of the Kakapo, regardless of who is working with them.

The check I presented to Don Merton was made out to the Dept. of Conservation Kakapo Recovery Programme.

We respect and admire Don Merton very much, and he is an important part, probably the most important part, of saving the Kakapo. But our money goes directly to help the Kakapo.

I would appreciate your printing this letter in your "Letters to the Editor" column. It is important that the people who so kindly donate to us understand what we are.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Rebecca Dennett
President, Kakapo Rescue ●



KAKAPO RESCUE

Save the Kakapo

by Rebecca Dennett, President
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Kakapo Rescue is a small organization dedicated to the survival of the Kakapo (*Strigops habroptilus*). Our purpose is to raise money to help fund various projects necessary for their survival and to teach people of the plight of endangered species.

The Kakapo, New Zealand's eccentric ground-dwelling bird, is one of the most remarkable animals to be threatened by extinction in recent years.

Not only is the Kakapo the only flightless and totally nocturnal parrot, it is the heaviest parrot in the world, weighing up to eight pounds. There are only 40 to 60 Kakapo existing at this time.

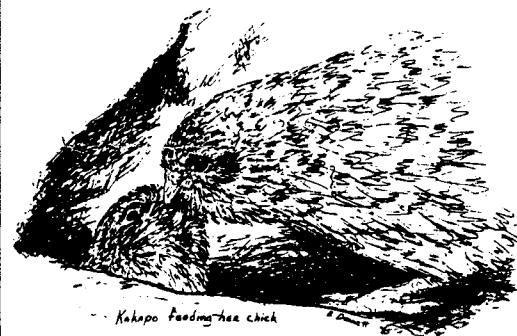
Unlike other birds, Kakapo cannot be kept in captivity. Therefore, we are trying to provide as much predator-free habitat as possible.

It would be a tragedy if such an extraordinary and beautiful bird were to join the dismal ranks of extinct species all over the world.

There is not much time left to save these beautiful parrots.

Please help!

Kakapo Rescue members are all non-paid volunteers. *All proceeds* go to help the Kakapo. ●



Kakapo feeding a chick