

New Finch Society Formed

The Waxbill and Parrot Finch Society was formed in July 1995 to establish in captivity the estrildids commonly referred to as waxbills, parrot finches and, although not mentioned in the name, the non-Australian mannikins, genus *Lonchura*. In view of countries shutting off export, airlines refusing to carry wild caught birds, and legislation prohibiting the importation of such birds, it is becoming clear that these finches are rapidly vanishing from aviculture. This is particularly true for the CITES III finches, a good example of which is the Green Twinspot, a bird which until a few years ago was commonly found in pet shops but now has practically vanished from aviculture. The purpose of the Society is to disseminate the most up-to-date information on breeding, including the aspects of behavior, diet, compatibility and environment.

We have formed a board of advisors which includes Mike Fidler, co-author of *Parrot Finches, the Aviculturist's Guide*; Stash Buckley and Carol Anne Calvin, contributing writers for the *AFA Watchbird*, authors of the column "Estrildid Finches in Aviculture", and contributing editors for *The Estrildian*; Jayne Yantz, *Bird Talk* magazine's finch expert and columnist; and Dr. Luis Baptista, of the Department of Ornithology at the California Academy of Sciences. Our zoo liaison and organizer of the Species Interest Committee for Estrildid Finches, part of the Taxon Advisory Group for Passerine Birds is Josef Lindholm III, a keeper in the Bird Department at the Fort Worth Zoo.

Members are invited to ask as many questions as they wish. These will be answered in the Society's bi-monthly publication, *Finch Breeder*. Members who have experienced consistent breeding success are invited to submit articles detailing their techniques.

Membership in the Society is \$10.00 per year to cover publishing costs. Payment should be made in the form of a check or money order payable to Levin H. Tilghman III, 6419 N. 15th St., Philadelphia PA 19126-3503. ➤

are living in artificial environments.

First we domesticated *ourselves*, moved on to horses, dogs, cats and other animals, and we will inevitably domesticate more animals, including parrots. Biologically, the process of domestication is a success story without precedent in the history of evolution. If we want to really save the parrots we love from extinction, then let's have them declared as "eligible for domestication" and we will save them.

Parrots are ideal for domestication. They mesh well with our pet-loving society. They have certain recognizable *pre-adaptive* traits that make domestication a natural possibility. They live in flocks with a "pecking order" and a strong bonding potential that is easily transferable to man. Their big eyes and rounded facial features, reminiscent of infantile human characteristics, make them irresistible to most people. Their playful antics, their bright colors and their ability to hold things in their "hands" brings pleasure to anyone who sees them. Their penchant to mimic human speech and eat cultivated crops (fruits, vegetables and seeds), creates a natural affinity with humans which has completely seduced us.

With all the human-like and appealing characteristics parrots demonstrate, it is easy to understand why animal rights activists, as well as devoted pet owners, frequently anthropomorphize when attempting to gauge what is in the best interest of parrots. While parrots may experience a range of emotions, there is no evidence that parrots, or any animal, has the ability to think on a conceptual level, e.g., parrots cannot imagine being free.

Regardless, there is one freedom I would like to see restored to us and our parrots: the freedom from regulations that make it difficult for aviculturists to practice their craft. Declaring parrots "domesticated animals" would free us from the myriad laws, rules and regulations associated with "wild and exotic" animals. And that is a freedom that may halt the inexorable slide towards extinction for many parrot species.

References

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- Marshall, Tom. "Exotic Birds and the Theory of Co-Evolution." *American-Cage Bird Magazine*, Feb. '91, pp. 77-79.
- Voren, Howard. "Wild Child" *BIRDS USA*, '95-'96 Annual, pp. 110-111. ➤

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*Position open — contact regional vice president if interested
**Indicated 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club's state coordinator.

SCHEDULE FOR AFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS