

tinued supply.

I initiated a breeding project with 800 wild caught birds just over six years ago and have been heavily involved in overcoming problems of management, breeding and rearing of the species. We became aware of a serious health problem when our first batch of young birds were about eight weeks old. They came under stress easily and died off without any indication of ill health. We have strived to diagnose, treat and cure the complaint and have met with a degree of success.

We believe the problem to be caused by an inherent virus which manifests itself after birds (young birds in particular) come under stress. We further believe it to be inherent in wild populations as we captured our stock birds ourselves and housed and bred them in complete isolation to any other species. We have had indications that a specific virus is present, but have not as yet managed to have it isolated or confirmed. However, we have proceeded along a programme of vaccination and have met with a large degree of success in that we have second and third generation of captive bred birds which are themselves breeding.

Although we have met with this success, there is still a long way to go before a resistant strain could be assured. This would require prolonged and expensive research (with some of it done in the U.S.A.) which we are sure would not be supported by the bird trade itself which is now extremely sensitive to the costs of this malady.

We are therefore reducing our stock and keeping only a few of our now relatively hardy strain for ourselves and have asked if the National Parks will exercise constraint on exports until such time as proven resistant birds are produced by whoever should have the funds and dedication to take up the cause.

The only solution may be for public conscience to produce funds for a trust to save and captive breed the Nyasa Lovebird and I am sure this applies to many other species. I also appeal through the media for CITES Authorities, particularly in neighboring countries, to observe constraint.

Would you please be so kind as to publish this letter in the Sunday Mail? Your indulgence would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

T.E. Cox 

A Better Record Keeping System

by Rick Jordan
Kutztown, Pennsylvania

Keeping and breeding animals of any sort seems to be a controversial issue in these changing times. Local restrictions, city ordinances, or state and federal laws keep popping up to be endorsed by representatives of that particular area. What do they all have in common? They impose some type of record keeping system on the animal breeder. Whether it be for sales or just for health and breeding data, these laws and ordinances are an attempt to make animal breeders keep track of all of their offspring.

If you take a look at some of these "model" laws that are being passed in many cities around our country, you will notice that many are introduced by animal rights or animal welfare organizations. Groups of this nature are attempting to legislate our businesses and control what we do with our birds and their offspring. Ten years ago, these same groups were imposing these laws on dog and cat owners in much the same way. They aimed to put all the "puppy mills" out of business by proving that breeders were overbreeding their stock and producing puppies for the pet trade in an inhumane manner. The only breeder who survived that era were those who were involved with the AKC and had all of their dogs and puppies registered.

By keeping good records on your breeding birds, banding or labeling all of your offspring, and showing the whereabouts of the progeny, you can stop this type of "control" legislation by negating its necessity. If all legitimate breeders were involved with a registry program or were keeping verifiable records, the animal rights groups would not have a leg to stand on. Statistics and facts are the only thing that can stop them. They rely on propaganda to convince government of a need to control the trade. Over-inflated statistics about the survival rate of baby birds, horror stories of how many birds escape from their cages, and myths of "bird mills" are the only thing they have going for them. To Stop the animal rights groups, all

one needs to do is to keep good records and provide printouts of production, incubation data, survival rates, longevity, and health records to smother their agenda before they have the time to make it a law.

Up until recently, I was keeping track of my production on 3 x 5 note cards and scrap notebook papers. This was fine for me and I understood the information that I needed to research. However, if I had ever needed to provide a copy of the breeding records for a certain pair of birds, it would have looked as though I quickly jotted it on a sheet of paper, right off the top of my head. This is exactly why the United States Fish and Wildlife Service has entertained the idea of a Federal Registration Program for all exotic birds. They even built the permission to do so into Section 115 of the Wild Bird Conservation Act of 1992. So, at any time, if they wish, they can suddenly require everyone to band birds and register all of the offspring with the government. Trust me when I tell you that they really don't want to do this but, if certain animal rights or humane groups keep lobbying them to provide humane treatment laws, they will act on this section of the law and we will all have to be registered with the feds in order to sell a baby bird. Of course, within a few years of doing that, the IRS will require a printout from the feds that provides income statistics on all of us also.

So, how do we stop this before it happens? The best plan of attack is to keep our own record systems clean and in an orderly manner. For 10 years I have been searching for the perfect computer program to do this for me. This program would have to be "loser friendly" because the only aspect of computers that I bothered to learn was the word processor. I have tried the programs that came out in the past. They were simple enough to use, but they were also very limited in what they could do. I wound up keeping notebooks of information in addition to the data that I put into the program. This seemed rather stupid and I knew

there had to be a better way. Does AT&T have to look you up in notebook to find your account number? I don't think so.

My search has come to an end. A company called "Portable Data Systems" from Richardson, Texas has been working for over a year to write a database program that acts as a breeder registry for your flock. It is fairly easy to use and keeps track of the entire breeding program all the way from buying the breeder stock to pairing them, recording their eggs, tracking the chicks to adulthood, and selling the chicks. If you wanted it to, this program even produces a printout of sales and expenses to be used when you file your income tax.

The nice thing about this program is that it can track all of your birds, their eggs, and all of the offspring too. It shows interrelationships, incubation data, rearing data, formula consumption, growth rates, sales, individual pair productivity, purchases, mutation data, banding or transponder information, and so much more. I was truly amazed at the complexity of the program. It has made my life so

much easier. Of course, at first I had many questions but the support personnel at the company always explained it in "idiot" terms so I could catch on. Since I have started using this program, there is no need to keep journals and notecards on each and every baby bird I produce. Now I can go to the computer and print out a sheet on the parent birds that will show all of their progeny for as many years as I request it to do.

If any of you are now keeping track of your breeding on paper, you must invest in a copy of this program. The company has given the name "AIMS" (Aviary Information Management System) to the program and marketing has just begun. It is available from the company by calling (214) 4370949, ask for Phil Elrod. This program could become the standard in the industry if this company keeps up the good work on trying to make each and every section work for all of us. As it stands, small breeders and huge commercial operations would benefit from using this program as it takes the "memory" work out of record keeping. I give this product

the official seal of approval and you should tell them I told you to call. Perhaps they will give you a discount, they seem quite willing to help aviculture in any way they can!

So what does the future hold for exotic bird breeders in the United States? If we can prove to the "animal crazies" that we are doing a legitimate job of preserving genetics in the aviary, maybe they will leave us alone and go after some other group. To prove our point we must provide hard copy statistics, not just hand written notes. It is time for aviculture to show the opposition that we can and do breed birds in the numbers that we say we do. We are not the responsible party for exploiting the wild populations of birds. The trappers have not stopped trapping even though the United States is no longer a customer of Wildcaught birds. This means that our government has not succeeded in stopping the trade in wild birds, and we must do our part to preserve the ones we have now. As the forests are cut, conservation fails, and captive preservation will be the only chance for many rare and wonderful species. ➔

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