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Book Review: *The Complete Parrot* by Arthur Freud

by Tom Marshall, Leesburg, VA

Where were you on that portentous day in October, 1994 when a corporate takeover ended the oldest continually published avicultural magazine in the United States? *The American Cage-Bird Magazine*, which began publishing in 1928, was devoted almost exclusively to the canary fancy. Then, in February, 1974, Arthur Freud joined the staff as a columnist catering to the readership's growing interest in parrots. His articles made him one of the most effective avian publicists in the county as his enthusiasm for aviculture and his promotion of parrots as pets proved infectious to many.

In 1980, Freud became editor-in-chief and by 1984 owner of ACBM, all the while transforming a rather dated-looking magazine into a slick publication with a distinct personality and a large readership. Alas, *The American Cage-Bird Magazine* is gone forever. But Arthur Freud is back with panache and personality in *The Complete Parrot*.

In the first section of this beautifully illustrated, highly readable book, Freud conveys meaningful information as would a favorite teacher or favorite uncle, tempered with anecdotal experiences for all parrot lovers. He touches on purchasing a first parrot and the changing priorities which parrot owners wrestle with in trying to find the best match in an avian companion.

He explores documented evidence of longevity in parrots, reasoned techniques in taming and training parrots and the latest developments in parrot nutrition and avian medicine. Finally, he examines the breeding of parrots from two different perspectives—to breed or not to breed.

Much of the information presented on breeding parrots is second hand, but is derived from serious research and extensive interviews. Where there exists controversy or widely held differences in practices or preferences, Freud highlights those salient distinctions with respect to the pros and cons of one position over the other. However, when it comes to practical care of the parrot as a pet, Arthur Freud is without parallel in providing advice on all facets of smart and sensitive parrot care.

Part II of *The Complete Parrot* covers Freud's obvious favorites—the

African Grey Parrot, Amazons, macaws and cockatoos. Owners and potential owners of these species will delight in the style of writing in which this important information is presented. *The Complete Parrot* is the kind of book you can curl up with and simply enjoy reading: it's fun! Freud also does a good and fairly thorough job with his chapters on Eclectus, Australasian parrots, lovebirds and conures but, oddly, has completely neglected the popular Cockatiel and Budgerigar.

In chapter 17, "A Variety of Smaller Parrots" and in chapter 18, "A Variety of Unusual Parrots" he highlights representatives from several species but does not always choose the most widely held member of a certain category. For instance, he discusses the Maximilian Parrot as his "stand-in" for the Pionus genus. Most aviculturists and pet owners, however, have the Blue-headed or the White-crowned Pionus in their possession. It is true that much of the information on the Maximilian can be applied to all eight members of the Pionus genus and, perhaps, the drab Maximilian could use some good press from an avian publicist like Arthur Freud. There are some excellent photographs of the Blue-headed and the White-crowned species but no text is devoted to them nor is there anything at all about the striking favorite of the Pionus—the Bronze-winged.

Caiques, this reviewer's favorite parrots, had a little textual material on their behalf but not one photo, making the book somewhat incomplete from my personal perspective.

Finally, Part III, "Parrot Potpourri," vintage Freud from his days with the *American Cage-Bird Magazine*, shares many of the parrot tidbits that have come his way. Some are clever and useful while others are simply appealing to those of us who love parrots. Arthur Freud is obsessed with parrots and if you are as well, you must add this excellent and user-friendly book to your library.

The Complete Parrot sells for \$34.95 plus \$2.95 shipping and handling. Visa and Mastercard are accepted. Order from Audubon Publishing, One Glamore Court, Smithtown, NY 11787; (800) 359-2473 or (516) 979-8681.

Happy reading. 🐦