

Some Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the AFA Exotic Bird Registry

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Why Was the AFA Exotic Bird Registry Established?

The AFA Exotic Bird Registry was developed in 1994 as a service to our members, and to the avicultural community in general, to assist in the management of their collections and to enhance efforts to establish long-term, self-sustaining, genetically stable, captive populations of exotic birds.

What Are the Primary Benefits of the Registry?

First, the Registry is a management tool.

The Registry is intended to serve as a central repository of information on the numbers and kinds of birds that are being kept and bred in aviculture. In addition, the Registry serves to compile population information, or demographics, which, once a significant database is established, will give a general index on the ages, sex ratios, the degree of relatedness (inbreeding coefficients) in the captive population, the numbers of individual specimens reared annually, etc. This kind of valid statistical information is currently lacking particularly for private avicultural efforts. This has a major negative impact on efforts to establish the credibility of private aviculture. We have no proof of the success of our efforts. Without this kind of information we cannot hope to manage captive populations successfully or convince others of the merits of our efforts.

If we are to succeed in maintaining the majority of species that are in captivity today for long term, it is essential that we begin compiling these data. These data are not just for our own use

in managing our collections. These data will be critical for the use of future generations of aviculturists. This is a legacy that we owe to the future.

Unless we act now, species that are common in our collections today could become aviculturally extinct in the near future. With only limited or no access to additional breeding stocks for a wide variety of species, avicultural extinction is a very real possibility. This should be a cause for major concern within the avicultural community as this will affect each of us either directly or indirectly. In this sense the Registry is a "noble" effort in helping to ensure the future of aviculture.

The reality of avicultural extinction is a new concept for many of us. In the new age of aviculture in which we are now living, just being able to breed a species in captivity is not enough. It is essential that we improve our skills, increase our knowledge and develop the tools that will enable us to sustain our birds, not just in the short term, but in the long term and in the decades that lie ahead. The AFA Registry is a critical and valuable tool for this purpose.

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Additional specimens for some species will *never* be allowed importation into this country again! This is a sobering reality for the future of aviculture in the United States.

Second, the Registry is a marketing tool.

With increasing emphasis by conservation, animal rights organizations and others that only captive-bred birds should be acquired as pets, a registry system that certifies the captive-bred status of specimens will likely become a valuable marketing tool in the future. For the livestock trade in general, the registered animal is always perceived as having greater monetary value.

Third, the Registry is a documentation and identification tool.

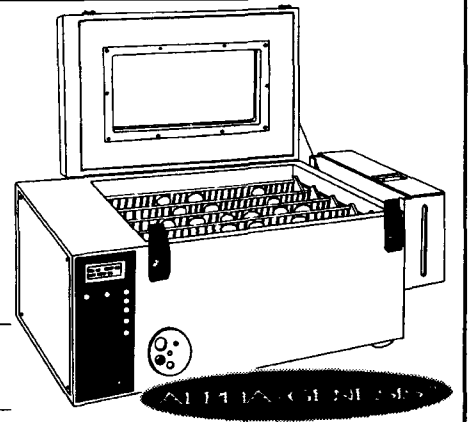
All specimens submitted for registration must be positively identified by any one of several acceptable methods (e.g. banding, microchipping, DNA sampling). The common and scientific names, the origin of the specimen (whether wild-caught or captive-bred)

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the estimated age or hatch date, the sex of the specimen and specific identification information such as band or microchip numbers are all recorded on the face of the Registration Certificate. Although other pertinent data such as name of the registered owner, parental information when known, whether hand reared or parent reared, etc. are also recorded in the registry files this information does not appear on the Certificate.

The AFA Exotic Bird Registry Certificate provides an official document that indicates a specific bird is registered as a captive-bred specimen. Some states already have laws that allow commerce only in captive-bred birds and there have been reports that in some instances airlines have requested evidence that birds to be shipped were captive bred.

Who May Participate?

Registry participation is not limited to AFA members, although AFA members do receive reduced fees. The Registry is initially being offered as an "open registry." You do not have to be the breeder in order to register a specimen and any species of bird can be registered provided the specimen is positively identified in an acceptable manner. Ultimately, however, the Registry may be converted to a "closed" system where only the progeny of registered parents will be accepted.

How Does the Registry Work?

The entire Registry program has recently been up-dated and revised. The application form is very easy to fill out by entering a limited amount of specific information and simply checking certain boxes and signing the application. Once a completed application form is validated and processed by the AFA Registrar, an official Registry Certificate is issued. All pertinent information pertaining to identifying the actual specimen is included on the certificate, but the certificate does not list the name or address of the individual registering the bird. A transfer of ownership form is printed on the back of the certificate. If a new owner wishes the ownership of the specimen to be entered into the Registry file, a transfer fee is required. The original

certificate is surrendered to AFA, changes are updated and a new certificate is issued.

All participants must agree to be bound by the Rules and Regulations established by AFA. An affidavit of agreement to this effect is printed on each individual application and must be signed before an application will be processed. Payment in full must accompany the application.

What Are the Direct Benefits?

Aside from the marketing aspects, amassing the demographic information on what is actually occurring with species management in captivity will provide the greatest long term benefit to aviculture. These data when summarized will provide the following kinds of information that are critical to sustaining viable captive populations:

- Total numbers of specimens of a given species that are included in the Registry
- The ratios of the numbers of males, females and unsexed individuals
- Ages at which successful breeding has commenced
- Whether the population is growing numerically or is decreasing
- The numbers of captive-bred generations that are represented in the population
- The numbers of pairs that are successfully reproducing
- Whether certain pairs are dominating the captive gene pool with their progeny
- The incidence of inbreeding that is occurring, etc.

What Does it Cost?

Introductory discount fees have been established to encourage greater participation in the Registry. If all offered discounts apply, individual specimens may be registered for as little as \$3.50 per bird. Rebates for Commercial members reduce this introductory rate down to \$2.50 per bird.

Which birds Should You Consider Registering?

In situations where there are very limited numbers of individuals of a particular species available for breeding, it is important that these "founder" birds be registered. The major emphasis of

the Registry, however, is to include as large a percentage as possible of captive-bred birds produced each year whether or not they are a common or rare species.

When considering which birds to register, remember that any bird (including mutations and hybrids) can be registered at any age, whether captive-reared or wild-caught. Also, you do not have to be the actual breeder of the bird in order to have it registered. The primary determining factor is that each specimen must be positively identified in a method approved by the AFA Registrar.

Why Should I Participate?

First and foremost you are contributing to the future of the practice of aviculture. Ensuring a continuing supply of captive reared birds for the pet trade helps support the future of the pet industry. *Without* a continuing supply of captive reared birds, there will be little need for cage manufacturers, feed supplies, equipment, etc. As our present breeding stocks slowly die off, *without* captive-reared birds there will be no access to replacement birds. If we do not manage our breeding stocks effectively, we could easily be left with inbred, reproductively incompetent birds. Talk to some of the pheasant breeders about the serious long-term effects of continuous inbreeding. Talk to some of the senior members of the avicultural community and see how easily a species can slip away and disappear from aviculture. Where are the Nyasa Lovebirds? Where are the Edward's Pheasants? Where are the *Goura cristata* Crowned Pigeons? Where will all our African waxbill finches be 10 years from now?

The AFA has provided a valuable tool to aviculture. This program will not succeed in fulfilling its promises to the future if you do not actively support the Registry and begin filling out your forms today. Don't deny to your children or their children's children the joy and pleasure and the opportunities that you have experienced as aviculturists.

The AFA is looking to the future with a keen sense and awareness of our avicultural responsibilities. We ask that each of you do so as well. ➤