



DEDICATED TO CONSERVATION OF BIRD WILDLIFE THROUGH ENCOURAGEMENT OF CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAMS, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, AND EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

1974 OFFICERS

President JERRY JENNINGS, JR.
 1st Vice President LEE HORTON
 2nd Vice President GARY AALFS
 Secretary RUSS SUTTON
 Treasurer FRANK J. KOZELUH

WATCHBIRD STAFF

Senior Editor/Photographer DICK BARRETT
 Artist/Ad Manager MARY JEAN HESSLER
 Membership Subscription CHUCK NOBLE
 Field Reporters/Writers RUSS SUTTON
 FRANK J. KOZELUH • JERRY JENNINGS • GARY AALFS
 JUDY JENNINGS • LEE HORTON • SHELDON DINGLE

ADVERTISING RATES & DATA available upon request. Send to A.F.A., P.O. Box 1125, Garden Grove, Calif. 92642. Publisher reserves the right to exclude any advertising or articles not appropriate or conforming to A.F.A. standards.

LEGAL THREATS

Have you ever been requested to get rid of your birds? If so, the AFA may be able to help.

AFA has retained a lawyer who is available to the membership. He has already assisted one member who was threatened with legal action.

The lawyers services are not free; however, you will find them to be more than reasonable.

If you have a legal problem and would like advice, please contact your local AFA delegate or one of the AFA Board Members for additional information.

AFA RAFFLE WINNERS



Mr. and Mrs. Perry Mastro are shown receiving their check for \$700.00 from Mr. Gary Aalfs of the American Federation of Aviculture. The check was presented to the Mastros' in front of their game bird display at the Orange County Fair. They are members of the Golden West Game Bird Breeders.

The first prize originally was a trip for two to Hawaii. The Mastros chose the \$700.00 in lieu of the Hawaiian trip and intend to use the money to purchase new carpeting for their home.

AFA OFFICIAL POSITION



Jerry Jennings

ON USDI INJURIOUS WILDLIFE PROPOSAL (50 CFR PART 16) AND DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT 74-64 STATED BEFORE DISCRETIONARY HEARING

As President of the American Federation of Aviculture, representing aviculturists and avicultural organizations throughout the U.S., I wish to register our

strong opposition to the proposed importation regulations for Injurious Wildlife (50 CFR Part 16) as published in the Federal Register Dec. 20, 1973 and the associated draft environmental statement published May 29, 1974.

Although we recognize that a return to the pre-Newcastle-level of bird importation is unrealistic, the near absolute prohibition of the importation of all birds is just as unrealistic if not more so. Transparent indeed is the claim that all birds are injurious to the named interests, save the four "low risk" species, since there is absolutely no scientific evidence to support such a simplistic notion.

Rather, it is obvious that a true scientific approach lies in a case-by-case determination as to whether a particular species is injurious, and as to whether a so-determined injurious species would in fact survive in a foreign environment should it be released, either intentionally or accidentally. A contrary approach is an affront to the principles of scientific investigations and a sham.

If there is indeed "common scientific knowledge" re the proposed regulations, it is that the overwhelming majority of birds are harmless in their native environments and would prove equally innocuous in ours. Moreover, a preponderance of avian species are too highly specialized in their dietary and other biological requirements to survive more than a few days of freedom let alone a seasonal change of climate. The notion that a single fertilized female could, by herself, establish a feral population does not apply to birds even in a vague sense. Birds, rather, follow a sophisticated ritual mating pattern requiring both partners to complete. The absence of either parent precludes the rearing of young.

The threat of the hybridization of exotic birds with native species of the United States, presumes the existence of native species closely related to the exotic imports. The number of species of birds imported that are related to our native species is extremely small. The number of fertile hybrids resulting, would be even smaller, the majority of crosses being infertile.

Regardless of man's importations, natural hybrids occur frequently in the wild. The Golden-winged and Blue-winged warblers freely hybridize wherever their ranges overlap in North America.¹ Originally, named the Brewer's Warbler, this hybrid is not the aesthetically unappealing abnormally alluded to in the Draft Environmental Statement.

If most avian species are not injurious to agriculture, horticulture, forestry and wildlife, they are no longer a threat to public health and safety. Rigorous U.S.D.A. quarantine regulations have virtually eliminated the risk of disease introduction, such as was experienced on two occasions in the past.

1. Gray, Annie P., "Bird Hybrids: A Checklist and Bibliography", Commonwealth Agricultural Bureau, Bucks, England, c. 1958, p. 207.

The myriad examples of introductions noted in the draft environmental statement are, with but few exceptions, the results of deliberate attempts by a man and his institutions. The mongoose was introduced into Hawaii and Jamaica to control rodents, the European rabbit in Australia for hunting, the weasel to control the rabbits, the Starling and English Sparrow in the U.S. respectively to control insects and remind jolly old Englishmen of home, and the Ringneck Pheasant in North America to please the sportsman. It is noteworthy that few, if any, introduction resulted in the establishment of feral populations on the first attempt, that large numbers were released, the initial specimens were well protected, that the majority of successes occurred in island environments and that, generally, no predators existed as a population check.

Historically, the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife and state fish and game departments account for nearly all exotic animal introductions in the U.S. Very few intentional introductions can be attributed to private individuals. In the case of birds, only one example of a successful accidental introduction, the Red-whiskered Bulbul, can be pinpointed and this bird, in a study by Dr. Own T. Owre, has been shown not to be injurious to Florida fruit crops as once suspected.² Although other species of birds have escaped and can be observed in our environment, it has not been established that they are feral. Today the likelihood of the occurrence of intentional releases by private individuals is remote considering the short supply of all birds stemming from the U.S.D.A. quarantine regulations and the current high cost of even the most common varieties.

The concern for the depletion of foreign wildlife populations is, perhaps the statement most easily supported in the D.E.S., and a concern we share. The wholesale capture of exotic wildlife has exerted pressure on some foreign animal populations and deserves some regulation. Foreign governments have already assumed the initiative by limiting exports. Likewise, an import quota system instituted by the U.S. would help to alleviate this problem. Notwithstanding, it is necessary to keep in mind that the commercial fare on the bird market is drawn from bird populations close to urban centers and comprises a very small percentage of the 8,650 species of birds known to man — a reality acknowledged in the draft environmental statement.

Nowhere in the proposed regulations is there any recognition of the legitimate concerns of aviculturists, who are, on the most part, serious conservationists, interested in propagating birds to preserve them as well as for scientific, educational, and zoological reasons.

The relatively recent examples of avicultural conservation efforts in the U.S. concern the restoration projects involving the Nene Goose, the official Hawaiian state bird, and the Laysan Teal, also of the Hawaiian islands.

By 1950 the Nene Goose had been reduced to 12 individuals in the wild and a slightly greater number in captivity. Through captive breeding efforts conducted by private aviculturists, the Hawaii Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, enough captive bred birds were raised to permit the re-introduction of 20 birds in 1960, 31 in 1961, and 46 in the first quarter of 1962.³

Similar results occurred in the case of the Laysan Teal. Many other species, currently endangered in the wild, are relatively common in captivity, i.e. Scarlet-

ched and Tourquoise Parakeets, and the Swinhoe Pheasant — a fact has been acknowledged by the U.S.D.I. in their letter of July 22, 1974 to the A.F.A. signed by Curtis Bohlen, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish & Wildlife Parks. Mr. Bohlen has indicated the U.S.D.I. is considering reclassification of these birds from endangered to threatened.

The list of species of birds bred in captivity is impressively long. The information gathered from those breedings has been documented and provides an important basis of support for future programs aimed at the restoration of any given species of bird to its native habitat.

As potential sources of zoological and research specimens, aviculturists help to relieve pressures brought to bear upon those species through capture. Many zoos including the San Diego and Los Angeles Zoos, have received a significant portion of their variety of species through donations from aviculturists.

Unfortunately, the concern for wildlife preservation is not enthusiastically shared by the governments and peoples of the developing nations; the primary sources of most imported animals. Although these governments give verbal support to conservation in keeping with their chic image, they themselves are often directly involved in the illicit traffic in restricted animals and animal products, as exemplified by the Kenyan government participation in the ivory trade.

The pressures brought to bear upon primitive peoples in the underdeveloped world, to acquire money to pay for certain necessities of life, force them to disregard the aesthetic values of wildlife conservation in the interest of self-preservation. This disregard manifests itself in the consumption of animals both as a source of protein and revenue. Concurrently, unrestricted population growth is steadily consuming the remaining forests and jungles, ensuring the decline in numbers of all but the hardiest of animals.

Government agencies throughout the world are involved in vermin eradication programs utilizing non-discriminatory methods that take a heavy toll of other animals. We are informed that in Australia most species of kangaroos are agricultural pests, abhorred by farmers and destroyed in large numbers. Their newspapers talk of "Roo" population explosions, yet in San Francisco a shoe store is fined for selling kangaroo skin shoes, because the animal is endangered. Waterhole poisonings in Australia to eliminate animal pests coincidentally took a toll of 120,000 Lady Gouldian finches in 1973.⁴

Given the general deterioration of the environment and man's need for first-hand experience of nature, captive propagation of animals is essential — not to be discouraged. Aviculturists are conservationists actively engaged in the propagation of birds. They need to be allowed to import numerous species of birds, especially captive bred birds since these have selected or will select away from those traits necessary to survival in the wild, and to paraphrase the DES, are only a "low-risk" threat to the "named interests". These imports will alleviate the problems of inbreeding thereby strengthening the species in general.

The proposed regulations hardly provide just treatment for aviculturists and, if allowed to stand, it is the aviculturist who will be the most recent addition to the list of endangered species. One does not kill a patient to eliminate the disease.

2. Owre, Owen T., "Studies on the Population of the Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*), contract No. DISW14-16-30008-534, c. 1969.

3. Lint, K.C., "The Nene—State Bird of Hawaii", Zoonooz, San Diego

Zoo, San Diego, Calif. Feb 1962, pp. 10-14.

4. Anonymous, "Aviculture in Western Australia", Australian Aviculture, April 1973, p. 56.