

# OPINIONS

## *Buckleys Respond to "Another Viewpoint"*

When we received a phone call from Sheldon Dingle, managing editor of the *AFA Watchbird*, regarding a letter criticizing our column which he wanted to publish, we responded "certainly," as we always welcome intelligent opposing viewpoints. However, when we read the letter published in the November/December 1997 issue, we were appalled and shocked, as it certainly fell far below the usual high standards of the AFA.

Obviously, the letter writer, Ms. Dalrymple, does not know us nor what we are all about for she has completely misunderstood our intent. In her letter she is evidently primarily concerned with character assassination rather than expressing an opposing point of view. She has, unfortunately, resorted to base name-calling, thereby thoroughly embarrassing herself. Anyone who reads our column knows we have never engaged in personal, hurtful attacks.

She claims we are newcomers, yet she was given, with our permission, a pre-publication copy of our "Conan the Aviculturist" article which clearly states we have been involved in aviculture for 10 years. This hardly makes us beginners nor does the label "newcomers" correctly convey the intensity of our dedication to our goal of advancing aviculture through sharing our practical experiences.

Here we must apologize to our friends and colleagues worldwide, who have sterling reputations, but whom Ms. Dalrymple has also defamed. These include Dr. Luis Baptista of the California Academy of Sciences, Gunter Enderle of Nekton in Germany, Howard Robinson of the *Estrildian* in England, Mike Fidler of the Australian Finch Society in the UK, and well known finch researcher and author, Robin Restall, perhaps the

world's foremost authority on mannikins, Josef Lindholm, III, of the Fort Worth Zoo, Jayne Yantz, *Bird Talk* columnist, Dale Thompson, our editor-in-chief, and others too numerous to list due to deadline restrictions. All of these fine, dedicated people, and the reputation of the *AFA Watchbird* itself, have been degraded to the level of "those eager to impress" and who "eagerly pay well for less than legal birds" by Ms. Dalrymple in her letter. We know not to whom Ms. Dalrymple refers, but they are certainly not among our friends or colleagues.

To call us "snake handlers" is preposterous as we have never been such nor do we even like snakes. Our interest lies with the *Chelonians* (turtles) and the amphibians — toads, frogs, and salamanders.

Ms. Dalrymple's letter states she has been in aviculture for much longer than 10 years, yet she does not mention what estrildids she keeps and breeds. Her defense of the shows leads us to surmise that she most likely breeds the Australian finches and shows for self-gratification since the future of Australian finches in aviculture is not in doubt. We and many of our colleagues specialize in the *breeding* of African and Indonesian finches whose future is in jeopardy, even in the wild. Her condemnation of us falls back on patriotism as her final defense, and, as Patrick Henry said, "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel." If she would correct her myopic thinking, it would be clear to her that we were the first to warn American aviculturists of the "junk" birds entering the country, namely, the hybrid parrot finches — Mindanaos, Peale's, and Blue-breasted — from breeders and exporters in Belgium, Holland, and Denmark.

As we've stated before, we do not endorse the "show mentality" as it

exists in this country, nor have we ever entered any of our birds in the shows. In many other countries the shows exist to encourage and promote better breeding for the ultimate benefit of the birds themselves. We share this belief that the shows should exist for the birds, not the birds for the shows.

Personally, it sickens and disgusts us to be lowered to the level of having to defend ourselves and our colleagues against such a vicious, uninformed, and unjustified attack. But since we seem to have been put in such a position, here are some of our qualifications for writing this column.

- 10 AVY Awards, eight for U.S. first breedings of various estrildid finches, and two for best-written article of the year.
- Finch breeding videos, now enjoying international distribution which have received critical acclaim in this country and favorable reviews worldwide.
- Consultants on finches to the Taxon Advisory Group of American Zoos.
- Best Overseas Breeder Award of 1990 from the Australian Finch Society in Great Britain.
- Members of RADS (Rare and Difficult Species) advisory group of the Australian Finch Society.
- Asked to write a book on estrildid finches by a publisher in the U.S.

If Ms. Dalrymple or anyone else feels more qualified to write on estrildid finches, please let us know and we'll gladly hand over the reins. Our first and foremost concern has always been the birds — not to sway in the winds of political correctness. To quote Nietzsche in *Conan the Barbarian*, "That which does not kill us makes us stronger."

After all, Ms. Dalrymple obviously misunderstood our intention in criticizing American aviculture. We mean not to destroy it, but to strengthen it. ➤

# On the Blue-fronted Amazon Experiment

## Can the Internet Lie?

Jan. 2, 1998

Dear Dale and Sheldon,

Hope you enjoyed the holidays and best wishes for '98!

Thank you for the beautiful job you did on my Whydah finch article. I also enjoyed the Viewpoint of Ms. Dalrymple.

Unfortunately, I am filing the enclosed photos with you for a reason. There is a person in Louisiana who has advertised on the Internet that he will be the first person in the U.S. to breed Cremino Society Finches.

This is a hurtful lie.

Levin Tilghman got European Societies from the Buckleys several years ago, which the Buckleys had imported through S.E. Bird Supply (Mr. Meyer). Levin, Marie Grein, myself and at least one other party have been working with a small population of approximately three unrelated pairs. Creminos have been produced along with an unexpected "sable" color.

Levin told this advertiser about these birds and promised him some after the population rose. We have all been reticent on this subject until we better understand the genetics of these birds. The Buckleys did breed Creminos. But Levin is the first person for whom the "sable" color appeared, very recently.

I don't imagine the truth matters to many people or will affect the Internet advertising enterprise. I just couldn't be silent while something special is ruined for close friends of mine.

Kindest regards,

Nancy Mindlin ➤

To The Editor;

I recently read "A Blue-fronted Amazon Experiment" by Michele Bauguess in the Nov/Dec 1997 *Watchbird*. It was an interesting article, well expressed and professionally to the point. It is nice to see new writers submitting their work to the AFA journal.

Several practices mentioned in the piece, however, should perhaps be expanded upon so that beginner or hobby breeders do not get the wrong ideas.

First-time breeding pairs of parrots perform all their mating/nesting actions in a trance-like state. They are striving to reestablish links with wild and instinctual urges while in a captive and unnatural environment. ANY disturbance of young or unproven pairs while in the nestbox runs a serious risk of causing dysfunctional behavior habits forming. When Ms. Bauguess again and again insisted upon opening up the check hole in her Amazon hen's box to peer in at, handle, etc., the eggs she was traumatically exposing the female bird to abrupt light, noise and disturbance. It is not surprising that cracked eggs can result. When a hen has an infertile egg with other fertile eggs, if keeper throws that egg out, she has changed the egg cluster formation and the setting position of her hen, it is not unusual for a hen to then fumble with her clutch and dent or crack one. I encourage all beginning aviculturists to leave setting hens alone. This is especially true with young domestic-raised and unproven pairs. Interrupting a female in the box risks ruining the safe, secure feelings Amazon hens need to function as good mothers. The truth is, we want our hens to set tightly in the face of *outside* the box distractions.

Secondly, it is unnatural for an Amazon male to be entering the nestbox and going into the egg chamber. Males cause a high proportion of broken eggs, etc. Their place is up at the

opening feeding the hen!

Third, rather than force a hen off her eggs, it is best is to just leave eggs alone, or devise ways to naturally coax the hen out of the box. If she will not leave her clutch, be patient, count days until hatch, and listen at the box rear for the peeps that indicate babies are hatching. Beginners should know, "If it ain't broke, it don't need fixin'."

Finally, taking chicks from under a hen can be devastating. Many Amazons when so irritated will scramble, maul and kill babies. It is *not* necessary to remove chicks from parents and nestboxes at two weeks of age. Two weeks after hatch, many devoted hens are still setting in a trance state nearly 24 hours per day. It is a great shock to disturb them and pull the babies.

In addition, chicks taken so early have little chance to learn that they are birds; their eyes are barely open, they have no feathers to preen or be preened, feeding motions, bird sounds, mother's touch and more are as yet barely known and developed. It is being proven these days that, contrary to former belief, these early-pull chicks actually make less-desirable long-term pets since they tend to over-imprint on humans and have not the bird skills learned from parents to allow them to make natural transitions once puberty arrives. Pull your chicks at *four* weeks of age. Hens will adjust more easily as they are no longer setting so tightly, and are even beginning to appear outside the nestbox to eat, preen, bathe. Chick strength, immune systems, feeding motion and exuberance will all be greater, and with wide open eyes the youngsters, even with their acquired love for handfeeders, will remember that they are birds!

In conclusion, I congratulate Michele on successful raising of Blue-fronted Amazon offspring. Any reproduction within this genus ranks as advanced aviculture.

Sincerely,

EB Cravens

Waiohinu, HI. ➤