

AFA's Hurricane Relief Efforts

Brenda Piper , AFA 2nd Vice President
and
Fred Smith, AFA Regional Director, Florida & Puerto Rico

From the day after the first hurricane passed, Fred Smith, AFA Regional Director for Florida and Puerto Rico, has been actively working to help those in need. Most of Fred's days begin at 5:00 A.M. as he gets in his truck to head out to help people all over southern Florida and doesn't end until he pulls in his driveway around midnight. He has been the focal point of offers of assistance, monetary and physical. Numerous people, organizations, and businesses have donated money, caging, food, and labor to get their fellow aviculturists on their feet again.

Fred has always been known for his great sense of humor, which has been sorely taxed in the past weeks. Typical of Fred, though, he sent out the following email to the bird world to solicit help with the relief efforts:

Great Vacation Opportunity!

How about coming to Florida where you can enjoy the sunshine! We offer it in a variety of ways! Hot Sunshine, Mild Sunshine, Liquid Sunshine, slight breezes. Heck, we even offer it in large amounts if you think you can handle it! Remember, its not for the faint-of-heart! LOL!

While here, you can spend your time helping fellow aviculturists get back on their feet – removing tree branches, repairing cages, etc.

As an Aviculturist yourself, you know how withdrawn you are when a disaster happens, not asking for help, thinking that there is surely someone else in worse shape?? Well, let's band together and help those in need right now -- 3 Hurricanes is toooooooo many! If all you can do is to come down and stand on the banks and keep Ivan away it would be greatly appreciated!

If you are willing to jump at the chance of a lifetime and come to Florida and help out, contact me.

*The Birds Will Thank You For It.
Remember - They are depending on Us!*

And he certainly has gotten help to those in need. Dr. Susan Clubb has been diligently following up on her breeder clients and letting Fred know where he is needed. One gentleman had no idea where to start on getting his yard and aviary back together until Fred showed up. Many folks only needed some seed to tide them over, and the donations of products from both Sun Seed and Janis Clark made their lives so much easier and gave them one less thing to worry about.

Fred has been to numerous breeders helping to drag branches and trees off of cages, chop up the branches, repair cages, and get birds to safety. The outpouring of support from the avicultural community has been extraordinary! Fred has received many calls and emails from people willing to help – from California to New York. A gentle-

man loaded up his tractor with a front loader and 4-wheel-drive truck and drove all the way from Texas to Southern Florida to help lift large tree trunks off of cages!

Many of the challenges facing the Florida Aviculturists after the Hurricanes are:

1. Fire Ant bites! With the ground full of water from the Hurricanes, the ants are climbing on downed trees, cages on the ground, and anything else that has to be picked up and therefore the workers get bites all over them. Fire Ant bites Hurt!

2. Mosquitoes! With water standing everywhere, mosquitoes are hatching eggs on every mud puddle there is. We don't even have time to worry about West Nile and that should be a great concern!

3. The Stress on the birds – especially the birds that have been put in temporary cages. The cages are much smaller than the birds are used to and they get upset as much as we do. Only stress to a bird can be and is dead-



A disaster too big to comprehend, an aviculturist studies the mess and wonders where to begin.

Photo by Fred Smith

ly in many cases. To get the birds back in their original cages first requires removing the downed trees on it, then if the cage needs repaired it takes time for that. If the cage has to be replaced, then this stresses the birds as everything is new to them. Many times the nest boxes are not their original one and thus do not smell like theirs. All of this stress lasts over several days or weeks.

4. Watching the TV – The aviculturists are always trying to keep an eye on the TV to see where the next storm is heading. This is time consuming and stressful on them as they are working as fast as possible to get everything back in order only to see that another hurricane is coming. Do they make permanent repairs or do they make temporary repairs until after the hurricane season is past – in November?

Plus, the birds have to be fed every day before any work can be done.

On the surface, many times everything seems okay with breeders, but when Fred talks to them and asks if they could use some assistance, he finds the true situation behind the smiling face. Many aviculturists are afraid of repercussions from others because they didn't take all the birds inside or protect them better. We have all seen some of the comments on the Internet concerning this from people who aren't there. Fred has personally helped more than 20 aviculturists as of this writing and helped orchestrate assistance to many others with the local bird clubs in Florida.

Fred had a small breeder call him wanting to know if anyone could use some small cages, as they sold several of their birds after Frances. After prodding her more, Fred found that her husband is a salesman and because of the storms he has to work everyday and was not able to work on rebuilding their aviaries; but then Fred found out the real story was that they didn't have money to rebuild the cages, roof, etc. When he asked her if she could use some feed she started to break down.



Photos above and below show the extent of damage suffered by aviculturists in Florida.



Fred Smith with his rescue truck, a most welcome sight in troubled times when Florida bird breeders try to restore order to house and feed their birds.

He had found out that they were themselves in dire need of help and yet were offering some of their small cages to help others! Fred told her he would be there on the weekend to help rebuild and to deliver some seed to them.

Different breeders have different needs depending on their situations. Some only need building material as they have enough manpower. Fred doesn't always have enough time to help everyone each day, but he has tried to help as many people as much as possible. Fred monitors how much material he gives to each person so as to spread out the assistance as fairly as possible.

He hasn't been able to contact any breeders in the Florida Panhandle damaged from Ivan as most have no phones or electricity at the time of this article. This is what is the hardest to deal with – knowing there has to be some folks out there needing help, yet not being able to contact them! Fred has a small breeder east of the area who is trying to locate some of the needy breeders for him, but a person can't get into some areas as it is open only to local residents at this time. Unless Fred knows the exact location of those persons, it is hard to just drive around looking for them.

Although many of the emergency problems have been addressed in Florida, experts in emergency management have indicated that oftentimes there is more relief and help needed weeks *after* the initial event as opposed to the first few days afterward. People have managed through their immediate crises and are now trying to move forward with their lives. Many jobs have been lost, which means that bird food supplies are starting to dwindle. Birds that were loose have been caught but are in carriers while their cages need repair. This is when the AFA Disaster Relief Fund can really help get people through their transition period until they are able to rebuild their lives.

During Hurricane Andrew (1992), the American Federation of Aviculture established a Disaster Relief Fund to assist aviculturists who had been affected by natural events such as hurricanes, wild fires, earthquakes, etc. When the aftermath of hurricane Andrew was being assessed, AFA volunteers were involved in helping aviculturists and their birds deal with short term relief of their situations. When the wildfires hit California, assistance was made available from the Disaster Relief Fund and affected individuals were helped. Now, with Hurricanes Charlie, Frances, and Ivan gone, the Disaster Relief Fund is there to help our friends in Florida and the Southeast.

Thus far this season, the following kind and generous people and organizations have helped immensely:

- Aviary & Cage Bird Society of South Florida
- Avicultural Society of Tucson
- Janis Clark
- Coastal Bend Companion Bird Club & Rescue Mission
- Marcia David

- Orange County Bird Breeders
- Parrot Breeders Association of Virginia
- Reno Area Avian Enthusiasts
- Rocky Mountain Society of Aviculture
- Sun Seed
- The Triangle Bird Club (who then challenged all affiliated clubs to match their contribution)

If you would like to donate money to the Disaster Relief Fund, you may do so by sending your check to the American Federation of Aviculture office at:

**American Federation of Aviculture
Post Office Box 7312
Kansas City, MO 64116**

Or, if you would like to donate via credit card, you may contact the AFA office at 816-421-2473 or email the AFA office at afaoffice@aol.com or fax at 816-421-3214. If you would like your donation to go directly to the Disaster Relief Fund, please note that in the memo line or let the office know of your intention. If you have physical items, such as bird food, cage wire, cages, dishes, etc., that you would like to donate, please contact Fred Smith directly at

fredsmith@netzero.net or 863-858-6739

In addition, if you are someone in need of assistance or know someone in need of assistance, please contact Fred at the above email or phone number immediately. He is coordinating all efforts and will respond as quickly as possible.

The number of folks who need our help has increased exponentially. If you hear of anyone needing help, please contact Fred Smith as soon as possible as he is out in the field and working constantly to make sure our friends are safe and secure. Again, please consider helping your fellow aviculturists recover from this natural disaster. Thank you to all the generous people who have already done so much to help:

- Pyrrhura Breeders Association
- Northwest Exotic Bird Society
- Pippin's Roost Exotics - Paula Strasser
- Itinerant Peddler Aviary - Fred Wilson
- Pat Chinnici •Janice Boyd •Chester County Bird Club
- Bird Endowment •Capitol City Bird Club
- Jacksonville Avicultural Society
- South Bay Bird Society
- An anonymous AFA Board member

