

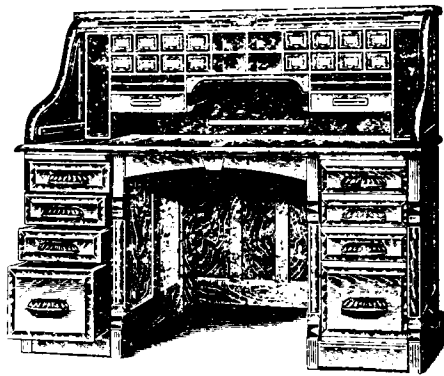
## NOTICE

All correspondence intended for the editor of the Watchbird should be mailed directly to his address.

Sheldon Dingle  
P.O. Box 340  
Norco, CA 91760

# From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



Ah, gentle readers, how quickly your passions flare, how volatile your emotions. This column is a forum for exchange between reader and reader and between reader and editor. Exchange is healthy, I think, but I should like to see it done quietly, amicable, logically, and based on issues rather than on personalities. Nothing printed in this column has been intentionally directed toward the denigration of any individual.

Individuals, by name, do pop up now and again in various letters, but individuals **are** often intimately involved in one issue or another. The Alba Ballard controversy is a prime recent example. Alba Ballard is the individual and draping human clothes on an animal is the issue. In my mind, I separate the two instantly.

As an individual, as a human being, Alba Ballard has all of the qualities and ingredients that entitles her to the same honor and respect that one should afford any other human being. Never for an instant have I meant to take anything away from Alba. I don't know her personally, but from all I can learn she is a gifted and remarkable woman.

Now to the issue. Just as some people like jazz and others like classical music, some people like animals in human garb and some people like animals in their natural form. The issue of to garb or not to garb is one of personal taste. It has no bearing on the virtue or worth of an individual. For example, my wife would dearly love to see Alba's dressed up birds. I, on the other hand, would be made distinctly uncomfortable by such a display. Do I love my wife less for her taste in this matter? Certainly not. My very good buddy H. Richard Mattice loves good scotch whiskey while I prefer a good wine. Is he less a friend for the difference? You already know the answer to that.

As a final installment on this particular issue I have included excerpts from several letters on the subject.

Dear Mr. Dingle,

When I read the letter that Catherine C. Tyler wrote in the Oct./Nov. issue of the A.F.A. Watchbird, I felt it warranted a reply. Either she knows Alba Ballard personally or she speaks with forked tongue.

I went to the 1979 A.F.A. Convention in Florida and I came back with a notebook loaded with information. While I was there, I had, quite by chance, a little chat with Alba and I found her to be a lovely and very charming lady. I also observed and petted "Galaxy" her pet Moluccan Cockatoo. I found that "Galaxy" was in beautiful plumage. If "Galaxy" was "clipped", then she had a really great way of hiding it. By the way, Alba's show was very fascinating. Some of the costumes were adorable. Since "Galaxy" does a jiffy little two-step on her perch, she would be A-1 in any disco. . .

In all seriousness now, those who missed the convention really missed a wonderful gathering. I learned an awful lot down there and I met a lot of very interesting people. The speakers were all very informative and it gave me quite an insight to aviculture. I must say it was a valued experience.

Sincerely, Beth Greenberg



Dear Mr. Dingle,

. . . Regardless of whether one approves or not of the antics of "Fred" on Baretta or of Alba's dressed birds, these birds all receive loving care.

Alba's birds performed both before and after the banquet on their own because they like to do it. They love Alba and she loves them. The one cockatoo, "Galaxy" was a "bronco" that no one could handle before it was given to her. With love and kindness, she made it the gentle bird it is today. Can Catherine Tyler do as much with birds?

To know Alba Ballard is to love her. She has devoted her life to the care of abandoned, injured and sick birds and to giving performances on her own time and at her own expense to retarded children, the sick and the aged. . .

Sincerely,  
Mark J. Reader



Dear Editor,

I have just read the letter by Catherine C. Tyler in the Oct./Nov. issue and was terribly saddened. Is it possible that Ms. Tyler and the majority of your membership think themselves far too sophisticated to honestly enjoy the heartfelt example of mutual love as in Alba Ballard's presentation of birds in costume.

I was fortunate in that I attended one of her many benefit performances with these birds in August.

- 1 .Her beautiful troupe jumps up and down begging to be the first one dressed.
- 2 .They are proud and happy when in costume.
- 3 .A costume is on a bird for only one minute.
- 4 .She doesn't have to reward with food — she does it with love.
- 5 .The love she has for her birds and the birds for her is plainly seen.

Alba Ballard's main joy is to appear for children and to share with them how loveable a pet parrot can be — and to bring joy into the lives of many . . .

Thank you,  
Lillian M. Enright



Dear Mr. Dingle,

. . . I have had the pleasure of visiting Mrs. Ballard in her home. Her birds are without exception beautiful and well cared for and her ability to handle them is extraordinary. (The fact that Alba is Italian promotes comparison as a modern female counterpart of St. Francis of Assisi — her love and ability with her charges so remarkable.)

I'll have to admit that last statement reads a bit dramatic, but I do want to impress upon your readers that Alba Ballard has a real gift that should not be underestimated and probably has to be seen in its many facets to really be appreciated.

The conventioners in Florida saw one aspect of Mrs. Ballard's work. I am sure that many appreciated that opportunity . . .

Sincerely,  
Tom Marshall

# AN IMPORTANT AVIAN NUTRITIONAL ANNOUNCEMENT

At last, there is now available on the market a **complete** bird food containing, in one mix, all of the nutritional elements thus far known to be necessary for optimal avian growth, development, health, and breeding. Except for perhaps fresh greens, no additional nutritional products (proteins, vitamins, minerals, fruits, etc.) are needed when feeding this seed compound to both adult and young birds. The contents of this seed "compound" produced by Topper's Bird Ranch, comply with recommendations of some of our nation's leading university avian nutritionists.

This seed "compound" utilizes a **safflower** base, rather than the usual sunflower seed used in most psittacine mixes. Besides already having proteins, vitamins, and minerals, it has added to it the advantages of producing less visual "mess" than does sunflower husk, but its primary advantage over sunflower base mixes is that safflower is **lower in Tri-Glycerides**, thus producing less cholesterol in your birds, and it also does not contain the drug "Papaverine," that sunflower seed does, which tends to produce a euphoric state which may decrease breeding.

Under normal conditions, the preservatives used in the **unsaturated** oils, which binds the protein, vitamin, and mineral additives to the seed mix, prevent rancidity of these oils for the normal useful life of the seed.

Most psittacines can be switched from their old seed mix to this new one easily and gradually over a one- or two-week period.

The impressive nutritive breakdown per cup of this seed "compound" is as follows:

Protein — Min. 18%	Fiber — Max. 10%
Fat — Min. 18%	Ash — Max. 4%

VITAMINS	AMINO ACIDS	MINERALS
A ..... 1,100 I.U.	Isolucine ..... 24 Mgm	Calcium ..... 380 Mgm
B1 ..... 0.50 Mgm	Lucine ..... 38 Mgm	Copper ..... 58 Mcgm
B2 ..... 0.75 Mgm	Lysine ..... 50 Mgm	Iodine ..... 8.8 Mcgm
B6 ..... 0.50 Mgm	Methonine ..... 35 Mgm	Iron ..... 2.9 Mgm
B12 ..... 0.003 Mgm	Phenylalanine ..... 30 Mgm	Magnesium ..... 9.5 Mgm
C ..... 6.222 Mgm	Threonine ..... 39 Mgm	Manganese ..... 95 Mcgm
D3 ..... 85 I.U.	Tyrosine ..... 44 Mgm	Phosphorus ..... 180 Mgm
E ..... 11.70 I.U.	Tryptophan ..... 11 Mgm	Potassium Cl ..... 56 Mgm
K ..... 2.0 Mcgm	Arginine ..... 40 Mgm	Sodium Cl ..... 50 Mgm
Bioflavinoids ..... 850 Mcgm	Alanine ..... 36 Mgm	Zinc ..... 345 Mcgm
Niocinamide ..... 3.7 Mcgm	Cysteine HCl ..... 8 Mgm	Cobalt ..... Trace
Biotin ..... 3.1 Mcgm	Glycine ..... 36 Mgm	
Asperidine Cmplx ..... 7.5 Mcgm	Histidine ..... 22 Mgm	
Rutin ..... 4.2 Mcgm	Proline ..... 46 Mgm	
Carotine ..... 365 Mcgm	Serine ..... 50 Mgm	
Choline ..... 11.1 Mgm	Glutamic Acid ..... 140 Mgm	
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Folic Acid ..... 139 Mcgm		
Inositol ..... 11.4 Mgm		
Lecithin ..... 1.67 Mgm		

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Las Vegas, NV 89108  
(702) 648-5955

Dear Mr. Dingle,

This is the first time I have ever felt the necessity to write a letter to an Editor. This is in response to the letter written by Catherine C. Tyler about Alba Ballard.

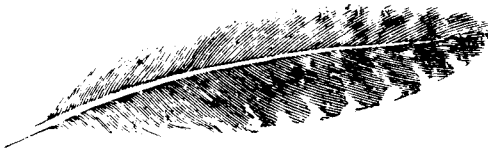
I had heard about Mrs. Ballard about six years ago. At that time I was in the process of hand raising my first baby macaw, and was having a difficult time. I just looked up her number and called with my problem. Although we had never met, and it was in the evening, Mrs. Ballard was at my home in one hour and helped solve my problem . . .

Thank you for listening to me. I am sure that this letter will receive the same space afforded Mrs. Tyler's letter, because I am

sure that you are interested in giving your readers opposite opinions on what you have already printed.

Thank you,  
Mrs. Arthur Levy

*My dear Mrs. Levy, I'm sure you will agree that, in this case, equal time has been more than equal. Now, with your kind permission I should like to push on to some other letters.*



I personally would not return or suggest that anyone else attend this very disorganized and wrongly advertised show. The many calls I made from Sun Valley to Fullerton will not be made again under the circumstances.

Possibly if the person in charge were to know of the hardships made to many people (I saw others in the same situation), maybe next year's show & advertizing would improve.

Sincerely,  
(that is, sincerely aggravated),  
Karen Lee Allen  
Torrance, CA.



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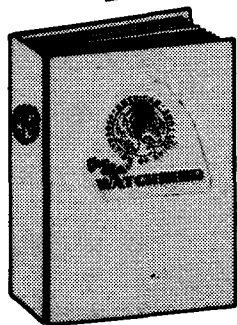
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Dear Mr. Dingle,

I wanted to write and say thank you to you and the A.F.A. It was a real surprise to win the pair of cockatoos in the A.F.A. raffle. I was sorry not to have been able to be at the convention of the A.F.A. in Florida.

I would like to thank again the donor "The Pet Farm" and also Mrs. Judy Hofferma, the Raffle Chairperson, and Mr. Tom Ireland.

You are all doing such a wonderful job with the A.F.A. that it makes me very happy to be a member.

With best wishes,  
W.P. Bonsal



Dear Mr. Dingle,

After receiving the A.F.A. Watchbird Magazine & the B.A.C. magazine I read the announcements about the "National Bird Cage Show", Nov. 15, 16, 17, & 18th. I was quite excited and called all the bird people I could think of to let them know about it. Several friends and I arrived at the Hacienda Hotel at 11am on the 15th to find that the show was not open to the public until the 17th from 9-2 pm. We had changed our work schedules, used gas and wasted our valuable time for naught.

There was no information available anywhere to indicate that we were only welcome on Saturday. We viewed an enormous amount of empty tables & a very rude lady who we overheard remark "we are just going to have to close the door so the public can't get in."

On top of the disappointment & aggravation, someone in very poor taste, had a sign on a table near some Lovely canaries which read "IF YOU CAN'T CLASS 'EM, GAS 'EM" I must tell you that I find that extremely offensive, & not the least bit humorous as I suppose someones sick sense of humor thought it was.

Dear Mr. Dingle

In the most recent issue of *Watchbird* you asked if anyone was aware of whether there is such a thing as "teflon poisoning". It so happens that in the June, 1978 issue of *American Cage-Bird Magazine* there is a letter to the editor from Dr. S.B. Hitchner at the Cornell University Veterinary College which states:

"...the accidental overheating of teflon-coated pans produces a substance that is highly toxic for birds. This has been well-documented by experimental studies in Germany. The toxic volatile products produced kill small birds in 20 to 30 minutes."

Dr. Hitchner is a well-respected avian pathologist and should know what he's talking about.

I also have another item of information in the form of correction or clarification of an earlier *Watchbird* article. In the August/September 1979 issue, Dr. Fowler states in his "Nutritional and Metabolic Diseases of Cage Birds" that red beets are a good source of provitamin A. According to the U.S.D.A. Handbook #8, raw red beets contain only 20 International Units per 100 grams. Cooked ones would have even less. This value is considered in the low range. The poor bird would have to do nothing but eat beets all day to meet its vitamin A requirements, a fate I would wish on no living man or beast. However, beet greens are an excellent source of vitamin A at 6100 I.U./100 g. Possibly this is what Dr. Fowler had in mind. Except for this discrepancy, I thought the article was one more feather in A.F.A.'s cap as far as providing information for a sound, scientific approach to aviculture. I look forward to more of the same.

Sincerely yours,  
Roddy Gabel  
Gaithersburg, Maryland

Thank you for your response regarding the teflon question. Several responses came in including one from Dr. Robert Kroshefsky, a research chemist, who volunteered to research the issue thoroughly. His report will appear in the next issue of Watchbird.

Regarding the beets. Thank you very much for noting the discrepancy. I'll attribute the formula to an error of our typesetter who left out "greens" and to our faulty proofreading. Now I'll have to exchange six crates of beets for some greens. Ed.



Dear Sir & Buddy

I recently wrote an article for the African Lovebird Society Bulletin, airing a very special complaint I have with regards to a very few, but existant bird breeders and their methods of disposing of surplus, or marketable birds.

Now I am making my complaints to you, that you may add your humble opinions to mine, regardless whether you agree with me or not.

My gripe is with the breeder who sells his surplus birds to the wholesaler and the individual breeder or general public for the exact same amount of money, and also the breeder who sells his surplus stock to the general public at wholesale prices.

My thoughts on the whole subject are as follows:

If a bird sells for \$50.00 retail, then the wholesaler must buy the bird for a lesser amount in order that he, too, can retail the bird for \$50.00, thus making a profit to cover his overhead, etc., and still compete with other breeders at the retail level. So far so good, right?

Now, along come a few breeders that dispose of their birds to the general public at wholesale prices — let's say \$30.00. The wholesaler now has to drop his buying price to \$20.00 or ?, to compete with the \$30.00 retail price, and therefore we breeders who were selling retail for \$50.00 now have to drop our retail prices to \$30.00. Then the whole mess gets stickier, as the bad guys then drop their retail price to the general public to \$20.00, the wholesaler drops to \$10.00, the good guys drop their prices to \$20.00 and the whole mess gets worse and worse.

P.S. I am *not* a wholesaler, but just a breeder who is trying to stay ahead of the feed bills, proposed governmental regulations and the bad guys.

Ralph Smith

Tourquoise Aviarics

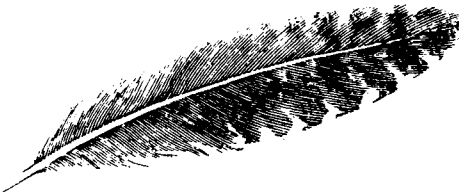
I suspect that one's attitude regarding this matter depends upon whether he is selling or buying birds. The next time I want to buy birds I'm going to wait until the downward price spiral gets really worse and worse — and breeders will be vieing with each other to give their birds to me. In fact, my scheming little brain tells me to hold out for a five dollar bill with each bird I take.

Actually, the prices on the bird market are dictated by supply and demand. When there is a plethora of a given species of bird the prices will naturally fall. The formula you outlined functions when there are more birds available than there are buyers. On the other hand, if there are only ten birds and a hundred buyers want them the prices will go up sharply.

The real immorality that sometimes occurs on the bird market is when a seller advertises \$100.00 birds for sale at \$50.00 a piece — but he doesn't have any of the birds. This makes the legitimate sellers look like price gougers. Even this problem usually works out fairly but it causes the buyer a lot of extra phone calls and time to find out that the only birds actually available really cost \$100.00.

I understand just what you are saying because I have been involved with mutation peach-faced lovebirds for years and they are a classic example of a bird that has steadily decreased in price. Despite the fact that my albino and lutino peach-faces are worth less now I don't go along with price-fixing. We live in a relatively free country and have a basically laissez-faire market system.

At the same time, if you know a particularly gross violator of ethical marketing practices perhaps I should put you in touch with a couple of Las Vegas heavy-weights who are very skillful in explaining business practices. But then this is a matter we should talk over while strolling in the park.



Dear Mr. Dingle

I am writing because I'm outraged. Books on birds by the most respected authors talk about the small decorative cages being suitable for pet canaries. It's as though if a canary is sold as a pet it doesn't matter if it can barely flap its

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wings, let alone fly. I saw one arrangement where about all the bird could do was bat his swing back and forth. And all one can buy in the best bird shops are things about one foot square — maybe two. They can get pretty expensive, up to over \$200 if the bottom is a painted china bowl. Or one could purchase cages used by those who raise birds, although these are not designed to fulfill what the bird pet owner might want in the living room. Birds may be the pet of the future, since they don't present some of the problems that dogs and cats do. Isn't it about time that those who earn their living from the bird trade build decent cages for them? I speak only of canaries, since other kinds of birds require different arrangements and my experience is with canaries. And I'm writing now because I've just sold several canaries and they were put in houses so small that I hated to see them leave their flights.

**Question:** What is the opinion of experienced aviculturists on cage size for canaries? And no hiding behind what has always been done.

Attractive cages at a competitive price should be possible. Ones that are long and narrow and high. Ones that would sit on a bookshelf or could be hung on a wall. I'm not saying that little old ladies who always had a canary in a small cage should have to change. I am saying that pet shops should stock cages that are more suitable for the bird and explain to perspective customers why they are better.

One final comment. In addition to enabling the canary to get better exercise and be less bored, such a cage would be better for the owner too. A canary better displays its beauty if it can fly a little.

Sincerely  
Mary F. Walter  
Denver, Colorado

*A wise old aviculturist (Guy Hughes) once explained his formula for cage sizes. Big bird — big cage; little bird — little cage. A good formula but I agree with you that sometimes it is carried to extremes. Unfortunately, many pet-store operators are not knowledgeable regarding the needs of birds. Likewise, many cage builders are ignorant of the needs of various birds. Much education is in order and, of course, that is one of the goals of the A.F.A..*

*You, madame, on the other hand, are aware of the cage problem. You should have, in your outrage, leaped, snapping and growling upon your customer's tiny cage and gnashed it to pieces then stomped on the splinters. Think what an unforgettable education that canary buyer would have gotten.*

Ed.

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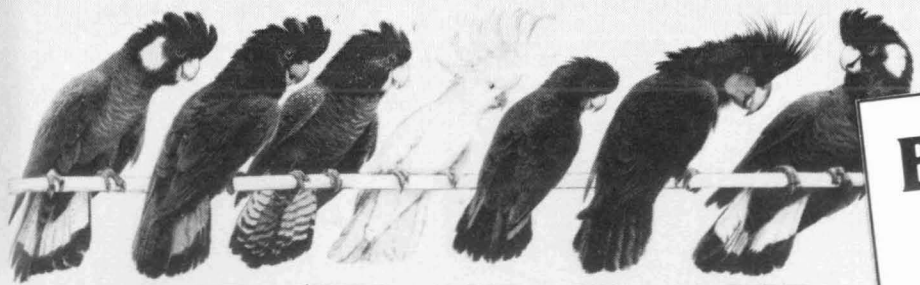
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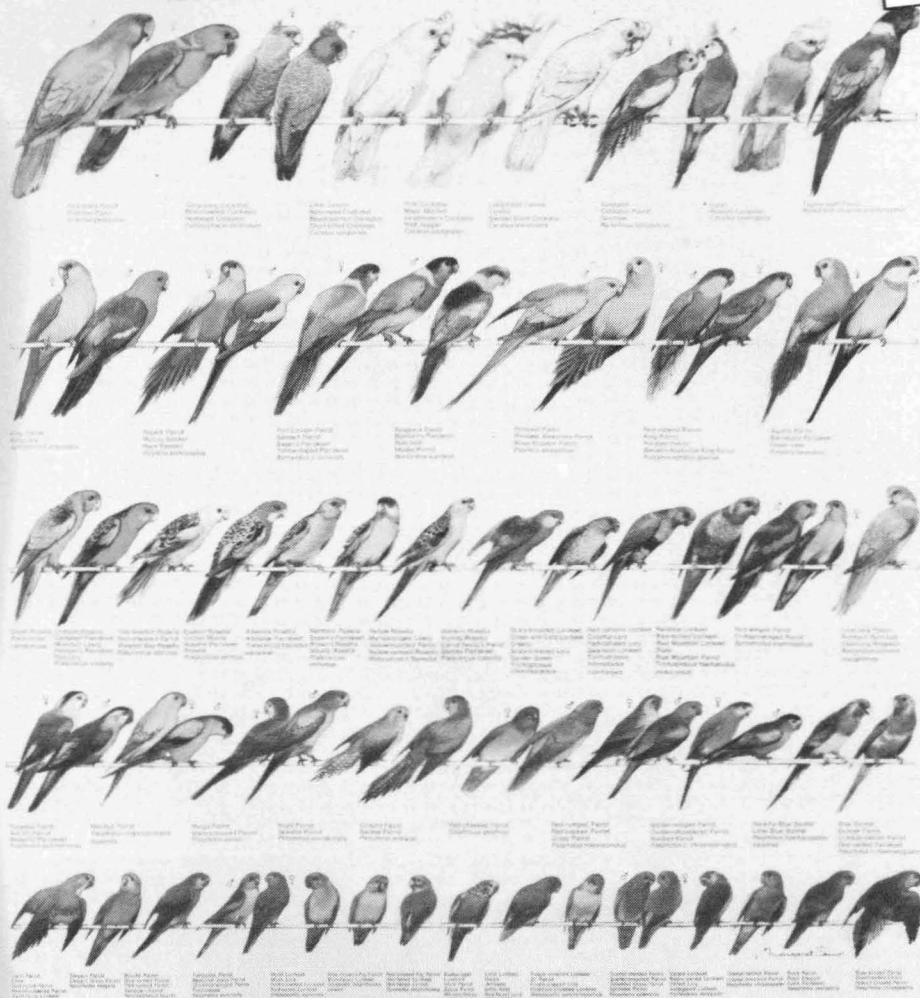
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