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# Preface

by Sheldon Dingle

You regular readers already know that this is the second of two *Watchbird* issues devoted to the endangered birds of the world. There are about two hundred and fifteen species of birds that are in imminent danger of extinction with many more in the threatened category. Some of these species have become stabilized in captivity — three or four parrot species, several pheasant species and a few miscellaneous species such as the masked bob-white, the nene goose, and the Rothchild's mynah. A mere pittance, gentle reader, a mere pittance.

The A.F.A. in general, and these two *Watchbird* issues specifically, hope to direct your attention to the huge moral responsibility that **you** have as an aviculturist. It is **immoral** to raise birds just for the financial profit of it. It is wrong to raise thousands of domesticated birds such as canaries, cockatiels, zebra finches, and lovebirds just to make money.

Don't misunderstand me — it is perfectly legitimate to raise domesticated birds for the pet trade and to make a handsome profit at it. But, dear friend, even the Lord demands His tithe of the increase. What do I mean? Should you donate a red-factor to the rabbi, a parrot to the priest? No, I don't mean that. The rabbis and priests have enough problems already but you **should** donate a portion of your time, skill, and facilities back to nature if you want to keep an equitable balance.

If you have fifty or a hundred aviaries, devote five or ten of them to a species of bird that is endangered or threatened. If you have five or ten aviaries, devote a couple of them to a rare or difficult bird. If you have a few breeding cages in your basement, include room for two or three pairs of birds that won't survive much longer without help.

It is one thing to reap profits from the birds nature has provided. It is another thing to rape the birds of the world. Nobody loves a profit more than I do but I am also convinced that we must pay our dues. Use a portion of your profits to specialize in one species of rare or endangered birds. If only a hundred aviculturists each specialized in a different species of endangered birds, almost half of the endangered birds might develop a self-

sustaining captive population. What a boon to nature.

After much thought I have decided to start the ball rolling with the following suggestions. I'll specialize in golden-shouldered parakeets; Dr. Richard Tkachuck can specialize in the brown pelican; Jerry Jennings will raise imperial woodpeckers; Dick Baer should concentrate on the Arabian ostrich; Frank Todd is good with penguins; Lee Horton might work with the western bristle-bird; Cliff Witt should be able to handle the short-tailed albatross — the list goes on and on.

Well, you can see that there may be a few problems here but the A.F.A. is working very hard to identify just what is being done. Larry Shelton is working on a registry that should inventory and document just which rare and endangered species are currently part of American aviculture. Just to learn the status of these birds in captivity will be a long slow process that demands input from all bird breeders. Once the current situation is known, plans can be made for the future.

It is our hope that the articles and photographs in the *Endangered Species* issue of the *Watchbird* will inspire you toward a more serious effort to work with the rare birds of the world. A few aviculturists and a number of zoos and public institutions have already recognized their responsibilities to our vanishing birds. Visit your zoos, talk to the concerned aviculturists, support the A.F.A. We are all pulling together for the survival of irreplaceable, beautiful birds that we love.



So the plight of the endangered birds won't be just a passing thought in your mind, the A.F.A. is preparing an *Endangered Species Portfolio*. This portfolio will contain many beautiful photographs that will bring joy and aesthetic pleasure to you and at the same time will serve as a reminder of what the world stands to lose. Also included will be knowledgeable capsules regarding the status of each bird in the wild, its success in captivity and as much pertinent data as can be compiled. Look for further details in the next *Watchbird*!