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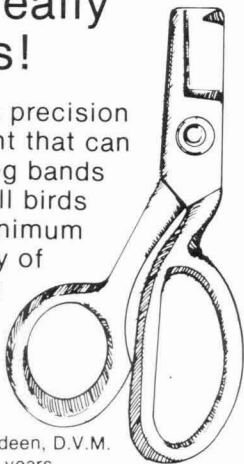
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by Sheldon Dingle

## The Hawaiian Goose

Most of us, no doubt, are keen on aviculture or we wouldn't be reading (or writing) this article. For some of us, however, it is almost impossible to comprehend the current status of world affairs and how they radically and instantly affect our own little backyard lives. Thirty years ago American oil companies pumped oil out of the mid-eastern deserts while the locals had camel races and popped a few rifle shots at stray members of the neighboring tribe. Now when the locals fight or get their heads together we have to line up at the gas pumps. Just so, a few years ago a Jean Delacour could mount an expedition and capture the birds he wanted and a Francis Billie could visit the local animal exchange and choose from an unrestricted flow of imported exotic birds. Now our borders are closed except for a few government regulated quarantine stations and many countries prohibit the export of an ever lengthening list of birds.

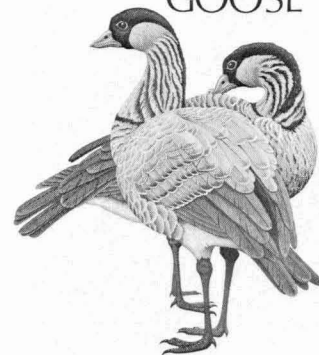
Times have changed. We may lament the good old days of thirteen-cents-a-gallon gas and unregulated traffic in birds but we can't bring them back. While most of the businesses, industries and, yes, even hobbies, have changed with the times I keep thinking aviculture has not changed much. The government estimates there are twenty million bird breeders in this country. Of course, several thousand aviculturists in the vanguard *do* think along more modern, technically advanced lines but where are the others? The world has shrunk to the point that virtually every endeavor has an effect on all of the others. This creates a great deal of overlap and conflict between various interests. And in our scientifically and technically oriented society the proponent who puts forth the

greatest bulk of data (even if on close examination the data are erroneous) usually prevails.

A case in point is the ludicrous proposal the Fish and Wildlife Service intends to present at New Delhi. Their backup data are laughable—but where is aviculture's solidly researched refutation? Where are the facts and figures to support aviculture's claims? At present, they seem to be almost nonexistent. The entire bulk of avicultural literature is miniscule compared to that of other endeavors of similar importance and the avicultural literature that has any scientific validity is very rare indeed. It is not easy to argue with Fish and Wildlife Service and their shabby "scientific" support if we present nothing at all.

The point I am trying to pound gently into your cranium is that the old laissez-faire days are gone. We must pull ourselves into conformity with modern methodology. At present, aviculture moves from crisis to crisis like an emotional yo-yo. When a sufficient threat appears we mobilize in a panic and try to scream the enemy down. Our blood-curdling shrieks have been remarkably successful thus far but they will become less and less efficacious in the future. The governmental bodies (our chief opponents) are piling on the insulation and I fear the Fish and Wildlife Service even now doesn't hear us. To get their attention we will have to rap their heads with our walking sticks and have our good scientists jam irrefutable evidence under their noses.

## The HAWAIIAN GOOSE



Janet Kear & A. J. Berger

Now, patient reader, all of the above merely serves as an introduction to a book that will give you a very good idea of the sort of data we must accumulate. The book is *The Hawaiian Goose* by Janet Kear and A. J. Berger, published by Buteo Books, Vermillion, South Dakota 57069. This book is an excellent example of the sort of literature that aviculture

should produce for *all* of the rarer species of birds in captivity. At present, the zoos and other public bird breeders are about the only ones keeping decent records. An occasional privately funded group such as the Wildlife Trust at Slimbridge also contributes to the avicultural scientific literature. The millions of breeders in the private sector could add immensely to this literature if they knew how. To my mind, *The Hawaiian Goose* is an outstanding pattern or lesson book to familiarize the average aviculturist with good avicultural techniques. I recommend every serious breeder get and study the volume.

Fortunately, the book is eminently readable. It is written in a smooth flowing style that you'll really enjoy. It is packed with fascinating history and personalities and the footnotes are a positive delight to a collector of trivia such as I.

One note, for instance, explains that the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands) were named after the British First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Sandwich. He is famous, of course, for inventing the sandwich when he had his servant place a piece of meat between two pieces of bread so he could stay longer at the gaming tables. Another fascinating note explains the Hawaiian monarchy in brief

and mentions that Princess Kaiulani was heir to the throne when the Hawaiian Monarchy was abolished in 1893. My dear friends, it seems incredible that one of our present fifty states had its own king less than ninety years ago.

Well, fascinating notes aside, *The Hawaiian Goose* tells a story of how the islands were formed, where the nene probably came from, how the islands were colonized and "civilized," and how the nene were reduced from a population of about 25,000 to about 30 birds from the 18th century to the 1940s. The book continues the story then, by relating in detail (which system of detailing is precisely what we should assimilate) how a two pronged effort, governmental and private, proceeded to slowly build up the birds' population by captive breeding.

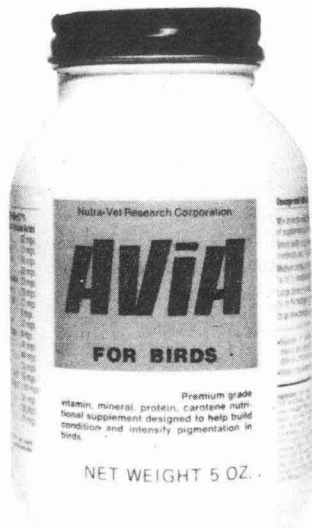
The book is primarily a valid report on the status of the goose in the wild and in captivity when various and sundry people decided at last to take steps to save it. The volume has six chapters that tell the whole store, 1) The Hawaiian Islands, 2) The Hawaiian Goose or Nene, 3) The Nene in Captivity (especially in Hawaii), 4) The Nene at Slimbridge, 5) The Release of Captive-Reared Nene, 6) The Experiment in Conservation. The last

thirty or so pages are appendices which include sections on endemic, extinct, rare and endangered Hawaiian birds, weights of adult nene, measurements of Slimbridge adult nene, the egg and clutch size of nene, gosling weights, nene breeding performance in captivity, mortality of Slimbridge nene, and rainfall at Keauhou and Kahuku sanctuaries. These statistics tell the story in great detail and are just the sort of data all aviculturists should compile on all of their rare birds. If we had such data we could present a very strong case, indeed, in favor of aviculture.

*The Hawaiian Goose* is not a book on bird art. It contains twenty pages of black and white photos and one beautiful color plate and there are many very well done line drawings but the thrust of the book is more toward a report on the nene than an illustration of it in living color. I recommend the book for its well written, vastly interesting report on how the nene was saved and also for the excellent avicultural techniques it exposes. To my notion, *The Hawaiian Goose* is one book that every serious aviculturist should study thoroughly—again and again. It is one of the first literary steps in the right direction.

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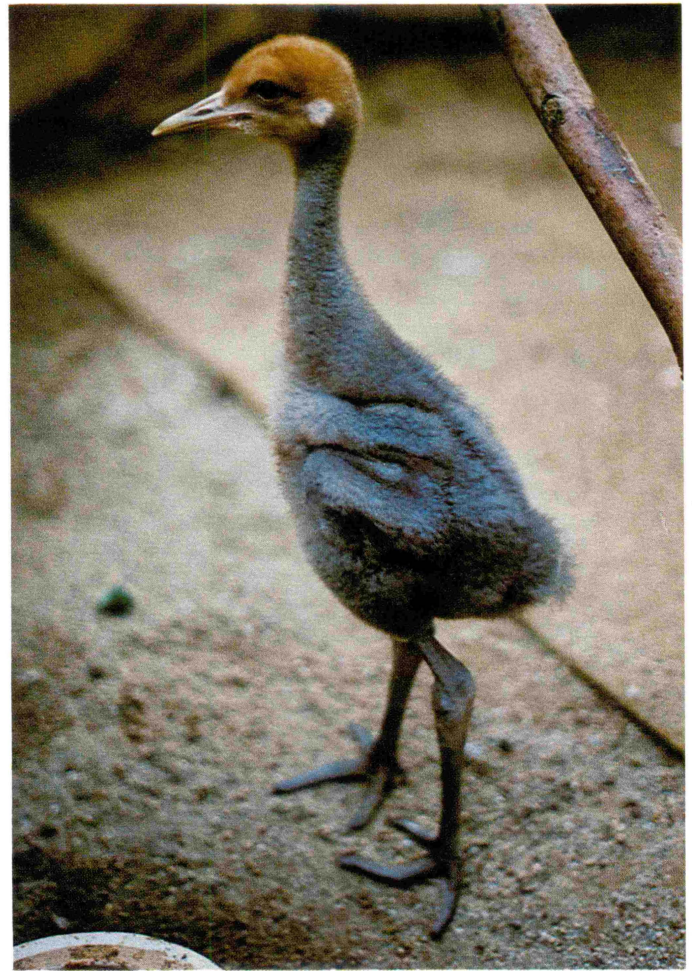
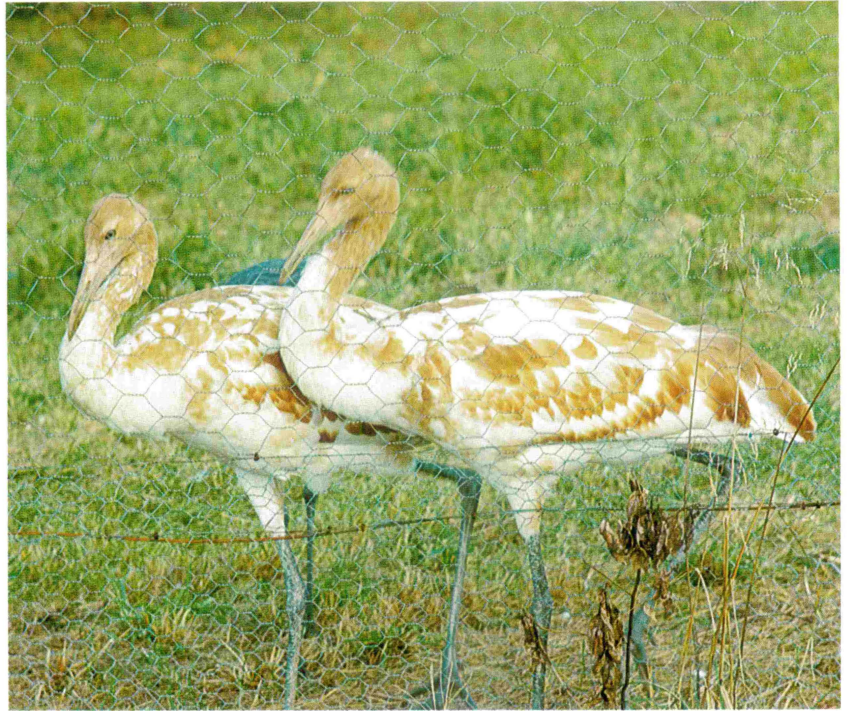
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*Sandhill crane adult.*

*One year old whooping cranes.*



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*Whooping crane adult.*

Photos courtesy of Dale Thompson, Calif.