

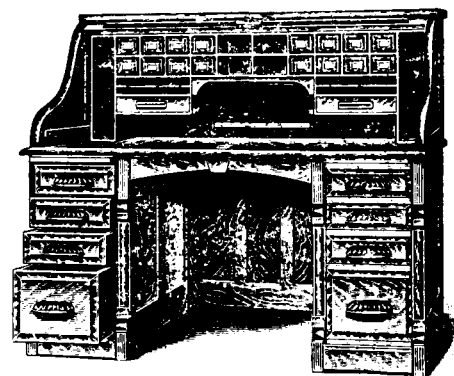
NOTICE

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



Somewhere along the line I'm sure each of you has encountered a task so formidable that the more you looked at it the less you did about it. Such was the state of the editor's desk. After months of pondering great piles of paperwork, I at last went into a frenzy of raking and burning. A

great bonfire reduced my printable mail to the following items. (Unfortunately, it also reduced my eyebrows and hair to frizzled twigs, but that is another matter.)

Please give these surviving documents your closest perusal.

Dear Editor,

I would like to reply to Ralph V. Smith (Dec 80/Jan 81) and address AFA and its readers.

I share Mr. Smith's concern over the nutritional unknown. The problem is there hasn't been a lot of blood samples available for testing and the results compiled. The science and technology for running nutritional analysis is known. Aviculturists need to make blood samples available for testing.

AFA is critically needed to direct and assist in a program such as this. I would like to see AFA set the standards for a nutritional testing program by blood. For example, Protein Level, 1 ml. serum required, normal levels 3.8 to 6.0, test method; Kjeldahl Nitrogen Analysis, keep refrigerated, not to exceed 3 days old, etc...

I wanted to find out how good (or bad) my hand feeding formula was in protein, so my vet drew blood for protein testing. The results came back 4.0, low side of normal. I changed my formula (increased the meat) and ran a second protein level 2 months later and the results came back 5.2. The lab test showed me which formula gave my babies enough protein.

Aviculturists are needed to provide the samples and forward the results to AFA with a history of the bird, age, sex (if known) *diet*, and condition at the time the sample is taken (breeding, moult, sick, in-

jured, etc.). AFA could then compile and publish the results. Hopefully these results will give us the knowledge and guidelines for which we are looking.

Kathy VerBeck
N. Canton, OH

Your advice seems very good. Such a program would benefit aviculture greatly if it works as well as you suggest. I suggest you write a formal letter to AFA president, Dr. Richard E. Baer, and encourage him to explore this concept with our scientific research committee.

And since that old aviculturist, author, and rabble-rouser Ralph Smith set this thing off, I suggest that his blood be tested first. If it pans out we can go on to test his birds.

Ed.



In the first 6 months of 1980 permits were issued for the legal importation of 106,868 parrots which included, at least, 20,000 for the genus *Amazona*. *

Dear Dr. Baer,

I enjoyed being in the presence of so many concerned aviculturalists at AFA's last convention in Las Vegas and would like to thank everyone in AFA for the op-

portunity to speak.

I can't help but wonder if, in the years ahead, the history books will record two important dates: the 1430s when Nezahualcoyotl collected a zoo of strange animals, the first in the New World, the 1980s when animals were no longer allowed into the United States and zoos began to die.

It may sound a bit fictitious, but with no internal breeding and with importations increasing, natural populations certainly can't be expected to hold-up. Deer are managed for harvesting, but parrots must endure both native pressures of habitat destruction, pet and pot demands, and also the foreign pet trade. That noted attribute of humans, lack of foresight, will destroy aviculture in America if it is not checked now.

Two points greatly disturb me in regards to the activity of AFA. First, I have been pushing for the sale of a poster (such as the great one I saw on the wall at the convention) to provide funds for projects, etc.

Secondly, throughout the Christmas season I have traveled throughout Texas and some other southern states and made a point to stop in pet stores. The chances that a person entering a pet store and purchasing a pet bird will see any proof that AFA exists are very close to zero. With AFA members in most large cities, why is there no evidence of AFA's existence in places where the public buys our specialty?

I certainly hope we are not getting to the stage of some other organizations to which I belong that publish a journal and nothing more.

The main point of this lengthy letter is once again to appeal to the Officers of AFA to support scientific research in the field. Let me remind you of your logo dedicated to *conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research and education of the general public.*

Let me concentrate on parrots, specifically *Amazona*. We are not dealing with a domesticated bird. The present captive diet for parrots is derived from poultry science adapted to the present whim of parrot owners. The fact is that we are taking a bird from the wild, changing not only its diet, but its surroundings and then wondering why it doesn't become reproductively active the first year. I am frankly surprised that we have had any success at all! Our parrot, prior to its capture, did not eat the same thing every day. Parrots travel from area to area, from tree species to species as the various fruits become edible. I am not aware of any fruiting plant that fruits year-round. At some times the parrots have little variety, at others a great deal. With some species its the same cycle of food stuff year after year. You can't help but wonder what physiological effect this has on the bird. And when we get it and change its diet how does that affect it?

A study needs to be conducted on the cycle of nutrient intake in parrots. I would not be surprised that in the future we have a Yellow-head diet and a Red-lored diet that is as different as canary and parakeet now. Such a study would be the greatest single effort that AFA could make to restore our reputation in the scientific community. I believe that AFA could raise the money from within our membership and could get a grant from a cooperative effort with the major feed manufacturers for pet birds as they would greatly benefit from such research. Please give such a project some thought. I would gladly chair such a project and work closely with you and other aviculturists to insure its success.

Sincerely,
Jack Clinton Eitniear
McAllen, TX



Dear Sheldon:

The preceding letter was sent to me by Jack Clinton Eitniear. Mr Eitniear brings up several matters which I think must be of

interest to all AFA members and aviculturists. They are of great concern to me. The first point in regards to the activity of AFA, hopefully, has been taken care of. In the last issue of WATCHBIRD, AFA does offer for sale the beautiful poster which Mr. Eitniear so admired at our convention. My question is: How many of our readers have taken advantage of this offer and have sent for theirs? There should be one posted in every bird room. I like the suggestion that the sale of these posters should be so priced that it would provide funds for projects, etc.

Mr. Eitniear's second observation that AFA needs to be better publicized in many parts of the country is one in which I fully concur. Every AFA member should be an AFA promoter. Each AFA member should have membership brochures in his bird house and give them out to everyone who comes by for a visit. Brochures are free for the asking from the Home Office. The promotion of AFA is in the personal interests of all bird breeders if aviculture is to survive as we now know it.

I, as president of AFA, am fully in accord with Mr. Eitniear's appeal for the need to support scientific research in the field. I appreciate his offer to chair such a project if the Board should give its approval for the work.

I do contend that there is more captive breeding of bird wildlife than is acknowledged by those who would discredit what is being achieved. True, this needs to be greatly further stimulated. It is through the AFA national breeding registry and with each breeder registering his birds that the true statistics can be compiled and the first giant step toward the encouragement of bird wildlife conservation through captive breeding can be taken.

Sincerely,
Richard E. Baer, D.V.M.
President, AFA

I concur with Jack Eitniear and Dr. Baer on both points — the AFA, through posters and other means should be publicized better, and the AFA could render a great service to aviculture if it could sponsor field research on avian nutrition.

P.R. and research, however, take a lot of money. Selling our poster is a good idea, but I'd rather sell it to the millions of American bird lovers who at present don't know we exist. We could use the fresh money.

The AFA is too large and too important to function off of the kitchen table. We need a professional P.R. firm that could get us newspaper, magazine, radio and

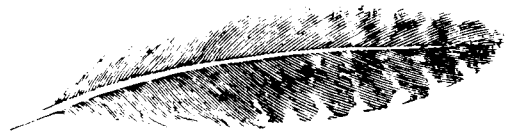
television coverage. If we depend upon volunteer labor and bird room posters to expand our horizons, we will all be extinct before the goal is reached.

Five years ago Lee Horton and Joe deAguiar envisioned a huge organization with a high-rise world headquarters building and a large well-paid staff of professionals. They even suggested we buy a modest piece of property as a beginning. We could have done it. If we had, the organization would be worth a small fortune now, what with the radical increase in property values.

My point is that the AFA must be run like a private-enterprise business, not like a government bureaucracy. There are hundreds of tax-exempt non-profit organizations that earn millions of dollars per year — pay their pros and funnel the remaining funds into their pet projects.

We must do likewise or perish.

Ed.



Dear Sirs:

As a follow up to an article in your last issue of the WATCHBIRD by Bradly G. Dalton, "Spectral-Analysis as a Diagnostic Tool for Birds", I wanted to add a few words.

First I want to thank you and Mr. Dalton for submitting and publishing the article. I've had a Blue & Gold Macaw that has had a feather problem for the past two years. He appears to be going through a molt year round with downy insulating feathers showing. We've tried everything to relieve the problem but nothing seemed to help. We knew it was not from boredom because "Chip" gets plenty of love and attention.

After reading Mr. Dalton's article, I called him by phone and discussed the matter. His bird seemed identical to mine as to the problems they were having; eating good, no sign of infection, plenty of exercise and toys, but looked feather plucked. I then got feather samples of "Chip", my "sick" bird along with feather samples of one of my other birds which was healthy and in good feather. I sent these two samples to Dr. Arthur Furman of A&A Laboratory in Washington, D.C. to perform a spectral-analysis.

The results came back showing that the comparison of the two birds were similar in nutrient minerals except for one — the aluminum content of the "sick" bird was at a toxic level, more than twice that of the "healthy" bird. The "sick" bird had a lower level of lead content also, but this is prob-

ably due to the toxic level of Al and the fact that both Al and Pb (lead) are positive ions. The values on the printout from the analysis are only relative (thus the reason for submitting two samples) because the computer was set up for testing human values.

Thus, I hope we've discovered the answer to the bird's problem. His CAGE!! Chip has been in a very nice aluminum cage for a little over two years. Mr. Dalton's cockatoo had also been living in an aluminum cage. Of all my birds, Chip was the only one subjected to this type cage and the only bird to suffer with any problems. I just wish we had known earlier about aluminum toxicity and how dangerous it is for our feathered friends. My household would never be the same without this very special Blue & Gold Macaw. I hope you can print this article to give all other avian lovers warning about their birds' environment.

Both samples from the analysis revealed that the specimens were males. I know for fact that one of the birds is a male but am not sure about the macaw. Maybe this will prove to be a new way to determine sex without surgery, but more research will have to be done on this subject.

Thanking you again for your beautiful magazine,
J.B. Brown, II
Ahoskie, NC



Dear Sheldon:

Several letters submitted to WATCH-BIRD have inquired about the proceedings which were supposed to have been published following the First International Birds in Captivity Symposium (March 8-12, 1978) held in Seattle. This excellent symposium was primarily sponsored by the International Ecological Conservation Foundation, Jan R. van Oosten, General Director; about 400 people were in attendance. This was indeed a highly successful symposium bringing together people of diverse interests and approaches to aviculture, but all intent on sharing knowledge and experience with captive birds. The majority of us shelled out money for the proceedings which never materialized, although we were led to believe that proceedings were, in fact, forthcoming.

To make a long story short, when it became readily apparent that Mr. van Oosten was not going to complete the pro-

ject, nor would our money be refunded, a few of us decided to act. Registered letters to Mr. van Oosten seeking all the manuscripts were never answered so an effort was made to obtain copies of all the manuscripts from the authors. Being an inveterate pack rat, I had squirreled away a copy of the program and using that as a starting point, contact with the authors was made. After months of correspondence, about 50 of the papers have been received and Steve Wylie, Luis Baptista, Nate Gale and I, have begun the editorial chores. There was initially a great concern as to how this project was going to be funded (since all the money Jan van Oosten collected had disappeared) but publication of the proceedings will now be handled by the International Foundation for the Conservation of Birds. Some of the manuscripts are the original rough copies from which the authors prepared final drafts and thus will need to go through another typing.

It is human nature to shy away from deadlines and although a self imposed target date of end-1980 for the completion of the editing has passed, it is important to note that the project *is* progressing. There are even a few more papers straggling in. If all goes well, the long-awaited proceedings for this symposium will be ready by mid-1981. There will be a charge, but it is doubtful the cost will be nearly as high as we originally paid.

Thus, as I'm sure those who seek the proceedings are now tired of hearing: Patience, please, Patience.

Sincerely,
Arthur C. Risser, Jr., Ph.D.
Curator/Ornithology
Zoological Society of San Diego

Ah, Dr. Risser, a thousand blessings on your head. And equal boons to Wylie, Baptista, and Gale. May your birds be ever prolific!

This is the first good news we have heard since van Oosten migrated. Your good work will be greatly appreciated and will add much of value to the literature of aviculture. We will be very pleased to publish a large announcement regarding how the Proceedings can be obtained when you are ready.

Ed.



I have been an aviculturist for just a few short years but I got off to a good start through the help of a very fine man, Dr. Rainer Erhart. A few years ago in

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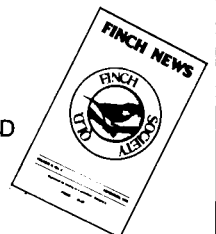
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Muskegon, Michigan, I bought a "pair" of peach-faced lovebirds. I followed the directions I found in a book and everything seemed O.K. The only thing left to do was to sit around and wait.

My patient waiting stretched out to several weeks with nothing happening. Then one day I walked into the bird room and saw the two birds mating. Soon there were seven eggs. To be sure the forthcoming babies got proper treatment I called around town for some advice. Someone finally told me to call Dr. Rainer Erhart. I did and he was very nice and helpful. I explained by situation and followed his advice only to find out that all of the eggs were infertile. Soon five more eggs were laid so I called Dr. Erhart. In about three minutes he told me what the problem was — I probably had two hens. He invited me to visit his place and see if we couldn't solve this little problem.

At the appointed hour we arrived at his home and were shown into his aviaries. I thought I was just going to die. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I pride myself on nice clean flights but the Erhart aviaries were so spotless that I was dumbfounded. They were immaculate. I didn't even move for about three minutes. I just stood there with my mouth gaping open at all of the beautiful birds. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine so many different kinds of lovebirds. And all of them were in perfect feather.

To solve my pair problem, I got a beautiful split to lutino male and a normal male that eventually paired up with my two hens and gave me many beautiful young. Thanks to Dr. Erhart, I was off to a good start in aviculture. He spent a lot of time explaining things and helping me get started. It is my sincerest hope that all newcomers to aviculture will be fortunate enough to run into as fine a gentleman and knowledgeable an aviculturist as Dr. Erhart is. Thanks again for everything, Dr. Erhart.

Kevin and Janice Kerr
Chula Vista, CA

You know and I know that I edited a couple of paragraphs of superlatives about Dr. Erhart out of your letter. Of course I know him well and agree with all you said but too much praise could go to a fellow's head. At present Dr. Erhart is a very fine professor in his field and an excellent specialty editor for the WATCH-BIRD. If he read the deleted accolades he might decide to run for President of the U.S. or even King of the World — and we need him so much right here where he can do so much good for aviculture.

Ed.



Dear Mr. Dingle.

Last week, I got my first issue (Dec80/-Jan81) of AFA WATCHBIRD magazine. I read every word and picked up new ideas on avian health I'm going to try to see and how they work with my birds. Plus the ever-so-informative articles and beautiful, framable pictures of different birds.

I would love to see your magazine go to monthly rather than bimonthly, even if it meant a 100% increase of dues. I get lots of other bird bulletins and magazines, but yours is the very best.

Thank you for such a very superior magazine.

Marcia Lee Harmon
Pacifica, CA

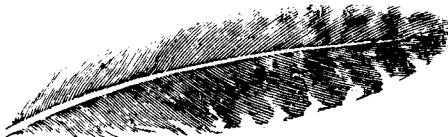
Thank you very much for your kind words. My associates do all of the work and I receive all of the glory. I love it.

Eventually, of course, we will publish on monthly basis. The magazine is an important addition to the avicultural literature — thanks to the many world-class experts who write for us.

The AFA is, however, much more than a publishing company. Its basic structure includes machinery for education, legislative monitoring, scientific research, compilation of avicultural data, and myriad other projects.

From a personal position of unbiased, pure objectivity, though, I agree with you. We should double our dues, double my salary, and double the work of my associates. You, madame, are a very perspicacious young woman.

Ed.



Dear Editor:

May I use this forum to express my sincere appreciation to all the officials of American Federation of Aviculture for their continuing efforts to preserve, protect and increase the numbers of our beautiful exotic birds by educating the public through the excellent articles in the WATCHBIRD and, also, their continued efforts to educate our government representatives in Washington regarding just, humane and fair policies toward

aviculture and attendant industry in the U.S.?

I refer to the recent Exotic Newcastle outbreak in the autumn of 1980 and the shameful and unnecessary, in my opinion, destruction of thousands of healthy, rare birds by the USDA Task Force in their costly and futile efforts to protect the poultry industry in this country.

I find it rather ludicrous that I, and many other aviculturists, work so hard with out small captive breeding programs in our desperate attempt to save from extinction a few of these lovely creatures, while our government officials continue to exterminate the species at every opportunity that presents itself, at enormous cost to the American Taxpayer, through their inhumane and senseless approach to the problem of Exotic Newcastle.

I am sure I speak for many when I say I am proud to be a member of the American Federation of Aviculture and I salute the WATCHBIRD, a publication not afraid to "tell it like it is".

Sincerely,
Jo Hall
Thorndale, TX

"You can't fight City Hall", is a phrase that was undoubtedly coined by City Hall itself. The AFA's unremitting fight against government injustices has proved that maxim a lie. "City Hall" won't be whipped in one whack though. It takes long, steady pressure and a dogged determination to sway the direction of government momentum.

Thoreau accepted the motto — "that government is best which governs least" and he added — "that government is best which governs not at all". Of course none of us believes that in this complex day and age our society can ever reach that Utopian state of non-government. Even Thoreau himself said, "I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government". I think that most of us feel the same way. Indeed, the recent elections indicate that most people feel that way.

The AFA has been a formidable adversary to various governmental agencies that hitherto have run roughshod over the little known avicultural interests. But over the past eight years we have, in truth, made the government sit up and take notice of us. We have caused it to modify some of its policies in our favor.

Through the exceedingly valuable work of Dr. Richard Baer and Cliff Witt, we have made some friends in government. The AFA and the various agencies of the federal government can now enter into a dialogue to help resolve some of our differences.

We can and do fight "City Hall". But better yet, we may even be able to reform it. Our strength lies in our members who, like you, are still outraged and angered by stupid governmental excesses.

The AFA is proud of its members like you, Jo Hall.

Ed.



Dear Mr. Dingle,

This is a hurried note to advise you that today I received in the mail a copy of "Information Report" Winter 1980-81 Vol. 29 No. 4. The publishers of this report are based in Washington D.C. (P.O. Box 3650, zip code 20007).

The first part of the report is a fairly correct account of smuggling and the Newcastle problems. The back page, however, has a cartoon with a parrot saying, "Pity Polly - Pity Polly". I couldn't believe it.

The back page also included the following quotes; "Only 20% of wild caught parrots netted in the forest or plucked from their nests as fledglings live long enough to be sold to pet owners across the counter of a pet shop and most of these die within a year".

"The industry is also repeating previous claims that trade in birds helps prevent extinction. These claims are entirely bogus. 90% of all birds imported are sold as single pets. And few of the remaining 10% which go to zoos and research are used for captive breeding".

They make no mention of the hundreds of thousands of bird breeders across the country. The article pictures everyone getting rich on birds. I am furious. I wrote them a letter stating my case for bird breeding but I thought the AFA ought to know about this.

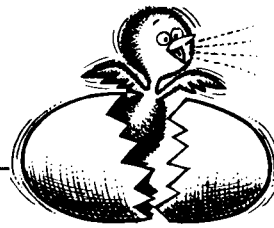
Mary M. Menser
Plantation, FL

You point out just one incident among hundreds where publicity and propaganda are directed against the bird fancy. Our enemies are legion.

Quite often they speak from ignorance. And it is our fault they are ignorant. The AFA will confront our opponents with valid data to support captive breeding AS SOON AS YOU SUPPLY THAT DATA TO THE AFA ANNUAL BIRD REGISTRY.

The ball, my fellow aviculturists, is in our court.

Ed.



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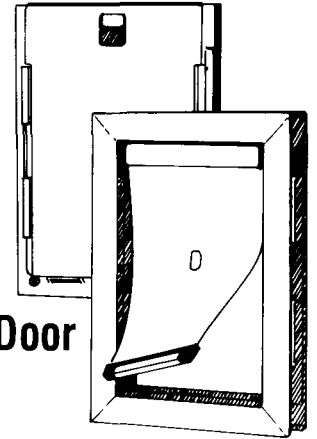
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