

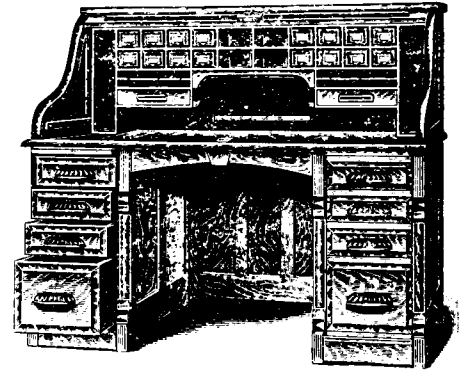
NOTICE

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



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

I hope, gentle reader, that in this issue you have noticed a couple of new additions. We have a "From the Field" series submitted by Jack Clinton Eitniewar of McAllen Texas. Jack spends a great deal of time doing research in the wilds south of the border. You are, no doubt, already familiar with the many articles Jack has published in Watchbird and we're glad to have a good field man working with us. You will also notice that the canary expert Tony Bucci has finally agreed to serve as a canary editor for us. Tony's series "Canary Culture" on the various aspects of the canary fancy has made him one of the most widely read canary men around.

We are very pleased to have these two fellows come aboard and lend their expertise to the "Watchbird."

Authorities Are Struggling Against Growing Trade in Rare and Endangered Wildlife

By THOMAS O'TOOLE
the Washington Post

WASHINGTON—When Philadelphia reptile dealer Henry Molt met his shipment of almost 1,000 iguanas, crocodiles, pythons, death adders and monitor lizards at a New York pier, he was questioned at length by customs agents about why such rare reptiles arrived by way of Switzerland.

Molt's answers did not satisfy Customs Service officials, and an agent was sent to Philadelphia to check Molt's records. The agent was not satisfied; there was something fishy about the way Molt kept records, about the documentation on the rare tortoises from Madagascar and the even rarer iguanas from the Fiji Islands.

Pressed for more answers, Molt gathered up the iguanas and lizards he had not sold and bolted for the Pine Barrens of New Jersey, where he killed and

buried the reptiles. Right behind him, customs agents dug up the evidence and took their case against Molt to the Justice Department.

Nine-Month Sentence

Molt was sentenced by a federal judge in Philadelphia to nine months in jail for criminal violation of laws protecting the growing number of endangered and threatened species of animals the world over.

Molt is one of a growing number of dealers in rare animals, especially reptiles and birds, who are being fined and imprisoned for smuggling animals into the United States from tropical habitats and for illegally dealing in indigenous animals protected by the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

"The courts have begun to treat this illegal dealing in rare wildlife as a serious criminal activity," said Kenneth Berlin, chief of the two-year-old wildlife section of the Justice Department's land division. "We are now getting stiffer sentences, substantial fines and longer periods of probation for wildlife violations."

Berlin estimates the illegal traffic in rare wildlife in the United States at between \$50 million and \$100 million a year.

Big Trade in Parrots

He said that between 25,000 and 50,000 parrots alone are smuggled into the country every year from Mexico and Central America, that 100,000 poisonous snakes are illegally shipped through the mails every year and that the traffic in such endangered and threatened domestic birds as bald eagles, scissortail flycatchers, broadwinged hawks, Carolina parakeets and condors is on the increase.

The largest illegal traffic is in reptiles and birds, in part because of the proliferation of game ranches and private collectors and in part because many species are nearing extinction.

"Some people just want the rarest things and don't care how they get them," Berlin explained. "They don't necessarily make good pets but people want them and will buy them."

The heaviest illegal trade in birds involves parrots and macaws, whose numerous, exotic and colorful species are being plundered for private collectors in record numbers. Rare parrots and macaws fetch as much as \$10,000 apiece, and even more abundant species like the yellow-headed Amazons go for \$1,000 each.

Story Not Swallowed

Not long ago, a dealer was arrested for smuggling 250 parrots from Mexico to California, birds that he said were bred in captivity. An investigation found the parrots were so rare that only a few had ever been bred in captivity. "But he wanted us to believe that he had 250 of this handful in the back of his truck," Berlin said.

A dealer in San Diego was caught with 32 yellow-cheeked Amazons he said he bought from a breeder in Florida. To prove it, he produced an invoice, which was turned over to the FBI for handwriting analysis. The invoice turned out to be written by the dealer.

Since he was already on probation for smuggling 18 parrots into the country a year before, he was ordered to jail on the spot. "The judge didn't even let him go home to get his toothbrush," Berlin said.

The illegal wildlife trade is being fueled by the increasing number of private collectors.

Berlin said that in metropolitan Philadelphia alone there are 500 serious collectors of rare reptiles. He said the membership of the American Federation of Aviculturists (breeders of birds) is now more than 50,000 nationwide.

My dear fellow aviculturists, the above article is an ill-researched, witless

diatribe that casts all of us in a criminal category via the "guilt by association" method.

I don't doubt the data regarding Mr. Molt. It was, no doubt, taken from court records. Likewise for the California crooks that smuggled the parrots. What isn't stated, however, is that most aviculturists and other animal lovers would have preferred to see Mr. Molt buried in the Pine Barrens instead of the rare reptiles. And it's a great pity that the parrot purveyors didn't perish crossing the Rio Grande. Why didn't Thomas O'Toole talk to some of us?

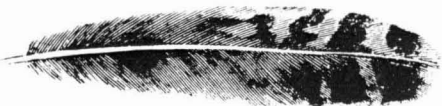
And O'Toole's research looks ridiculous when he alludes to traffic in Carolina parakeets and condors. Why did he leave out the ivory-billed woodpecker and the dodo?

I'll take for granted that Mr. Kenneth Berlin is a perfectly good fellow and I hope he catches every crook on the continent, but SHAME ON HIM for casting aspersions on the A.F.A. We are his staunchest allies.

It is evident that aviculturists are guilty until proven innocent. Once again let me emphasize that the best way we can justify our hobby is to participate wholeheartedly in the Annual A.F.A. Bird Census.

Many thanks to Dave West, Montebello, Ca., for bringing O'Toole's outrage to my attention.

Ed.



Dear Mr. Dingle:

My father sent me a clipping from the Cleveland Plain Dealer which I read with dismay. I am enclosing the clipping. I guess this is what you could call "local harassment."

Sincerely,

Pat Sutherland

Jackson Heights, New York

BIRD WOMAN WILL
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By Katherine L. Siemon

In bird lovers' circles, Lorraine B. Greene is known as the miracle worker.

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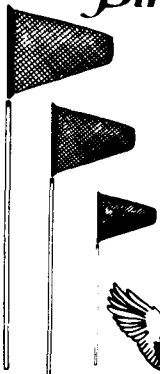
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hurst Municipal Judge Robert J. Grogan ordered her to end her labor of love.

Now she is about to pack up her feathered friends and move on.

Lyndhurst officials claim Greene is violating the city's zoning laws by operating a business out of her home, 1312 Richmond Rd. Neighbors say her hobby is a nuisance.

She pleaded no contest in court to the zoning violation and was ordered to stop selling any birds and advertising in newspapers that her birds are for sale. She faces a fine of up to \$750, which Grogan decided to suspend if she moves.

"For years I raised birds in other cities and never had any problem," Greene said. "We've lived in Lyndhurst for two years, and I can't wait to leave. It is just the wrong town."

Greene's problems began when neighbors contacted health officials, saying they feared seed Greene leaves for wild birds outside her home might attract rats. They also said a foul odor came from the house during warm weather.

Charges were filed by the city when residents complained of traffic from visitors and trucks delivering bird-related goods, said prosecutor Irl Rubin.

Greene's classified ad selling Coconut, her pet citron-crested cockatoo, led prosecutors to believe the breeding was as much business as pleasure. She later decided to keep Coconut. She wants to teach it to roller skate.

"I'm an aviculturist, a breeder who disposes of extra stock," she said. "I don't make any money."

She said she gives some birds away; she trades others and sells a few to help pay for her hobby.

Most of the birds live in cages in her basement set up for breeding. A chosen flock is kept as pets in cages in her living room and inside an extra bedroom converted to her birdroom.

There are the maroon-bellied conures bought specially for breeding and the two baby quakers she is trying to nurture. Many, however, are abused birds which no one wants.

"She works with injured birds," said Anthony Massa, head of the bird department of the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, who takes stray birds to her that the zoo cannot use. "She does miracles with them. If she sells, it is just for fun. She can't be making any money."

Greene and her husband, who says little about her hobby, put a "For Sale" sign in front of their home the day after she got her summons to court. At first, she planned to fight for the principles. Then she decided against fighting City Hall.

"The law is very cold, very cruel," Greene said. "I feel like a criminal, and it's all because I just love animals."

I received several clippings about Mrs. Greene and she has my sympathy. In my mind, however, there is no "harassment." Mrs. Greene is in uncontested violation of local laws and to enforce them is not to harass her.

Now you know as well as I do that a good 75% of the bird breeders are bootlegging their operations. Most of them violate their zoning and business laws, and maybe (God forbid) one or two even beat the I.R.S.

If you're going to drive without a license you don't want to run any red-lights and if you're going to bootleg your birds you don't want to roust your neighbors or local officials.

Ed.



Dear Sir:

We had a double yellow headed parrot, Mexico, and loved him dearly. He was clever, entertaining and quick to learn and we loved him so very much! Well, all of a sudden he would fall, for no reason that we knew of, appetite practically nil, just wasting away. We frantically tried to find *some one* that knew of birds! Well, we found out the hard way that there are vets without honor — he was kept at one vet's (to the tune of a couple of hundred) for a couple of weeks, returned with the remark "probably (?) just had a cold, or something" as he was dying before our eyes. Another one said, after a couple of weeks, "probably (?) has cancer, or something, he's going to die anyway — may as well take him home" — needless to say, I cried all the way home!!! A third one hit the ceiling when I said they did not even take a culture of the droppings. He said he had a parasite — could have been saved — if those people had *cared enough about the bird instead of money!!!* The last one said he was probably born with the parasite!?!? Does it sound to you like a parasite? Why are vets like this? Well, guess doctors for humans are the same — MONEY is the answer to everything — for them!!!

Would appreciate any comment on this matter. I have been taking your magazine for two years now and though I don't raise birds — I like the magazine.

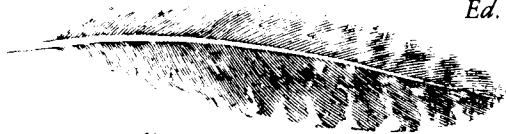
Sincerely,
Mrs. Donald L. Dunlap
Garden Grove, CA 92640

Yes, my friend, it does sound like a parasite problem. Two parasites (posing as vets) took your money and gave you nothing in return. Unfortunately, I feel that about ninety percent of the medical doctors and veterinarians fall into the parasite category. It behooves you to learn all you can about your bird's health and rely upon the vets as little as possible.

On the other hand, I do know a small handful of vets who can do everything but walk on water. Southern California is blessed in having a number of really good bird vets within an easy drive of your home.

Although it's too late to do you any good, it is, indeed, quite possible that "Mexico" died of a parasite infestation. Parasites are very common in nearly all cage and aviary birds although the problem is not difficult to control. Visit your local bird club meetings, talk to breeders, learn their remedies and their recommendations regarding veterinarians. You can prevent this sort of problem recurring should you take up another pet bird.

Ed.



Dear Editor:

I am very interested in learning about any life-after-death experiences people may have had with their pets. In order to aid my research, would you kindly run this notice in your next issue so that I may hear from your readers? If I can get enough responses, I would be glad to let you know the results of my research.

TO THE READERS

I am conducting research concerning pet owners' experiences in communicating with their pets after they have died. I have already received some true and interesting stories through association with animal organizations, colleges, ESP groups, mediums and customers at my pet shop. I am convinced, through my initial research that many such happenings do exist, but many people are afraid to discuss them. Many people are unable to explain how such phenomena do occur and would feel foolish if they discussed them publicly. Any factual life-after-death experiences, recalled in as much detail as possible, involving animal phantoms, animal ghosts, animal spirit hauntings (audio or visual) and any other unusual pet phenomena would be appreciated.

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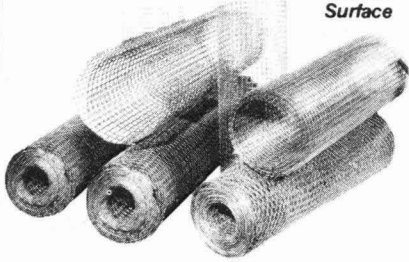
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I appreciate your help in this research by informing your readers of my request.

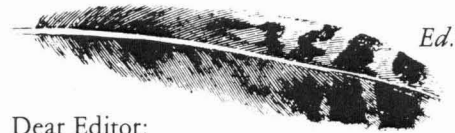
Sincerely, B.J. Spellman

I shan't accuse you of being a weird duck but you have put forth a rather bizarre request. However, as Hamlet said, "...there are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy." If you want to talk to dead dogs - or birds - who am I to object?

You might be interested in my brother's on-going experience with one of his defunct denizens of the aviary. He loved this little parrot so much - its beauty was so exquisite - that he just couldn't bear it when the bird went belly-up. In his staunch effort to stave off despair he affixed the petered-out parrot to a fine thread and suspended it from the roof of the aviary.

Now, as the gentle breeze of the morning wafts through the flight, it urges the extinct avian into an ethereal swinging and swaying - an unearthly dance that brings peace and joy into the heart of my bereaved brother.

He has the added blessing of not having to feed the thing nor clean up after it.



Ed.

Dear Editor:

I take quill to hand to jot a few lines, some of which may be interpreted as complimentary. It is with unmitigated delight that I dash to meet the postman bi-monthly, rummaging hungrily through the stack of bulk rates to feast these rheumy eyes on my copy of the A.F.A. Watchbird.

Alas, though the articles therein are well-written and extremely interesting, 'tis not these that cause tears of joy to slither down my cherubic cheeks. It is the ascerbic wit and fluffy sarcasm of "From the Editor's Desk" that is my pleasure.

I thrill as you slice and dice your way through the mundane. I chortle as you smugly berate the pompous. I gasp as you dare to challenge the status quo. I cringe as you meander off into verbosity.

To summarize, I do thoroughly enjoy your responses. Please continue, full speed ahead!

Sincerely yours,
Darden W. Vaughan
Chesapeake, VA



Dear Editor:

In your rebuttal to James Northern you sounded like a little kid. You obviously let your ego get the better of you. In my opinion, Mr. Northern had every right to correct you. We pay enough for this magazine to expect the scientific names of birds to be right. Even if you don't think it's important, some of us want to get something out of your magazine besides the word "parrot" or a few pretty pictures. A warbler to some may be as interesting as an exotic bird to you. I find your remarks concerning the sparrow insulting.

An unhappy subscriber. (I'd put my name down but you obviously only treat complimentary letters fairly).

P.S. Sorry about your "bush" but can't you leave your homelife out of the magazine? Honestly, no one is interested!

No Name



Dear Sirs:

I attended the A.F.A. convention here in San Diego and bought my first Watchbird there. The biggest reason for joining the A.F.A. is Sheldon Dingle who writes "From the Editor's Desk." I got the Feb/Mar '81 Watchbird in which I read about "Toby" the cockatiel and his reply was priceless. If a guy like that is a member of A.F.A., then, I figured this was the group for me.

Looking forward to the next one.

Sincerely, Marsha Potter

Win a few, lose a few.

Ed. •



In the assembly of type on page 28, Dec/Jan 82 issue, there is a type transposition in the headline of the artist's name. Please accept our humble apologies, Steven Michael Gardner.