

NOTICE

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

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From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle

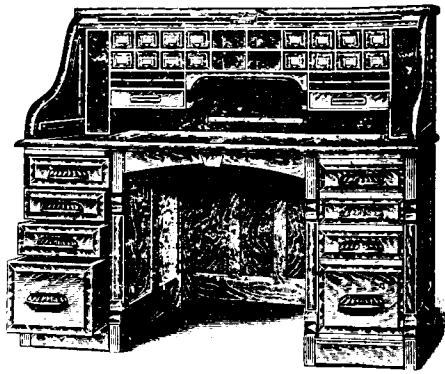
Now that the CITIES controversy has died down, I think it is a good time for the A.F.A. to consider an even more difficult and important problem facing aviculture; namely the appalling conditions that many birds are forced to exist in. I believe that it is imperative that the A.F.A. promote the following two minimal conditions for the keeping of cage birds: 1. That no bird be confined for more than twenty four hours in a cage that has a length less than the birds wingspan. 2. When more than one bird is kept in a cage that there should be a total amount of perch space no less than the combined wingspans of the birds.

As any observant aviculturist knows, enlightened self-interest does not always prevail in the bird trade or in government quarantine stations. Either through greed or ignorance, many establishments and individuals will accept a high death rate among their birds rather than add additional space.

It is common knowledge that stress can kill birds if they are overcrowded or too closely confined. Stressed birds are also more susceptible to disease and self mutilation.

Many of the groups that oppose importation of birds do so for humane reasons and they have a point. To assure future imports we must be on record for promoting the welfare of birds in captivity. At the risk of being labeled a bleeding heart, I would like to submit that we need to assure the increased survival of the birds we already import before asking that restrictions be loosened. It is in the interests of all aviculturists to help reduce the terrific losses of birds as they are imported, quarantined and marketed. If birds are worth breeding, they are worth taking care of!

The A.F.A. has a great record of service to aviculture. Its influence extends far beyond its membership list. If the A.F.A. can begin to define minimal conditions for the keeping of cage birds,



government agencies, retail outlets and individuals are sure to follow.

Bradly G. Dalton
A.F.A. Virginia State Coordinator



Dear Mr. Dingle:

That sand grouse drink as pigeons do, by sucking, and that they are the only birds to do so (*Watchbird*, Oct./Nov. '82, p. 50), is one of those venerable inaccuracies passed down from writer to writer so long that everyone believes them even in the face of contrary evidence.

Sand grouse in fact drink like chickens, by gulping beakfulls of water and then raising the head to swallow. Ten years ago Charles Sibley of Yale University, in studying the relationships of these birds, determined that they did not drink like pigeons at all. (He concluded, by the way, that they were probably closer to plovers than to pigeons.) Two nights ago I watched the documentary "River of Sand" on PBS and saw with my own eyes several sequences of huge flocks of sand grouse flying in from the desert and drinking by gulping and raising the beak—just like chickens.

Furthermore, both Klaus Immelman and Curt Af Enehjelm list several species of Australian finches that do drink by sucking like pigeons. Immelman speculates that these finches may have evolved this trait because they habitually drink by hanging downwards over the water from a reed or branch and wouldn't be able to raise the head in this position. Enehjelm lists these species as the zebra, the diamond sparrow, the star finch, and the masked grassfinch.

Sincerely yours, Hal Bruce
Winterthur Museum
Winterthur, DE 19735

Dear Ed.,

Sounds to me as though the acid kitties, who cannot stand any humor in their lives, are being mean to you.

I am not positive but it sounds as though you may not be going to give your kooky comments about letters in the future. The articles are great but without your brand of humor the magazine will only be worth half as much. I get a lot of chuckles out of your comments and I like to giggle. Have laughed for days over your last silly that editors should be classed as normal people. Now that was a real thigh slapper.

Anyway, let those who can't take it say what they want, no comments when they write but please keep the humor flowing. You can honestly use that old editorial ploy and say that you will continue by "popular request."

Some do like your comments and even think that you are close to being human.

Popular Request, Arkeny, Iowa

I consider this one letter an overwhelming mandate and must yield to the pressure. Thanks, cousin.

Ed.



Dear Editor,

Regarding Jerry Jennings' "Death, Taxes, and Birds" article in the Dec/Jan issue of *Watchbird*. The paragraph on depreciation needs some clarification. The method of figuring depreciation changed as of Dec. 31, 1980. Any item "placed in service" after this date is subject to the new ACRS (accelerated cost recovery system) method. This applied to Federal returns only—each state has its own laws. New in 1982 is an option to "expense" instead of "depreciate" property and equipment up to \$5000.00.

Incorrectly figuring depreciation could cost you money and possibly "flag" an IRS audit. Professional help is highly recommended before claiming your birds as a business. These IRS rule changes are subtle and are often missed even by professional tax people so be sure your preparer is really up to date.

Janice Schwalm
Accountant, Tax Preparer, Santa Ana, Ca

Rest easy my dear accountant. By the time the IRS catches our readers who screwed up their returns Jerry Jennings will be out of law school and looking for people to represent. At present Jennings is menacing the ski slopes and his missing the rule change is completely understandable.

Ed. ●