

# A.F.A. Visits . . .

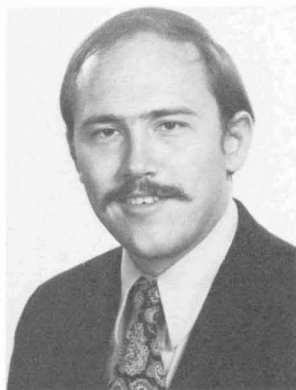
## Jerry Jennings

by Sheldon Dingle  
Norco, California

Many of you old time A.F.A. members think of Jerry Jennings as a dynamic bird-club politician. You remember how he was so vocal and active in forming the A.F.A. and how he served as its first president.

You may be familiar with the countless talks and lectures he's given before bird clubs all across the nation. You recall his testimony before legislators as the A.F.A. fought outrageous proposals. In short, some of you may have forgotten that Jennings is first and foremost a bird breeder - a true and tested aviculturist with much success to his credit.

Aside from a few pigeons Jennings kept as a child, his interest in aviculture began about fourteen years ago during a visit to Bombay, India. A street vendor was selling finches "trained" to sit on a perch. The naive Jennings haggled prices but ultimately



Jerry Jennings, first president and one of the A.F.A. founders.

bought a pair of these marvelously trained tri-colored nuns. Of course the bird's training disappeared as their plucked feathers grew back, but by then Jennings didn't care

- the birds, by now in California at Jennings' home, had begun to propagate and raise babies. Jennings' avicultural avocation was under way.

As Jennings completed his studies he built more and more aviaries. Eventually he entered business and established himself on a one acre location near Los Angeles where he pulled together a very impressive collection of birds.

At first Jennings' interests were focused exclusively on finches and he designed his aviaries to suit their needs. He built a complex of aviaries using 2x2 lumber and 1/2 inch aviary netting. The pens, as I recall, are 8'x8'x8' high. Perhaps the key to Jennings' success with so many species of finches lies in the jungle-like planted flights. The finches were right at home and felt very secure.

As American aviculture expanded, Jennings' interest expanded also and he acquired a number of psittacine species. He specialized in Australian parrots but has since added a number of New World parrots including several pairs of breeding macaws. The aviaries for the parrots, of course, were built of steel and heavy 1/2" x 1" wire. They were not planted. Jennings seems to have the right touch, though, and he has been quite successful in his parrot breeding ventures also.

continued on next page

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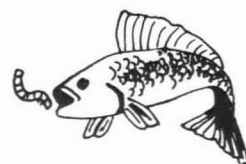
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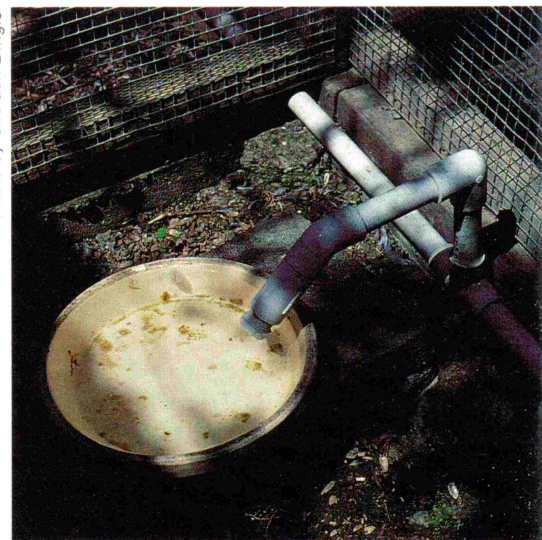
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Always seeking a challenge, and being interested in all types of birds, Jennings began collecting birds of the toucan family. These huge-billed brightly colored birds have always been rather rare in captivity and many species have never been bred. As Jennings became more proficient at keeping the exotic toucans, they began to breed and at this writing Jennings has earned three 1st breeding awards for: the ariel toucan, 1978; the emerald toucanette, 1978; and the green aracari, 1980. The toucans, toucanettes, aracaris and related birds have become Jennings major avian interest.

I would like to have described Jennings' aviaries in more detail but their construction and layout are difficult to talk about. The finch pens were the first complex and are laid out with a horseshoe patterned

Photo by Sheldon Dingle



Jennings' water crocks are filled all at once by the turn of a valve. A sharp jet of water blows the debris out of the crock then a soft stream fills it.

A pair of  
red-sided  
eclectus  
in the nest  
box with  
a newly  
hatched  
baby.



Photo by Jerry Jennings

Toco toucans in a symmetrical pose.  
In this spacious planted aviary, you would think these birds were in their native jungle.



Photo by Sheldon Dingle

aisle having planted finch aviaries on both sides. The accompanying photo gives a vague idea.

Added to the finch complex are long rows of parrot aviaries. There are a couple of free-standing macaw and cockatoo complexes built of pipe and chain link. An old stable serves as a shelter from which very large toucan flights extend. In short, the place is a maze - around each corner there is an additional aviary. Considering the whole batch was put together piecemeal, much of it built with Jennings' own hands, the overall effect is quite pleasing and homogenous. There are over 120 flights in the complex and over 100 species of birds housed therein.

A significant factor in Jennings' breeding success, I feel, is his excellent feeding program. All of the birds have access to a wide variety of seeds. In addition they receive a daily supplement of mixed vegetables and, for the frugivores, a portion of diced fruit. The parrots get apples and oranges when in season. The fruit and vegetable portions are sprinkled with vitamin powder. Some of the birds are fed pinkies or other live food according to their needs. Even I, who never skimp regarding bird food, was somewhat astonished by the variety and quality of food Jennings feeds his birds. The cost, too, was a factor that could inhibit a lesser aviculturist. The fact that Jennings travels a great deal does not affect the care of his birds. He always has one or more resident employees who lavish care and attention on the birds.

Although many of you think of Jerry Jennings as a quick-witted, hustle-bustle bird club politician, never forget that behind the scenes he is, indeed, an aviculturist of the first order. No one can fail to be impressed by a visit to his Walnut Acres Aviaries. ●



Nest log for keel bill toucans.

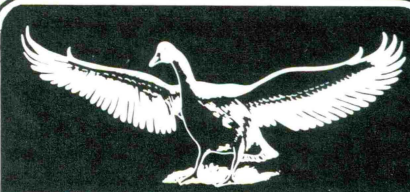


Breeding pair of keel bill toucans.



Looking down an aisle in the finch complex. The aviaries on each side are heavily planted and often contain just one pair of rare finches.

Photos by Jerry Jennings



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