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NOTICE

All correspondence
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of the Watchbird
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to his address.

Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 340
Norco, CA 91760

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle

My dear readers, as you all know I am a very conservative gentle soul not given to fits of outrage and display. Moderate is the word for Dingle, modest, servile, humble and harmless. But on rare occasions of severe provocation a sardonic demon rises in me and I become a towering inferno spewing erudite epithets. I also become totally P.O.'d. The following letter roused the demon and I am not responsible for the response.

Dear Sir,

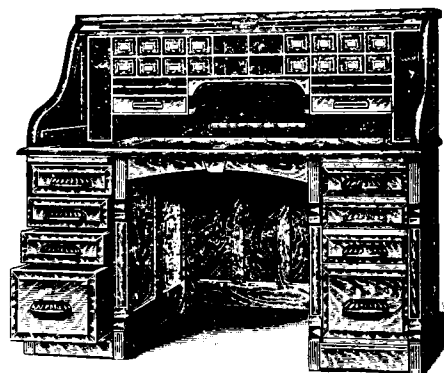
Having been a subscriber of your mag. for a year I find it very uninteresting. I raise parakeets and cockatiels and I haven't seen or read one article concerning either. Personally, I think I should have my money back. As a member of two bird clubs here in Phoenix whose members raise cockatiels and budgies mostly, can't understand why your magazine don't contain articles on them.

Yours truly,

L.J.H. Phoenix, Arizona

First off, my unhappy, uninterested friend you are not a subscriber to our mag.. You are a member of the American Federation of Aviculture, the most worthwhile, active, prestigious, protective, progressive organization in the entire known world for the benefit of bird breeders. If, dear sir, you are a bird breeder your scanty membership fee got you a tremendous bargain even if you never saw a magazine.

For you the A.F.A. battled the U.S.D.A. and won. For you the A.F.A. squeezed officials in Washington and helped save the little Tabitian lorries from destruction. For you the A.F.A. assembles world class experts each year to speak and teach about birds. For you the A.F.A. has funded avian research toward the development of a vaccine against Budgerigar Fledgling Disease. For you the A.F.A. granted funds for research on solid food requirements and water tolerances of



cockatiel chicks from hatching to five weeks of age (getting right next to you now, eh what, old buddy?) For you . . . Oh, Rats! Why go on? If you don't understand now you never will.

Back to the magazine and your lack of interest. In a panic I did a quick survey of the 1983 articles on birds and found articles on the following: honey creeper, canaries (three articles), crows (two species), pionus parrots, hornbills, budgies (two articles), lovebirds (two articles), conures (two articles), Buffon's macaw, ocellated turkey, shaft tailed finches, black parrots, toucans, goldbreasted waxbills, kakarikis, scarlet macaws, African finches, raptors, dwarf macaws, little black crane, banana quit, slender billed cockatoo, Indian ringnecks, and cockatiel mutations.

If that wide and varied body of avian information combined with 131 beautiful color photographs, if, I say, sir, all that couldn't get \$15.00 worth of interest out of you then your avian enthusiasm is at its nadir. You are either encumbered by a general dimness or all of your intellect is focused on minutiae. You do not like birds.

But my aim is to make you happy, sir. You think you should have your money back and you shall have it. Send to me your last six Watchbirds (I'm confident they are in mint condition) and out of my own pocket I'll return your \$15.00.

Ed.

Dear Mr. Dingle:

Although I ordinarily enjoy Richard Tkachuck's fine Question and Answer column I was appalled and disappointed by his answer in the Dec 83/Jan 84 issue to the person who wanted to know if love birds could survive in an unheated shelter — "if you want to experiment, use birds you don't mind losing too much."

I don't know the answer to the question but, in my opinion, anyone who "experiments" with temperatures,

diets, etc. to the point that injury or death might result to the bird should find another interest.

In my experience there are more than enough chances for disaster when making every possible effort to provide the best of care and taking no known risks which might endanger the health or lives of one's birds.

It seems to me that "experimentation" so often consists of "how little can we give them and how long can they take it." A good example of carefully monitored and positive experimentation is Scheithauer's work with the diet of Hummingbirds. Causing no more than temporary discomfort to his subjects, his work greatly improved the feeding of this specialized species in aviculture and has hopefully saved untold numbers of "hummers" from a slow death from the often bizarre and unsuitable formulas in use.

However, it is my feeling that exposing birds of tropical origin to temperatures which might result in their death is more akin to negligent homicide than worthwhile experimentation and has no place in aviculture.

Sincerely, Tom Riggs

Please believe me, Dr. Tkachuck must be forgiven his use of terms. He is, after all, a mad Russian Scientist and is constantly conducting one experiment after another. Now picture your typical mad scientist in his laboratory — glass beakers bubbling, test tubes, Bunsen burners, noxious fumes, add a little of this to a little of that, hold it up to the light — you get my meaning. What happens next? A great blast of fire and smoke, naturally, that sends said wild-eyed professor sailing through the air. Another laboratory lost.

Now that you know somewhat of Dr. Tkachuck's history I'm sure you'll agree that his seemingly offensive words were not a recommendation to experiment. Indeed, they were a warning against it — based upon his own explosive experience.

Ed.

Dear Mr. Dingle,

Hurray for the articles appearing in recent publications — "The A.F.A. Visits". One thing all we aviculturists share in common I'm sure, is a never ending curiosity about each other's operations.

Now the "however". A little more detailed information about the aviaries etc. would be greatly appreciated. For example, the excellent article on Frank

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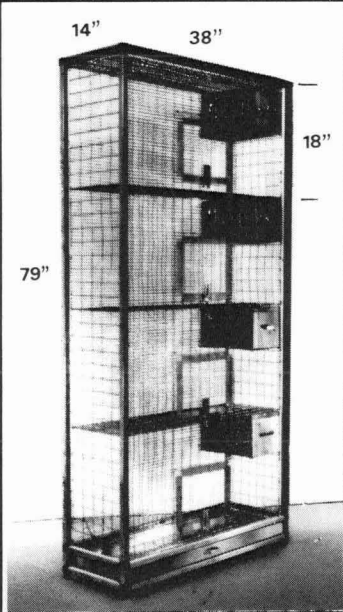
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Miser's place left me with my tongue hanging out for more. How big are his aviaries? How many birds does he hold per aviary? How often must he clean? How and what in does he feed and water his birds? Are his aviaries completely covered? How does he exclude rats and mice? How are his aviaries constructed?

Breeding birds is a never ending learning experience, and what better place for an education than the A.F.A. Watchbird?

Julie Atkinson
Monmouth, Oregon

Never satisfied, eh Atkinson? You had to put the squeeze on me to do my homework. Well, fortunately, Frank Miser graciously cooperated and gave me the answers.

Of course you realize that Frank Miser isn't breeding birds at his store. He holds birds in his flights so don't apply his figures to your breeding operations. Miser's beautiful upstairs flights are 5 1/2' wide, 14' deep and 7 1/2' high. Each flight will hold 75 conures, 100 cockatiels, 250 budgerigars, or 400 finches. The key to containing lots of birds is to have lots of perch space. Miser always allows more perch space than necessary. The flights are cleaned daily if necessary, depending upon the numbers and types of birds. Every ten days the flights are thoroughly cleaned. Little Giant #2525 automatic waterers are provided for the birds. Seed is kept in large three-section hoppers and additional seed is kept on the floor but not under perches nor under the seed hopper. Miser mentioned the curious fact that birds will starve to death rather than eat seed on the floor directly under the seed hopper.

There are no rodents in the new Magnolia Bird Farm. Over the years Miser has been a consistent crusader against mice. He is convinced that mice cause health problems and eat lots of seed. He recommends the use of snap traps, and wind-up traps. He knows of aviaries that use an electronic ultra-sound device which seems to keep the mice on the move and cause them to be trapped more easily. One facility was catching about 14 mice per day. After the electronic hummer was installed 50 to 60 mice were caught daily. When the mice were controlled the seed consumption went from 3,400 lbs. to 1,700 lbs. per year. Miser recommends trapping mice rather than poisoning them and I concur with that since I lost a king parrot to mouse poison.

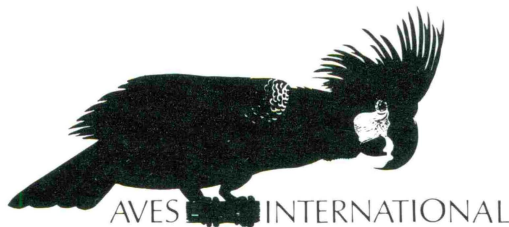
Ed. •

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