



Marvelous Mini in Arizona

by Tom Marshall
Great Falls, Virginia

Like the Arizona state bird, the roadrunner, the AFA Regional held in Phoenix, February 14-17, was fast and furious and fun! Everything that could be squeezed into a long weekend for beak freaks was done so by our gracious host, the Arizona Aviculture Society.

Upon arrival at the hotel lobby, we were met by a large, gorgeous finch-filled aviary constructed specifically for our enjoyment by Tal Crosser, who also provided one of the most appreciated lectures on Saturday and who later, with his wife, Opal, and son, Ken, opened his immaculate aviaries for our inspection and appreciation.

Allow me to back up and try and put all of this in some chronological order. It is difficult to believe that so much took place in such a short time, but altogether we were treated to eight lectures, four aviary tours, three zoo trips, two tasty convention meals and one heck of a good time.

While not exactly a treat, the well-attended AFA Board meeting was skillfully managed by President Jerry Jennings notwithstanding the heavy agenda. Our new Executive Director, Nancy Winters, was introduced, and it was obvious that she will add a touch of class and a good deal of professional expertise to our organization. Nancy will be working to find AFA grant money and to enhance our public relations efforts.

Bill Maynard, an articulate and knowledgeable aviculturist, began the lecture series with a "Breeder's Overview of South American Hookbills." His talk was

Photos by Chris Christman, Garden Grove, CA



Members of the host club anchored down their booth and encouraged sales of their well-chosen theme T-shirts "I am no more" using the extinct Carolina parakeet illustration as a reminder of avicultural responsibilities to conservation.



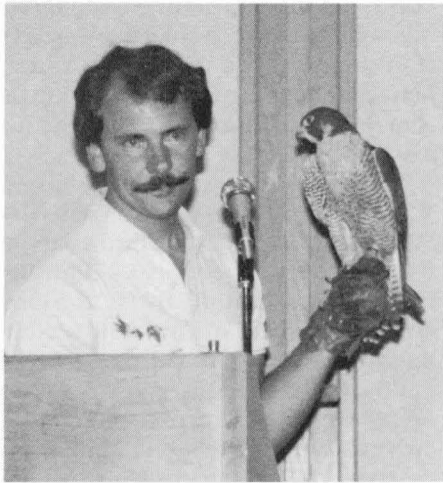
Dr. Robert D. Obmart enlightened the audience about Arizona's extensive native bird population, augmenting his talk with first rate slide photography.

This beautiful flight cage was constructed by Tal Crosser and family in the hotel lobby. The birds, plants, and cage itself was such an attraction the hotel would have liked to have it as a permanent display.



followed by well-presented discussions on disease prevention, taming and training, cage and aviary construction, artificial incubation and hand feeding techniques. Dr. Robert Ohmart educated the conventioners on the uniqueness of native Arizona birds, while Sunny Clarkson, her husband, Mark, and Hal Koontz updated us on the popular cockatiels and the finches of Australia.

Throughout the entire four days, a conservation theme was gently impressed upon those of us in attendance. The obligatory T-shirt featured the extinct Carolina parakeet, while Steve Martin's dramatic banquet presentation, highlighted by an airborne Harris' hawk, and background music by John Denver emphasized his concern that, "it was about time" that we concern ourselves about disappearing bird wildlife. Mickey Ollson then gave a satirical explanation of the future of avian species without captive breeding. The presentation was humorous, but the message was very poignant—captive breeding is the last chance for many birds still in the wild.



Steve Martin and his wonderful birds captured our respect and awe.

Bernard Roer, apparently the granddaddy of Arizona aviculture, as evidenced by the accolades heaped upon him at the banquet, has one of the finest collections of birds in captivity, or as Mickey Ollson prefers to say, "zoo-tivity." At the Roer's, there were many water fowl and pheasants, but I was awed by Leadbeater's cockatoos, galahs, barabands, lutino and blue ringnecks, and many other favorites kept in a variety of conditions—all breeding and producing quality off-spring.

At the Crosser's aviaries I saw another collection of exquisite birds, but I especially enjoyed handling a petite Solomon Island eclectus hen. Later, I marvelled at the fascinating aviaries of

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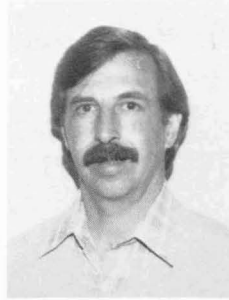
* Test data available upon request.

Charlie and Lorene Shepard. Some were several stories high; others went, in part, over your head as you made your way down the narrow passage-ways. Fortunately, the galah and Derbyan parakeet that came within inches of your face were friendly. However, what really amazed me was the symbiotic relationship between the birds and several cats. The most amusing couple was a yellow-fronted Amazon and a calico cat



Photos by Chris Christman, Garden Grove, CA

Sunny and Mark Clarkson served as some of chairman Koffron's very capable right arms. Sunny and Lorene Shepard took charge of organizing the tour bus trips. A fantastic job they did! Mark, along with other A.A.S. members, made countless shuttle trips with people and supplies to hotel, airport, and side trips.



Convention chairman Davis A. Koffron left no details to chance.

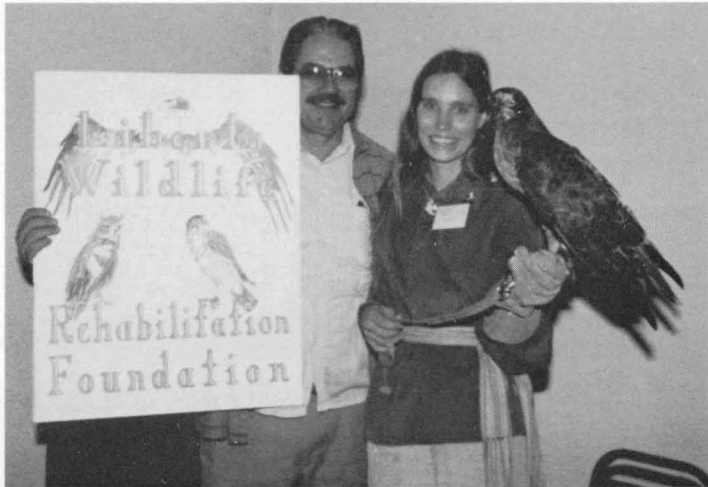
that competed for our affection and attention in a walk-through aviary. Finally, our last aviary tour introduced us to John and June Kendall's collection of game birds, which delighted many of us there.

All three zoos we visited were exceptional. The Reid Park Zoo was beautifully landscaped and maintained. Here they had much success in breeding crimson-wing parrots by providing the hen with two cocks, so that any aggression was confined to mock posturing between the two males, permitting the female to raise her young without discord.

The newest zoo was Mickey Ollson's Wildlife World Zoo, which boasted the Southwest's largest exotic bird aviary, all five species of the world's flightless birds and much more. By far, the most enjoyable aspect of this visit was the huge walk-in aviary populated with multi-colored lorries, which would land on your head or outstretched hand in order to sample the sweet apples provided by the keepers for this thrilling experience.

Just fourteen miles outside of Tucson is the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum located in the heart of the magnificent saguaro cactus forests. In very natural settings, visitors enjoy the animals and plants found in northern Mexico, Baja California, and the Arizona Sonoran desert region. It was here I first saw the roadrunner. It was running back and forth, with what appeared to be a tired smile on its face. At the end of my four days in Arizona, thanks to the efforts of Convention Chairman Davis Koffron and his great committee, I could relate to that roadrunner very well! Six months should be just about enough time to rest up before I get the energy to attend the 12th annual AFA Convention in New Orleans. ●

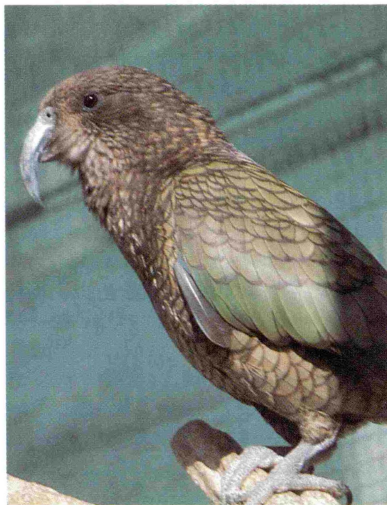
Chuck Bindner and his assistants had an impressive display of raptors troubled by man's thoughtlessness. His organization, "Liberty Wildlife Rehabilitation Foundation" administers medical aid to the injured wild ones, lectures to the public to raise human consciousness, and releases back to the wild those that were rehabilitated.



Yes, a picnic in the Arizona sun at Mickey Ollson's Wildlife World Zoo. Seated around table from back left — Hal Koontz, Barry Wold, Janet Lilienthal, Gary Lilienthal, Nancy Vigran and Davis Koffron.



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