

Show Suggestions

by Dana Hermes and Joan C. Davis
Fremont, California

An increase in the number of hookbills entered in bird shows this year is noticeable. As founders of the Exotic Hookbill Society we think this is wonderful. With many clubs sponsoring shows featuring an exotics, or hookbill, section we have some suggestions to help ease confusion, and streamline these categories.

Show clubs are involved mostly with the smaller birds, such as canaries, finches and budgerigars. This is understandable as the cost of these birds is reasonable and they breed more readily than the larger hookbills. The hookbills' price range is anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars. Clubs are aware that if they depend on the public for admission fees to help defray the cost of the shows, they need only watch the areas that the general public always "hangs around;" you've got it, the hookbill section. Without these critters in the show, there would not be as many paying spectators at the door.

The general public is able to see a larger variety of birds at one of the shows than anywhere else. The fact must be faced: no one person, not even a judge, can be expected to know every species of psittacine. Most people do not specialize in the larger psittacines because of the costs involved. Most of the participants in this section are pet owners who have caught the "bug."

It is discouraging when someone transports an expensive bird, subjects that bird to the stress of travel as well as stress caused by the show itself, only to be disqualified for having a clipped wing. Something like this is only an oversight because it is a standard in the smaller birds. A clipped wing on any bird, Amazon or larger, should be disregarded by the judge and only used as a tie breaker if two birds are equal in quality. Clipping large birds' wings is done more for the safety of the birds as well as to allow their owners to occasionally take the birds out of the house without need of a cumbersome cage. Therefore, we suggest that judges be instructed to disregard clipped wings in any bird Amazon-sized or larger. There are very few in breeding situations and most are pets.

There also seems to be a lot confusion

in the classification of some of the larger birds, especially cockatoos. The confusion arises from lack of knowledge as to the number of different species in a group. Example: most clubs divide cockatoos into categories, greater sulphur crested, lesser sulphur crested (the most common), and the Moluccans. I have noticed a lot of catalogs with a class for Leadbeaters and rose breasted cockatoos. These birds are extremely rare and expensive and most owners do not show these birds because of the risk of stress and/or disease.

We suggest a breakdown of the more common of the species. Problems arise with the sulphur crested because there are four sub-species listed in *Parrots of the World* by Joseph Forshaw (which we consider the work to be used to settle parrot questions). The most common of the four which are seen at shows are *Galerita eleonora*, and *Galerita triton*. Forshaw also notes that they are referred to as "sulphur crested," not "greater sulphur crested."

Lesser sulphur crested, on the other hand, is proper — now the problem is that there are seven sub-species in this genus, the biggest problem being identification of the various sub-species without having one of each to compare. *Parrots of the World* has a description of each of the sub-species. The next most common cockatoo is the Moluccan, then the umbrella, and the citron which, by the way, is considered by Forshaw as a "lesser sulphur crested." There are usually enough of them to give them their own class. The breakdown for the cockatoo division would look like this:

COCKATOOS:

1. Triton
2. Eleonora
3. Lesser sulphur crested
4. Moluccan
5. Umbrella
6. Citron
7. AOV

Just to dispel some of the myths being perpetuated by owners and judges alike: there is no such thing as a "medium sulphur crested cockatoo." This term was started by the pet trade and is not recognized in avian taxonomy; there is no such thing as a "blue eyed triton."

There is a triton and there is a blue eyed cockatoo, however, blue eyed are very rare in this country with only eleven on record in the U.S. [Editor's Note: at least ten young were hatched in 1985]; most cockatoos seen in the U.S. are not from Australia as Australia will not allow these birds out of the country. Most of the birds for the pet industry are from various Pacific islands.

To improve the categories and to make things easier for judges we recommend creating another section. Have a small hookbill section and a large hookbill section. The reason we suggest this is that there are more large hookbills being entered than ever before. It is extremely difficult for a judge to decide Best In Show, especially if the decision is between a ringneck and a macaw. If the small hookbills were anything smaller than an Amazon and the large hookbills Amazon and larger, that would mean another Best In Division and Best In Show set of trophies resulting in a few more winning participants and a better turnout. In all fairness to the birds, they should not have to compete with birds ten times larger or smaller than themselves.

Psittacines are expensive and they do one other thing that people seem to forget about, *they bite!* We would suggest for the health of the birds and the safety of the public and exhibitors that signs be posted at the entrances to keep spectators' hands out of the cages. All it would take would be one ill bird, that doesn't show symptoms, to be touched and that toucher carries the disease to every other bird touched. The fear of disease is the biggest reason people decline to show their birds.

We also noticed at the bird shows that security is not as tight as it could be. We helped move about twenty birds out of one show and not one person stopped us to verify whether or not the birds were ours.

We believe the judges will also be relieved to see some sort of guidelines by which to judge our feathered friends. According to one judge, "Anything to make it less confusing would be a blessing." ●

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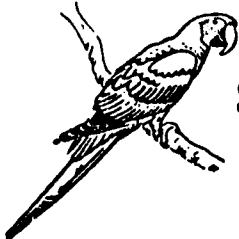
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