

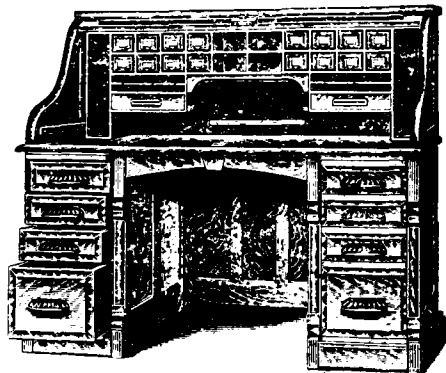
## NOTICE

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

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

# From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle  
Norco, California



*It was Joe DeAguiar, I believe, who first suggested a home office and the office of executive director. Hind sight, folks, is 20/20. All the times I met with Joe to discuss the AFA, I realize now, I never understood what he was saying. Now, several years after his death, I've run across well researched studies and documents that point out in black and white most of the things Joe wanted for the organization. Joe was right. The AFA, however, has been very slow shifting its huge organizational bulk towards the functional form that Joe recognized as correct and standard for non-profit outfits.*

*But, I am happy to report to Joe's ghost, the AFA has actually made noticeable progress. About three years ago, then-President Lee Phillips took a special interest in the home office. She reorganized the personnel roster and kept in very close touch with the office activities. Under Phillips' leadership the AFA began to use more effectively the executive committee, a smallish group of AFA officers who have been able to consult together when necessary and make immediate decisions. This has been a great help in handling the everyday affairs of the AFA. Phillips, like Joe DeAguiar, also recognized the value of a small core of paid professional help. When the Watchbird, for example, was not serving the organization as well as she thought it might, she was the one who called special meetings and ultimately authorized additional professional help.*

*When Jennings came aboard as president, one of the first things he did was create the office of executive director. Joe's ghost will clap his hands when he learns that. For years and years everyone has agreed with DeAguiar's concept of the AFA being coordinated and uplifted by a professional executive director. We all talked about it but did nothing until Jennings took the bold step and actually hired a professional to fill the long-awaited position.*

*So the AFA is, slowly but surely, evolving from the small roomful of bird club enthusiasts into a more sophisticated organization that can better serve American aviculture. It is developing organizational concepts and offices that are in closer harmony with the basic principles for non-profit organizations.*

*But enough of this. I prefer not to write on this organizational theme. Other subjects are so much more fun. But in this case, what spurs me on is that I believe the AFA is at the point*

*I believe in ghosts. I can't help it. The late Joe DeAguiar has appeared to me several times recently regarding the career of the AFA. Many of you won't remember Joe but he was one of the AFA's most ardent supporters as well as one of its sternest critics.*

*Joe had a dream for the AFA that projected well into the future. He saw a great glass and steel home office building set on a large tract of land planted and tended as a bird sanctuary. He saw a huge, well-oiled organization working with the precision of a Swiss watch. Joe saw the AFA in its ideal, ultimate form and he talked to people about it.*

*But Joe was not a mere dreamer. He knew the AFA had to begin small and move one step at a time toward the ultimate goal. He also warned that the path was narrow and easily lost. He prophetically pointed out several stumbling blocks that, indeed, the AFA has stumbled over.*

*In his practical way, however (Joe was an astute businessman), he tried to point out what he felt were appropriate steps for the AFA to take. His first thought was to establish a home office (the AFA had no office for several years). He actually found a piece of property with a suitable house*

*on it and proposed the AFA buy the thing. It would serve as a home office location and also as an investment. From this point in time we can look back and see what a great investment the property would have been had we bought it.*

*As a businessman, DeAguiar recognized the value of professionals. He always advocated a home office and a small, well-paid core of professionals to run the business of the AFA. After all, the AFA (if I recall correctly) turns over something near a half million dollars annually. That is not a backyard bird club. The AFA has a plethora of everyday business transactions that involve paying and receiving payments from an assortment of individuals, agencies, and businesses. It functions as a small company contracting with various vendors for materials and services.*

*The AFA is also set up as a not-for-profit organization. This means that much of its energy must be supplied by volunteer help. Joe was astute enough to know that 29 committees and around 150 volunteer board members would not, could not, pull together as one big team. Communications alone were, he felt, enough to confound such a bulky, scattered group.*

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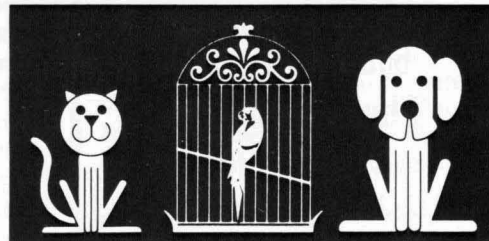
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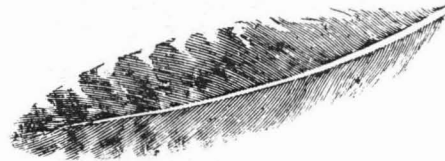
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*where it can mushroom into a truly  
great organization but most of you  
folks think the AFA is a mere magazine.  
In fact, the AFA is a very complex  
organization that has a number of  
goals and accomplishments aside from  
the best avicultural magazine going.  
In the next few editorials I'll try to  
touch on the AFA, the organization,  
and show how it is put together and  
how the various offices and parts  
interface. You paid your money and  
you really deserve to know.*

*In the meanwhile, the following few  
letters are included for your perusal.  
Ed.*



Dear Editor,

I am writing this letter as an aviculturist, resident of the state of New York, and one who represented the AFA in Albany on the bird legislation. I would like to state at the outset that I still have mixed feelings about this legislation.

One of the major problems I have with this legislation is the large amount of deforestation in the countries of export. Where will the birds end up? Shouldn't they be exported? Also, what about the loss of life in the capture and importation of these beautiful creatures. There must be some way we can deal with these problems without the unnecessary loss of life. Unfortunately, I do not have the answer. This is something the AFA should give top priority to, even to the extent of sanctioning someone to capture and import birds for breeding humanely. Under the new legislation in New York, this would be permitted since the AFA is considered an educational institution.

The legislation does not consider the aviculturist on the same par with the scientific, zoological and educational institutions. This is wrong. It should be noted that the private aviculturists have more birds than any of the aforementioned groups. The private aviculturist will be able, under this new legislation, to purchase and sell wild-caught birds to other breeders for five years only, and then must apply for an extension. The scientific, zoological and educational institutions do not have the same restraints.

We, as bird breeders, are capable of breeding many types of birds and could help fill the gap in the pet trade. I sell to

only three pet stores that handle large birds, and this is because they have demonstrated to me that they are able to give what I consider proper care to all the birds in their possession. This is not to say that there are only three stores in New York State that should have birds, but I only deal with stores in close proximity to my breeding facility.

My expectations may be too high, but birds are living, breathing creatures and, therefore, must be afforded proper care. This is true for the wild-caught as well as the domestic birds, both young and adult. The birds did not ask to come here, and if we keep them, we should give them a longer life than they would have in their natural environment. This can be accomplished by way of foods, housing, handling, and medical attention. It has been demonstrated that birds given proper care can live longer in captivity than in the wild. This has been proven by zoos and aviculturists alike for years. An example of this is the California Condor Project.

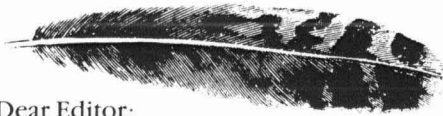
We, as aviculturists, have a responsibility, and now is the time to implement all our breeding knowledge before it is too late. I believe John Stoodley issued a challenge to American breeders at the last convention to start really breeding. This is the time to pick up the gauntlet and run.

Some of the pet stores (ones that specialize in birds) are already in the process of switching to domestic birds and seem to be doing quite well at this time. Since the proposal of the new legislation, many new breeders have entered the market, and a number of stores are now overloaded with teals and keets, which are exempt under the new legislation. Maybe the availability of larger domestic birds (Amazons, pions, cockatoos, lorries, macaws, etc.) will be on the upswing due to the new breeders. I am aware that it takes more to breed the larger parrots. However, I have confidence in the new breeders (especially if they feel more for the bird's well-being than the dollars that they hope to make) and I feel they will, in time, have a substantial impact on the bird market. One only has to look at the ads in AFA, Bird World, Bird Talk, Pionus Breeders Association, and the Cockatoo Society publications to see the amount of birds for sale.

Whatever the future holds and whatever we do, we should remember that the bottom line must be the welfare of the birds.

Sincerely yours,  
Paul Gildersleeve  
Oyster Bay, New York





Dear Editor:

I just wanted to drop you a line and thank you for such an excellent publication as *Watchbird*, and also to thank you for the recent coverage of Senate Bill 497 in Maryland. I was one of many aviculturists in attendance at the committee's proceedings, along with Ro Dahle, Maryland state coordinator, and Lee Phillips, legislative vice president. Thankfully, the bill received an unfavorable report.

Additionally, I wanted to tell you of a way I have found to combine two of my great loves, namely birds and computers, into an enjoyable service that might benefit you and your readers. I am talking about a Computer Bulletin Board which I operate on my home computer. It is a system which can be called from any person with a computer and device called a *modem*, which allows connection via the normal telephone lines from one computer to another. On this system I have a section devoted to birds — and anything to do with birds. I like to explain the system by reminding people of the cork bulletin boards you'll often find in a supermarket. There, people will post 3x5 cards with things they want to sell, services they offer, or just about anything. The computer bulletin board is much the same, although messages can be a lot more varied, and answered by other users. So far, interest in the birds conference, as it is called, has been steadily increasing since August of 1985 when I first set it up. Callers have been coming in from all over the country and leaving various messages, tips, comments, questions, etc. all about birds and related topics.

This is not a commercial interest in any way. Callers only have to pay for the price of the phone call they make, just like any other telephone call. My computer system accepts calls from 300 to 2400 Baud (a computer term indicating the speed of the computer connection). It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with the exception of a few hours a week for scheduled maintenance and network mail functions. The system can be reached at (301) 252-0717, and is physically located just north of Baltimore, Maryland.

I hope that you might be able to mention this bulletin board system to your readers, and that it might help them in various ways. I have seen messages regarding things like finding a mate for unpaired birds, questions on

cage materials, breeding, and even one question asking which birds make the best song — the person leaving the message worked in a sound studio and wanted to record it. Several veterinarians have frequented the board, and even left helpful hints. One user left a listing of bird-related magazines around the world in English-speaking countries. *Watchbird* was included in the list. Well, I could go on, but hopefully you can see what I am trying to explain.

Again, even if you're not able to tell your readers about this system, I wanted to say thank you for the notification and reaction to the proposed Maryland Senate Bill 497. Without the AFA and their notifications to Maryland members, I doubt we could have prevented the bill from passing.

Thank you for your time!  
Sincerely,  
Thomas R. Hendricks  
Lutherville, Maryland



Dear Mr. Dingle:

I'd like you to be aware of a small problem. After the June/July issue I'm sure there are a number of people who think cliff swallows burrow into riverbanks when they actually build dome nests, and other readers may think that barn swallows build dome nests in colonies although they actually nest in single pairs by building a cup-type nest.

I'm referring to the article, "20th Century Cliff Dwellers." The photograph on page 44 is of a colony of bank swallows (*Riparia riparia*), not a colony of cliff swallows as stated in the article, and the photo on page 45 is of a colony of cliff swallows, not barn swallows.

I am by no means an authority but I am aware of this slight mistake and it may be appropriate to let my fellow bird lovers know about it.

I have listed some books which may support my opinion and if you have time you may wish to look them over. Please refer to the following:

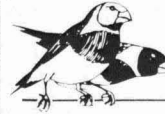
*A Field Guide to the Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of North American Birds*, Colin Harrison. See pages 213-215.

*Song and Garden Birds of North America/National Geographic*, Alexander Wetmore. See pages 121-129.

*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds, Eastern Region*, John Bull and John Farrand, Jr. See pages 330-334, 471-473 and 507-508. ●

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