

AFA to Initiate Breeding Consortium for the Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskin

(*Carduelis cucullata*)

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At long last, the time has arrived! The Red Siskin Sub-committee of the AFA Conservation Committee announces the formal implementation of the AFA Red Siskin Breeding Consortium.

As anyone who has read the *AFA Watchbird* magazine faithfully over the last several years knows, the idea of a long-term captive breeding program for the Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskin (herein called the Red Siskin) has been talked about for quite some time. Indeed, my interest in the project was initially cultured by Bob Berry, former Curator of Birds at the Houston Zoo, when he served as the AFA Conservation Committee chairman some three to four years ago.

While a great deal of thought was given to the idea of forming a structured program and several feature articles were drafted for *Watchbird* outlining the species' plight in the wild and its captive husbandry requirements, little hard action was taken until more recently.

Roughly two years ago, Jack Clinton-Eitnien, current chairman of the AFA Conservation Committee, and I discussed the feasibility of forming a Sub-committee of the AFA Conservation Committee, with the sole purpose of making the Red Siskin Consortium a reality. As you well know, most worthwhile endeavors require a lot of time and hard work. This has certainly been true for the formation of the Red Siskin Breeding Consortium.

After several years of hard work, editing, circulating and re-circulating the material, many pieces of correspondence and phone calls back and forth between Committee members, the permit office, etc., we have arrived at the following materials for the foundation of the consortium.

The format for the Breeding Consortium Agreement for Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskins (*Carduelis cucullata*) was developed using the Palm Cockatoo Breeding Consortium Agreement as a guideline (thanks to Ron Young, director, Mesker Park Zoo for providing that information). However, there are many factors quite different in the Red Siskin Consortium Agreement than were dealt with in the Palm Cockatoo Consortium. Thus the Red Siskin Agreement has been "custom tailored" to fit the needs of this particular species and its situation as relating to its wild and captive status, permit requirements, etc.

As you will see, in reading the Consortium Agreement and Application for Membership, we have been as detailed



Photo by Nancy Vigran

Pair of Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskins

as possible in an attempt to "cover all the bases" and anticipate any problems we may encounter.

Because of this, the application process may appear to be too long and cumbersome. However, please do not be put off by the appearance, as most of the questions are very straightforward and not at all difficult to answer. Also realize that the great majority of the applicants for membership will not be known to all (and perhaps none) of the Management Committee members. The application will be our only method of judging whether the applicants are qualified to receive birds.

Because of the prolific nature of the Red Siskin, it is likely that we will have more birds than holding spaces before all is said and done. So please, apply for membership if you are interested and have a good avicultural background.

You may be aware of the fact that one of the ongoing problems we have dealt with in initiating this program is the question of what permits are required to maintain Red Siskins in the U.S. The species is listed as Appendix I, "endangered," by all of the pertinent regulatory agencies.

Because of the population of Red Siskins found on the island of Puerto Rico (a U.S. territory), it has been unclear whether the species is considered to be native (hence requiring U.S. Endangered Species permits) or non-native (hence requiring Captive Bred Wildlife [CBW] permits).

Because of the continuing confusion over the permit requirements, the Red Siskin Management Committee recommends that each applicant for membership shall acquire the proper permits by first writing to the Federal Wildlife Permit

Office (FWPO) to ask which permit is necessary to possess Red Siskins and then apply for the identified permit. Please keep documentation of all of your correspondence with the FWPO.

I have been in contact with the FWPO very recently and feel that they are working earnestly toward resolving the problem and that a definitive statement on permit requirements is forthcoming.

Following are copies of the Breeding Consortium Agreement for Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskins (*Carduelis cucullata*) and the Red Siskin Breeding Consortium Application for Membership. For those interested in taking part in the Consortium, please read the Agreement and Application for Membership closely.

The membership application forms are available by writing or calling: Ed Diebold, Curator of Birds, Milwaukee County Zoo; Chairman, AFA Red Siskin Sub-committee; 10001 W. Bluemound Rd.; Milwaukee, WI 53226. Or call (414) 771-3040.

Completed applications are to be returned to the address above. The completed applications will then be circulated to the other six members of the Management Committee for screening. Red Siskins will be sent to applicants as they become available according to the results of the screening by the Management Committee.

Although there are a few minor questions yet to be answered concerning the logistical operation of the Consortium, we feel that it is time to test what we have on paper.

With the continued hard work of the members of the Management Committee and the support and cooperation of the membership of the AFA and new Consortium members, we feel that this program will take valuable steps toward the long-term preservation of the Red Siskin both in captivity and in the wild.

Thanks to the following Management Committee members who have been on board from square one: Steve Amos, Glover, Vermont; Dr. Val Clear, Anderson, Indiana; Chris Eckart, Dallas, Texas; Chelle Plasse, Houston, Texas; and Linda Sun, Riverside, California. Also, welcome to our newest appointment, Kevin Gorman, Rochester, New York.

For more information on Red Siskins, see references at the end of this article.

**Breeding Consortium Agreement
for Venezuelan Black-hooded Red
Siskins *Carduelis cucullata*)**

With the identified objective of estab-

lishing and maintaining a viable breeding population of the Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskin (hereafter referred to as the Red Siskin) in captivity, the parties to this agreement pledge to cooperate with each other by managing their respective stocks of Red Siskins as a total population, so that ideal pairings can be carried out and the genetic diversity of the captive population can be more fully utilized and maintained.

1. *Membership*

Membership in the Consortium is open to all individuals interested in the conservation of Red Siskins who are willing to abide by the terms of this agreement.

Members are required to abide by the recommendations of the Management Committee concerning general husbandry practices and specimen transfers to other locations for the enhancement of the total population in captivity. In addition, all applicants for membership must meet certain qualifications to determine their willingness, expertise, and sincerity to follow the guidelines identified by the Consortium.

The Consortium's Management Committee will review the qualifications of all of the applicants to determine if they are to be admitted.

Any member may withdraw from the Consortium at any time upon submitting written notification at least 30 days prior to withdrawal, to the Chairman of the Management Committee, and upon transferring any Red Siskins that are original stock to the Management Committee for proper placement.

For the purpose of this agreement, original stock will mean all Red Siskins that are placed with individuals or institutions via the Red Siskin Breeding Consortium Application For Membership and accompanying review of qualifications by the Management Committee, as well as all of the offspring produced by this original stock.

Any member may, upon recommendation of the Management Committee, be removed from the Consortium if said member has failed to abide by this agreement and thereby has impaired proper development of the stated goals of the Consortium. If a member is so removed, any original stock held by that member must be transferred to the Management Committee for proper placement.

2. *Management Committee*

Operation of the Consortium is guided by a Management Committee consisting of the following:

- seven representatives, one of whom serves as Chairman
- a studbook keeper
- other ad hoc, non-voting, participants as deemed necessary by the representatives (e.g., advisors, consultants, etc.)

Initially, for a period not to exceed two years, the seven members of the Red Siskin Subcommittee of the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) Conserva-

tion Committee will serve as the Management Committee for the Red Siskin Breeding Consortium. For this initial two year period, the Chairman of the Red Siskin Subcommittee will serve as the Chairman of the Management Committee.

Subsequent to this initial period, the members of the Consortium will elect representatives to serve on the Management Committee. Any member of the Consortium may be nominated for election.

The Management Committee representatives will serve staggered, three-year terms, established at the first election, as follows: (1) the two elected representatives receiving the highest number of votes will serve for three years, (2) the two representatives receiving the next highest number of votes will serve for two years, (3) the two representatives receiving the next highest number of votes will serve for one year. Thereafter, staggered election is automatic.

After the initial two year period, the Chairman of the Management Committee will be appointed by the Chairman of the AFA Conservation Committee and will serve a three year term. The Chairman of the Management Committee may serve consecutive terms, at the discretion of the Conservation Committee Chairman.

All persons serving on the Management Committee will be AFA members.

3. *Ownership*

The Consortium will hold collective title to Red Siskins included in this agreement. This does not preclude membership in the Consortium by individual persons or institutions that own Red Siskins. All such owners of Red Siskins must be reviewed and approved by the Management Committee on an individual basis before being accepted for membership in the Consortium.

All Red Siskins donated to AFA and placed by the Red Siskin Management Committee will be banded with AFA Red Siskin Consortium bands (open bands) labeled with the official AFA logo and a number, prior to being shipped to the Consortium member. This band will be in addition to any bands that have been placed on the bird by the breeder that has raised it. Whenever possible, birds donated for the Consortium will be closed banded. Under no circumstances shall anyone tamper with or remove bands from a Consortium bird without the written approval of the Management Committee Chairman.

All Red Siskin chicks hatched as part of this agreement will be closed banded with AFA Red Siskin Consortium bands labeled with the official AFA logo and a number. It is the responsibility of each member of the Consortium to guarantee that all offspring will be closed banded. Bands will be provided by the Management Committee.

4. *Transfer of birds*

Members of the Consortium agree to



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transfer individual Red Siskins to another individual or institution only with the prior approval of the Management Committee.

5. *Liability to the Consortium*

Responsibility for the care and health of the Red Siskins covered under this agreement shall be vested in the persons or institutions holding them. All liability, financial or otherwise, shall also rest with the holders, and not with the Consortium.

6. *Management Committee*

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Management Committee shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- development of a master breeding plan for the species, including decisions on the transfer of birds held by members of the Consortium.
- preparation of a comprehensive demographic analysis of the species in North America.
- establishment of dietary and veterinary care guidelines.
- identification of research projects necessary to develop any or all of the above and, in particular, any pertinent reproductive or behavioral studies that would enhance captive reproductive efforts.
- overseeing the creation and maintenance of a studbook for the species.
- determining eligibility of candidates for membership in the Consortium and ensuring compliance with this agreement by members.
- communication to all Consortium members about Management Committee actions and decisions in a timely fashion.

7. *Consortium Member*

Responsibilities

All applicants for membership must possess, or be willing to obtain, proper permits (both federal and, where applicable, state) for legal possession of Red Siskins prior to receiving birds from the Consortium. In light of the confusion over whether the species must be kept under Endangered Species Permits or Captive-bred Wildlife Permits, the applicant must be willing to provide documentation of his application for the appropriate permit.

All members agree to maintain and not to transfer any original stock, except to transfer birds as decided by the Management Committee with input from the Studbook keeper.

All members must complete an annual report concerning hatches, deaths, transfers, etc. and return it to the Studbook keeper.

Whenever possible, members will agree to maintain and breed their Red Siskins in enriched environments (i.e., in planted aviaries as opposed to small cages).

In the event of a bird's death, a necropsy will be performed and a copy of the necropsy will be forwarded to the

Studbook keeper, along with the specimen's Consortium band.

All parties to this agreement reaffirm that the chief objective of the Consortium is to promote the breeding potential of Red Siskins in captivity. Further, to achieve this end, all parties to this agreement join in reaffirming their dedication to the propagation objective of establishing a self-sustaining population of Red Siskins in captivity.

Proper pairings of individuals will be determined by the Studbook keeper. Members will abide by the decision of the Studbook keeper. Under *no circumstances* will Consortium siskins be hybridized with the domestic canary. Such practice will result in immediate disqualification from the Consortium.

Once the goal of maintaining a captive "reservoir" for the species has been achieved, it is the intention of the Consortium to hold these birds subject to this agreement for the preservation, protection, and restoration of the species in the wild.

Terms of this agreement may be amended consistent with the goals stated herein. Amendments will require approval by at least three-fourths of the respondents of the current membership.

8. *Acceptance of Responsibilities*

The person or institution named below understands, accepts, and is bound by the terms of this Breeding Consortium Agreement and, in consideration for admission to the Consortium, agrees with other members of the Consortium to promote its objectives in good faith and participate in accordance with stipulations for membership provided herein.

Name of person or institution

Name and title of person designated as representative to the Consortium

Address Telephone

Signature and title Date

Following is a sample of the Red Siskin Breeding Consortium Application for Membership form:

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Name of person or institution

Name and title of person designated as Consortium representative

Address Telephone

Signature and title Date

Please answer all of the questions listed below, including any additional comments that you feel are relevant to your application for membership. You may use the back of these sheets or attach additional sheets if necessary.

1. Briefly explain why you wish to participate in the Red Siskin Breeding Consortium.

2. Do you currently hold any Red Siskins?
☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please answer questions 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

3. How many Red Siskins do you currently hold? Males _____ Females _____ Unknown _____

4. Have you successfully raised Red Siskins in the past? If yes, please include details.

5. How did you obtain these birds?

6. Please list your source(s) for acquiring these birds.

7. Are your birds currently held under Captive-bred Wildlife Permits or Endangered Species Permits?

8. If you currently hold other Red Siskins, do you wish to breed Siskins received from the Consortium with your birds or maintain them separate from your collection of Siskins?

9. If you wish to breed Consortium Siskins with Siskins in your collection, do you agree to conform to terms of a breeding loan agreement between you and the AFA concerning the ownership, distribution, etc. of offspring, consistent with the terms of this agreement?
☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Are you willing to provide details of your current management techniques to assist in standardizing management techniques for birds to be held by the Consortium? ☐ Yes ☐ No

11. How will you house your Red Siskins if accepted for membership in the Consortium?
☐ Indoors ☐ Outdoors ☐ Indoor enclosure/outdoor flight

12. Size of cage/exhibit. Height _____ Width _____ Length _____

13. Cage or exhibit construction.

14. Type of flooring. ☐ Concrete ☐ Earth
☐ Wire ☐ Other (explain) _____

15. Will the cage/exhibit be on public display?
☐ Yes ☐ No

16. Is the cage/exhibit planted? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If no, is it possible to supply a planted cage/exhibit? ☐ Yes ☐ No

17. Will the Red Siskins be kept alone or in mixed species exhibits/cages?
☐ Alone ☐ Mixed If mixed, list the other species that will share the enclosure _____

18. Please include clear, detailed photographs of the above-described facilities. Provide six copies for distribution.

19. Please describe your prior experience with the captive management and propagation of this species and/or similar species.

20. Please describe your prior experience with the captive management and propagation of other species of birds.

21. Are you able and willing to provide the necessary funds to ship the breeding stock to your facility, and to provide for the maintenance and veterinary care of that stock while it is in your possession? ☐ Yes ☐ No

22. Do you have a regular veterinarian to perform your necropsies? If so, please supply name, address, and telephone number. If no, do you agree to have all birds necropsied and to submit copies of the necropsy to the Studbook keeper?

23. Please provide three references from aviculturists/ornithologists who you know personally and are familiar with your facilities and avicultural abilities. Please include the name, address, and telephone number of the persons providing the references.

24. Are you familiar with other aviculturists and/or institutions that may be willing to provide Red Siskins as breeding stock for the Consortium and/or participate in the Consortium? If so, please list.

25. Are you a member of the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) or any other avicultural or ornithological association? ☐ AFA If others, please list

26. If you are not currently a member of the AFA, are you interested in joining?
☐ Yes ☐ No

27. Do you agree to abide by the terms of the Breeding Consortium Agreement for Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskins (*Carduelis cucullata*)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

28. Please provide any other information that you feel is relevant to your application for membership in the Red Siskin Breeding Consortium.

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