

AFA in action...

NEWS and VIEWS

OCTOBER 1991

New Educational Programs Now Available

The American Federation of Aviculture is pleased to offer the following programs for use by affiliated clubs to be shown free of charge in a monthly meeting, or as a Bird Show program. A refundable charge is required with each program. These programs can be used in place of a speaker or a last minute cancellation of a speaker. Some preview is necessary in order to prepare for a question and answer period. Club delegates will be receiving a detailed brochure on all programs. The Committee will gladly accept donations and recommendations for future consideration.

AFA Slide-tape Programs:

1. *Husbandry and Care of the Psittacine* by John Stoodley
2. *Parrot Production: Midwifery* by John Stoodley
3. *Hyacinthine Macaw Habitat and Status* by Paul Roth
4. *Budgerigars* by Eric Peake

AFA Video Programs:

1. *Australian Finches* by H. & F. Hofmann
2. *Breeding and Disease Free Aviary* by Dr. Joel Murphy
3. *Breeding Cockatiels* by Diane Morrison

4. *Cockatoos* by Dr. A.E. Decoteau
5. *Common Diseases and Home Care* by Dr. Joel Murphy
6. *Diamond Sparrows* by H. & F. Hofmann
7. *Fostering with Societies* by H. & F. Hofmann
8. *Gouldian Finches* by H. & F. Hofmann
9. *Handfeeding — Getting the Right Start* by Prester & Harlin
10. *Macaws* by Dr. A.E. Decoteau
11. *Owl Finches* by H. & F. Hofmann
12. *Painted Finches* by H. & F. Hofmann
13. *Parrot Care and Training* by Steve Martin
14. *Parrot Finches* by H. & F. Hofmann
15. *Popular Amazons* by Dr. A.E. Decoteau
16. *Shaftails and Related Finches* by H. & F. Hofmann
17. *So You Want a Bird* by Dr. R. Dean Axelson

Contact your AFA delegate if your club is interested in viewing any of these programs. Your delegate then should contact the AFA Business Office to reserve the desired program at: P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218, or call (602) 484-0931. ●

U.S. Officials Kill 125 Fatally Diseased Tropical Birds

by Jim Morris

Reprinted from *Houston Chronicle*, Wednesday, July 10, 1991

U.S. Department of Agriculture officials on Tuesday destroyed about 125 tropical birds owned by breeder Dan Easter after several of the birds were found to be carrying Exotic Newcastle Disease, an extremely contagious ailment fatal to birds.

Easter questioned the need to kill all of the birds, which he kept in cages at his home in the Bear Creek area and which he valued at more than \$100,000. But officials said the killings — done by putting the birds in plastic bags and “painlessly” suffocating them with carbon dioxide shot from a fire extinguisher — were necessary to prevent an outbreak of one of the most feared diseases among exotic bird breeders and poultry farmers.

The USDA quarantined the birds — and 356 others at Easter's shop, The Tropical Bird House on West Little York — in late May, after agency officials traced four outbreaks of Newcastle Disease in Indiana, Michigan and Illinois to seven birds purchased from Easter.

No evidence of the disease has been found among the birds at Easter's shop, although they will remain under quarantine until they are tested one more time.

But after several cockatiels at Easter's home tested positive for the disease, officials decided they had to kill all the birds there, with the exception of five that were removed for further quarantine by a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agent because they are endangered species.

Easter will receive government compensation, but he said it would not be enough to cover his losses.

This is the second time in two years that Newcastle Disease has been traced to Easter's breeding business, although Easter denied Tuesday that a 1989 outbreak in Connecticut was caused — as the USDA claims — by Amazon parrots he sold to a collector there.

Several angry Houston bird breeders, however, said publicity about the most recent outbreaks has put a crimp in their sales.

“Everyone from out of state is skeptical of receiving anything bred in Texas,” said breeder Jan Maly. “This particular disease is so devastating and fast-spreading.”

Easter, who has been a breeder for 14 years, refused to be blamed for the two outbreaks, saying he is merely a victim of circumstance.

“This disease can happen to anybody if you buy and sell enough birds,” he said, adding that he believes other breeders are “jealous” of him because “we're on top of the bird world.”

Newcastle Disease, according to the USDA, is a virus to which young and caged birds are particularly vulnerable. An outbreak in California in the early 1970s spread to poultry farms, prompting authorities to destroy 12 million birds — most of them hens — at a cost to taxpayers of \$56 million.

The federal government has largely contained Newcastle Disease by requiring that all exotic birds from foreign countries be quarantined at least 30 days before they can be brought into the United States. Those that pass through quarantine are fitted with stainless steel bands engraved with three letters and three numbers. Officials caution that any exotic bird that lacks such a band may have been smuggled and may be carrying the disease.

USDA spokeswoman Natalie Bosecker said Tuesday that her agency has dropped its investigation of Easter. “We have found no evidence and have no reason to believe that Mr. Easter smuggled these birds,” she said.

Easter maintained that all of his birds either were purchased legally abroad or raised domestically.

“We've done nothing wrong here,” he said. “If they (USDA officials) had any inkling I did anything wrong, would they be buying my (dead) birds?” ●

Orange County Bird Breeders — Fund Raisers Extraordinaire

The Orange County Bird Breeders, one of southern California's biggest and most active clubs, has been a staunch AFA supporter from the very beginning. Back in 1982, the then president Arnie Gamboa and his officers started an annual raffle to benefit AFA programs and the Club has done it every year since, 9 years running. This year's president, Bob Bramer, and officers have kept up the tradition. By the 1st of June '91, he called AFA's southern California Regional Vice President Aletta M. Long to invite her to their next meeting for the presentation of a check that was the sum results of this year's AFA raffle.

On Saturday, June 8, 1991, Bob Bramer and his special raffle sales crew gathered to present their check of \$1,300 to Aletta. The OCBB raffle ticket sales force: Linda Golson, Donna and Kirk Reynolds, Felice Bahner - vice president, Cindy Spisak, Liz Shogren - treasurer, Bob Bramer - president, Emma Allison, Sharon Bril, Marcia Bock.

The subject of this year's raffle was a hand raised, young, African Grey Parrot, raised by breeder/member Diane Nahmie. The AFA Conservation Program was designated to receive all the monies raised. ●



The Club Connection National Capital Bird Club

by Nancy L. Vigran

Meeting Location: Alternates monthly between James Madison High School, 2500 James Madison Drive, Vienna, Virginia and Mt. Vernon Government Center, Route 1 south of Alexandria to Sherwood Hall Lane, Alexandria, Virginia.

Meeting Date: First Sunday of every month.

Contact for more information: Neil or Linda Elkins, 9920 Green Valley Road, Union Bridge, MD 21791, phone (301) 898-5965, or Tom Marshall, P.O. Box 176, Great Falls, VA 22066, phone (703) 318-8438.

1991 President: Neil Elkins, (301) 898-5965

General Information: The National Capital Bird Club (NCBC) has been running strong for about 15 years. The club was formed as an



Photos by Chris Christman

Most of the OCBB raffle ticket sales folks were gathered together for this photo. Left to right: Bob Bramer, Felice Bahner, Emma Allison, Kirk Reynolds, Cindy Spisak, Linda Golson, Sharon Bril, Donna Reynolds, Liz Shogren.



Presenting \$1,300 check to AFA So. Cal. Regional V.P. Aletta M. Long (center) is OCBB Vice President Felice Bahner (left) and OCBB President Bob Bramer, June 8, 1991.

educational club and serves the Maryland and Washington, D.C. areas as well as Virginia. The NCBC is comprised of about 100 members and is mostly concerned with the breeding of birds. Although most of the membership is generally interested in psittacines, the NCBC speaker subjects are on other avian species as well.

Activities and Special Events: Each year the NCBC conducts a bird mart, held in April, where commercial tables are available and club members can sell their birds and bird items. Each August, the club holds a barbecue (actually a crab feast) at a member's home and in December a Christmas party is also held at a member's home.

The NCBC states in its by-laws that the club remain a member club of AFA and as such renewal is automatic each year. The NCBC generously donates to the AFA Conservation and Research Committees each year as well.

Editorial Note: The club connection was designed to let members of AFA know what regional clubs are available to them, and to give your club ideas and a chance to learn from what other clubs do. If your club is a member club of AFA and would like to be highlighted in the club connection, please send information with a contact person's name and phone number to: Nancy Vigran, c/o AFA, P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85017. ●

Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico Unveils 316 Acre Nature Reserve Near San Juan

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Joins the Trust in Inaugurating Ecotouristic Site

SAN JUAN (April 24, 1991) — On March 21, The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico celebrated the official inauguration of its 316 acre Las Cabezas de San Juan Nature Reserve with a symbolic tree-planting ceremony led by Manuel Lujan, Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and Francisco Javier Blanco, Executive Director of The Trust.

This lush coastal site, known as "El Faro" ("the lighthouse") for the working 19th century lighthouse situated on the property, was acquired by The Trust to forever protect this beautiful and fragile ecological area from development.

With the inauguration of El Faro, The Trust took another significant step in its overall mission to heighten public awareness and understanding of Puerto Rico's natural and historic treasures. Joining the Island's ecotouristic attractions, El Faro is now open for education and enjoyment by the local community, school groups and families, and other visitors from throughout Puerto Rico and abroad. It also serves as an important new living laboratory for scientists and scholars in marine biology and the earth sciences.

Speaking to over 200 special guests at the reception, Secretary Lujan praised The Trust and its pioneering efforts to "safeguard the future of Puerto Rico, leaving a richer legacy to coming generations."

Executive Director Blanco, in turn, expressed hope that the Reserve would inspire visitors to develop a sensitivity to the need to protect fragile ecological areas across the globe.

A one-hour drive from San Juan, El Faro is situated in the town of Fajardo on the island's northeastern tip, where the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea meet. With the exception of the rain forest, which can be found in nearby El Yunque, the site features every type of ecosystem found in Puerto Rico, including a mangrove forest, a bioluminescent lagoon, dry forest, rocky and sandy beaches, offshore cays, thalassia beds and coral reefs. A wide variety of animal and plant life thrive on the Reserve, which is home to such endangered species as the manatee and the sea turtles, as well as species indigenous to the island.

Tour Features Boardwalk Through Mangroves and Open-Air Jitney

Visitors will enjoy guided tours which last from two to two-and-a-half hours. Upon arrival, visitors may explore the welcome pavilion, with exhibits offering an introduction to the Reserve and its history, as well as to The Trust's activities and goal. A shaded seawalk leads out to the Caribbean Sea, offering a wide view of a sandy beach and verdant hills.

The tour continues with an open-air jitney ride to the starting point of a one-kilometer boardwalk winding through the mangrove forest and lagoon. Plaques located along the boardwalk describe the type of flora and fauna which visitors may encounter. After the boardwalk, the jitney travels to Los Lirios, a rocky beach sandwiched between dramatic cliffs, and finally to the restored lighthouse.

Historic Lighthouse Serves as Nature Center

The lighthouse nature center enables visitors to examine, up close, a microcosm of life found throughout the site. Its aquaria and terraria are home to indigenous species of fish, the iguana, hermit crab, starfish and samples of the mangrove forest, among other flora and fauna.

El Faro Nature Reserve Opens

A special "touch-tank" room offers live demonstrations by tour guides, as well as an opportunity for independent exploration, as children and adults alike can observe and handle exhibits, including turtles, starfish, a stuffed iguana and over 75 different types of sea-shells and rocks. Exhibits in the terraria, aquaria and touch-tank room will vary, reflecting the seasonal life cycles of the animal and plant species living within the Reserve.

The lighthouse's outdoor observation deck offers a panoramic view of El Yunque and islands as far away as Tortola. The deck also features a working weather station, including a barometer, thermometer, hygrometer (to measure atmospheric humidity) and anemometer (to measure wind velocity). The original 19th century weathervane has been restored and now crowns the lighthouse roof.

A significant navigational landmark since it was erected in 1880 by the Spaniards, the lighthouse now features reproduced charts and maps which present a visual history of the site through various periods.

Living Laboratory for Education and Research

El Faro's exhibitions and interpretive and educational components were developed by Jane Clark Chermayeff Associates in New York. The goals of the education programs, according to Ms. Chermayeff, is to "translate nature's complex diversity and intangible mysteries into a clear and fun perspective, so visitors can nurture a deeper understanding and appreciation of the environment."

Serving as a center for education and research, El Faro offers a year-round laboratory setting for students and scientists residing on-site in dormitories. Among those benefiting from the facilities are students of marine biology at the University of Puerto Rico at Humacao, and scientists of pharmacology, physiology and animal behavior at the University's Institute of Neurobiology. Betsy Payne, El Faro's Superintendent, and the site's tour guides, are University graduates in marine biology.

Exhibitions and all printed materials for the Reserve were designed by Chermayeff and Geismar Associates of New York. Mr. Blanco, a Harvard educated architect, designed the entrance pavilion, and Beatriz Pantel of San Juan led the lighthouse restoration effort. American Airlines and the Caribe Hilton in San Juan hosted visitors from abroad for the opening festivities.

El Faro is the second Trust site opened to the public. The first, Hacienda Buena Vista, a restored 19th century coffee plantation and corn mill in Ponce, opened in 1987 and earned The Trust an Honor award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Trust's authentic restoration of Buena Vista serves as a permanent and important testimony to Puerto Rico's extraordinary cultural, social and technological history.

The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico — a private, non-profit institution established in 1970 by the Governments of Puerto Rico and the United States — is committed to acquiring, protecting, and managing lands and structures of historic, aesthetic and ecological value. To date, the Trust has acquired 11 sites in Puerto Rico (representing close to 6,000 acres of land). The Trust also initiated the debt-for-nature exchange program in the Dominican Republic with the Nature Conservancy.

Admission to El Faro or Hacienda Buena Vista is available by reservation only, Wednesdays through Sundays, at a \$4.00 charge for adults and \$1.00 for children. Special rates are offered for groups.

Reservations for both sites may be obtained by contacting The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico at (809) 722-5882. Fax: (809) 722-5872. Further information on The Trust is available by calling (809) 722-5834 or writing to P.O. Box 4747, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00902-4747. ●