

CITES Introduction

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Throughout history, people have received joy and inspiration from birds, watching them fly free in the wild and having them as companions in human society. In recent decades, man's relationship with birds has changed in significant ways that may either hinder or help the long-term survival of endangered species. Habitat destruction and indiscriminate harvesting of wild birds for the pet trade have both taken a serious toll. At the same time, knowledge gained by people raising birds is being used to develop strategies for increasing wild populations. Furthermore, captive breeding programs are reducing the demand for wild-caught specimens while providing superior pets.

The American Federation of Avicul-

ture (AFA) represents tens of thousands of individuals from across the United States who raise birds, along with hundreds of local and regional avicultural organizations, and over a hundred commercial members. AFA is at the forefront of the science of aviculture, the raising of birds under controlled conditions. Our members are developing innovative techniques for improving the reproductive success and general well-being of birds in captivity. Just as importantly, information learned from the careful observation of birds in our backyards and breeding facilities assists zoos and wildlife agencies attempting to re-introduce endangered species into habitats from which they were previously eliminated. AFA also funds field studies to assess the behavior and status of wild populations, veterinary research to reduce the impact of avian diseases, and a wide range of educational programs dealing with such issues as bird nutrition and ways to prevent smuggling.

The articles in this issue of the *AFA Watchbird* give an overview of the many ways aviculturists are contributing to the conservation and welfare of birds. Catherine Allen of World Wildlife Fund reports on the first U.S. Captive Breeding Bird Survey, which offers encouraging evidence that domestic breeding programs may soon supply enough pets to totally eliminate the need for imports of such popular species as Blue-and-Gold Macaws and Fischer's Lovebirds. Gary Lienthal's article on the Cooperative Working Group on the Bird Trade describes a unique three-year effort to forge legislation on avian imports to the U.S. that takes into account the diverse interests of private aviculturists, pet dealers, conservation organizations and animal welfare groups. Next follow updates on the status in the wild and in captivity of birds that are popular in the pet trade, including Goffin's Cockatoos, Yellow-naped Amazons,

and finches. Curator of Birds Alan Lieberman of the San Diego Zoo then relates several exciting examples of successful returns of birds bred in captivity to their original environments. Kevin Gorman's article describes AFA's Red Siskin Project, which aims to increase the numbers of this beautiful Colombian relative of the canary that is now nearly extinct in the wild; again the goal is to eventually re-introduce the bird to its native habitat. Similarly, Dr. Luis Baptista, Curator of Birds and Mammals at the California Academy of Sciences, details efforts to re-introduce captive-bred Socorro Island Doves to the Mexican island of the same name from which the entire wild population earlier became extinct because of a variety of pressures. Dr. Ann Brice tells about the goals and accomplishments of the Psittacine Research Project, which is actively developing ways to increase the populations of several parrot species in Central America. Other articles deal with AFA's efforts, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of the Interior, to reduce the smuggling of birds; the economic and ecological benefits of bird "ranching" programs in developing countries; a list of AFA research awards; and a history of AFA.

With the continued destruction of the world's tropical forests and increased size of the human population, more and more bird species are becoming critically endangered. Safeguarding these birds and ensuring their survival until the pressure on their habitats are relieved will require the skill and knowledge of aviculturists in cooperation with field biologists and wildlife management authorities in developing nations. The American Federation of Aviculture and its members are committed to addressing all of the problems surrounding the bird trade in order to achieve a secure future for our avian companions. ●

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Photos, slides, negatives

of indoor or outdoor aviaries, for a soon to be published book on the philosophy and techniques of aviary construction.

Owners of the pictures chosen for publication will receive photo credit and a free copy of the book when published. All participants will be able to purchase a copy at a discounted price.

Please label all material with your name and address, and include a stamped, self-addressed return envelope if you want your pictures back.

Remit photos to:

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