

aviaries of Lee Horton and Roland Dubuc

by Jerry Jennings
Fallbrook, California

A visit to Lee and Roland's is a step into a tropical garden, the likes of which I have never visited except at the more remarkable of public botanical gardens. One comes to see the birds and, as interesting as they are, one leaves marveling at the rare palms, bamboos, aloes, and other exotic flowers and shrubs. The combined effect is the sense one is in a forest far away. Just around the bend in the trail appears a Slender-billed Cockatoo peering at the intruder from behind a palm. There on the hill is a Greater Vasa Parrot in a tree aloe, shy but curious. This is truly what bird keeping should be all about — the pursuit of beauty for its own sake. This garen soothes the frenzied soul and washes away the grit of modern civilization.

Lee began his interest in birds back

in 1949 during high school and, by graduation time, maintained approximately five hundred lovebirds and show budgies — all on a typical city lot in Westchester, California, 60 by 100 feet. We don't know exactly what the neighbors thought, but Lee was engrossed in the genetics of the budgies and at the opportune time when many new mutations were rapidly appearing. In 1952, he joined the Avicultural Society of America, where he was quickly introduced to some of the great names of twentieth century American aviculture, including Mrs. Gilbert Lee, Jerome Buteyn, Dave West, the Rudkins, and Mrs. T. M. Towne, who signed him up as a member.

In the mid-sixties Lee moved to Rolling Hills, California in an effort to expand his hobby. While there, he acquired the first of the Blue Peach-face Lovebird mutation from Bob Berry. He soon was working with all the new lovebird mutations, applying his experience with Budgie genetics.

In 1970, Roland joined with Lee in a partnership that has seen the bird collection grow dramatically. In fact, a new move to even larger facilities was ordained, which led them to their current location in Vista, on three-plus acres they call Agapornis Acres, after the generic name for lovebirds for which they are best known. The move was completed in 1972 after Lee sold his businesses in Manhattan Beach, California. The new property also gave them the opportunity to enlarge their significant plant collection of rare palms and aloes.

During this period, Lee and Roland entered into partnership with a third party to manage and maintain their growing collection of large psittacines, many of which are kept off premises to this day. That is not to say the large parrots are not in abundance at Agapornis Acres. Rather, they are kept in a manner that compliments the garden instead of intruding upon it. The cockatoo collection includes: Goffin's, Bare Eyes, Galerita Galeritas, Galerita Tritons, Umbrel-

TABLE 1

Lovebird Special Mix

Oat Groats / Whole.....	95 lbs.
Turkey Br'd Krumbles.....	950 lbs.
Safflower Seed.....	100 lbs.
Canary Seed.....	570 lbs.
Millet / White Mixing	285 lbs.

Large Parrot Special Mix

Safflower Seed.....	440 lbs.
Sunflower / Grey Large	100 lbs.
Corn / Rolled	200 lbs.
Oats / Rolled	100 lbs.
Canary Seed.....	100 lbs.
Millet / White Mixing	120 lbs.
Turkey Gro Pellets 30%	100 lbs.
Oat Groats / Whole.....	80 lbs.
Pumpkin Seed.....	60 lbs.
Rape / Dwarf	60 lbs.
Flaxseed.....	60 lbs.
Millet / Red	40 lbs.
Peppers / Red (POD)	20 lbs.
Hemp Seed.....	100 lbs.
Niger	40 lbs.
Bird Greens.....	20 lbs.
Buckwheat	20 lbs.
Milo	20 lbs.
Good Life Chunk 40#	20 lbs.
Purina Reg. Monkey 25#.....	20 lbs.

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Deadline Schedule

Feb / Mar '92
Featuring **FINCHES**
Dec. 1 — editorial copy
Dec. 15 — display ADS

Apr / May '92
Feb. 1 — editorial copy
Feb. 15 — display ADS

June / July '92
Featuring **SHOWING BIRDS**
April 1 — editorial copy
April 15 — display ADS

Aug / Sept '92
June 1 — editorial copy
June 15 — display ADS

Oct / Nov '92
Featuring **INCUBATION**
Aug. 1 — editorial copy
Aug. 15 — display ADS

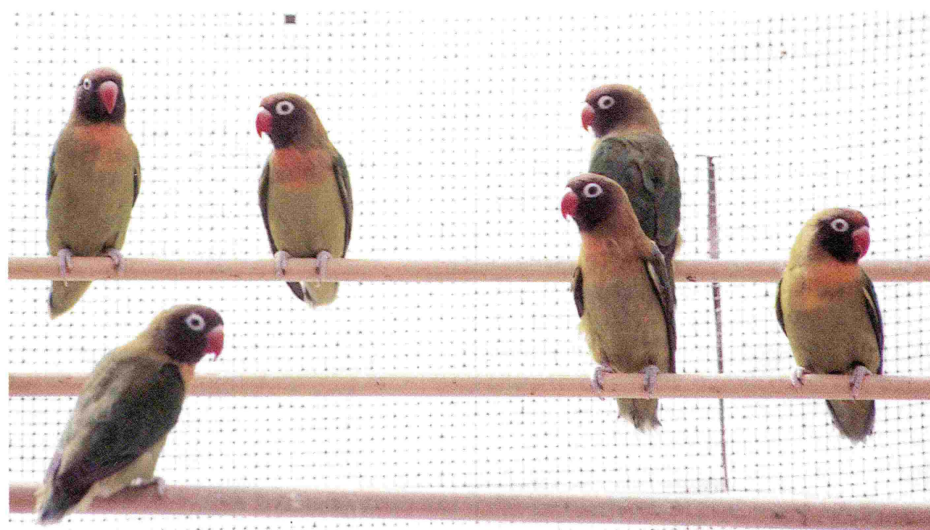
Dec '92 / Jan '93
Oct. 1 — editorial copy
Oct. 15 — display ADS



The cages for these Umbrellas and Galahs are 4 feet wide, 6 feet tall, and 12 feet long.



The cages in this complex for Galahs and Goffin's Cockatoos are 3 feet across, 6 feet tall and 8 feet long.



las, Moluccans, Slender Bills, Rose Breasted, Red Vented, Mediums, and Eleonoras. The macaws include: Hyacinth, Blue and Gold, Scarlet, Green Wing, Military, Yellow Collared, Severe, Red Bellied, and Hahn's. They also maintain Red Sided, Vosmaeri, and Grand Eclectus, African Greys, and Greater Vasa Parrots.

The lovebirds have not been neglected in the wake of large parrot breeding. On the contrary, they have expanded in scope and many new mutations have been pursued. They bred the first lutino, albino, and blue cinnamon peachface from specimens obtained outside the collection and established these strains.

In 1972, they imported Nyasas, Black Cheeks, and Red Face lovebirds direct from Africa and, in 1974, acquired Abyssinians from a U.S. importer. Most of these birds didn't do as well as expected. The Black Cheeks dwindled down to three birds before they cracked the nut. Now they have 28 pairs of Black Cheeks in their collection.

They are presently working on "eye-ring" mutations and have established a separate strain of *pure* lutino Fischer's Lovebird. The emphasis is on pure. They also are working on Masked mutations including lutinos, albinos, blues, whites and fallows.

All of the birds are well-cared for, as is obvious by their great condition and the immaculate flights in which they are housed. They are fed a basic seed mixture, one specifically designed for lovebirds, and the other for the large parrots. These mixtures are supplemented with apple, orange, and corn on the cob. The Eclectus, however, are on a diet consisting of 80 percent fruit and vegetables. And, the lovebirds receive grated carrot, dusted with Super Preen, whenever they have babies. None of the birds receive grit, but are provided with oyster shell and cuttlebone. They all receive fresh water daily and the big birds are given 10 cc Nolvasan disinfectant solution per gallon of drinking water as a preven-

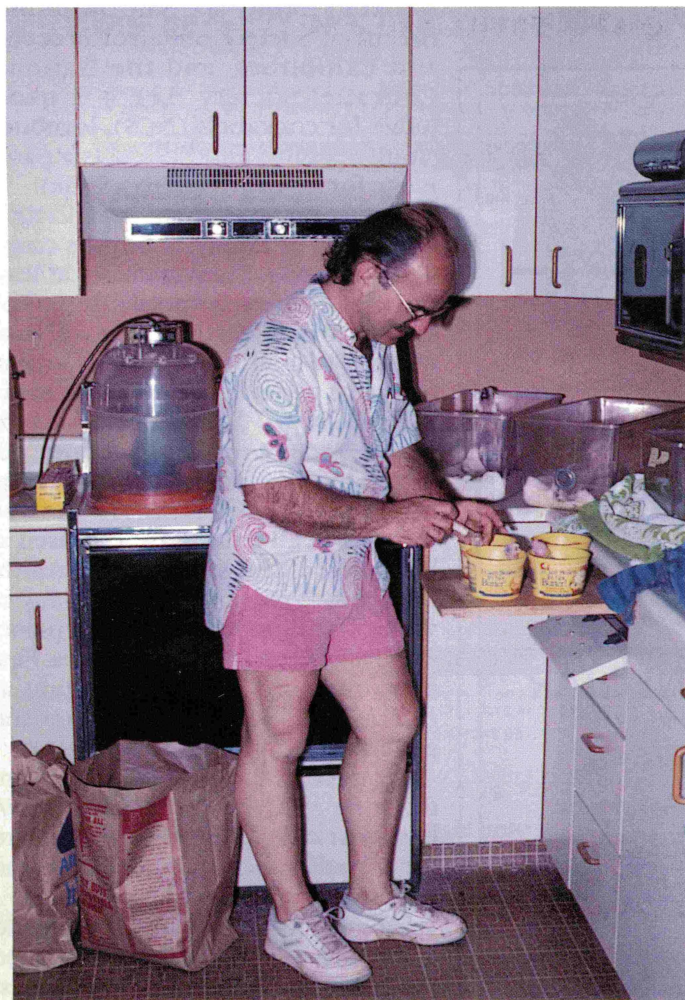
Black-cheeked Lovebirds (Agapornis nigrigenis) are confined to a very small range in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Lee and Roland's 28 pairs are the largest, and, likely the only breeding colony in the western hemisphere. They are descended from three birds imported from Africa in 1972.



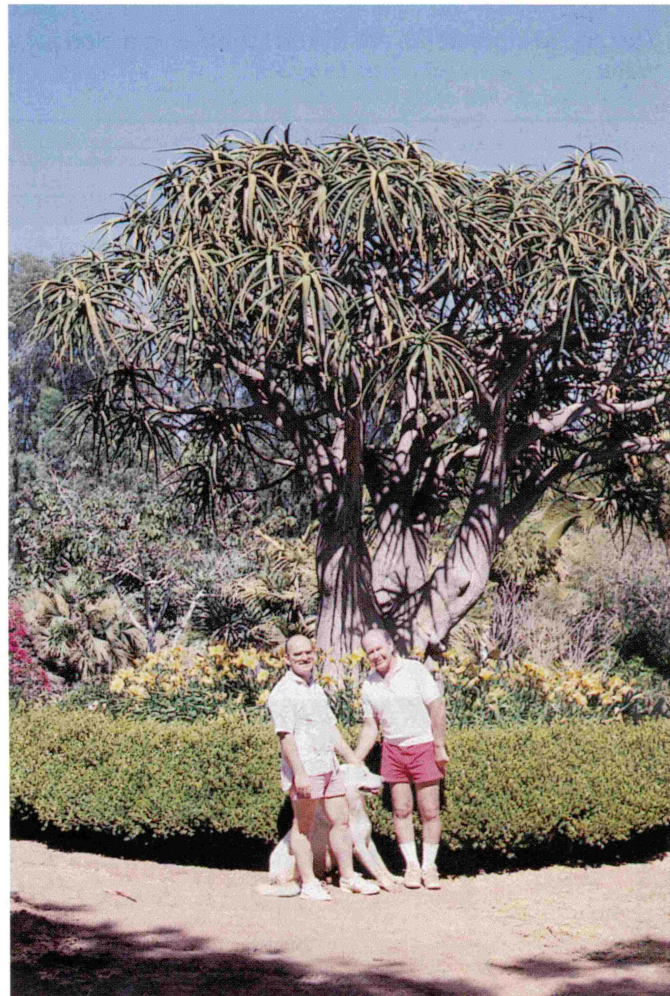
Greater Vasa Parrots (Coracopsis vasa), from Madagascar and Comoro Islands, remain a rarity in American aviculture, and have only recently been bred in captivity.



Cockatoos live in suspended cages in the garden. These Citron-crested Cockatoos produce three clutches a year — usually one egg each time, rarely two.



Roland feeding baby cockatoos, a job for which he is entirely responsible.



Lee, Roland, and guard-dog Shadow, in front of a magnificent "Aloe bainesii", one of many exceptional specimen plants in the collection.

tative measure.

Due to the ever increasing number of eggs produced at Agapornis Acres, Roland decided to retire from his job in 1985 to take on the duties of hatching and hand-rearing full-time. Ninety percent of all eggs are artificially incubated, although they are started by the natural parents. After two to three weeks, the eggs are pulled and placed in Lyon Electric Turn-X incubators (formerly manu-

factured by Marsh Farms). Temperature is set at 98.6°F.

Once the babies have hatched, they are also brooded in Turn-X incubators which have had their dome tops raised up several inches by a plastic riser. Once they are of sufficient size, they are transferred to plastic laboratory rat boxes, which are easy to clean. They use terry cloth towels for substrate, which are changed three times daily. The

towels are easy to wash, provide firm footing for the babies, and the babies can't ingest the material as they might if placed on wood shavings or Bed-o-cobs. This is especially important to the neurotic feeders, i.e. birds found three or more per clutch, which are highly competitive.

The hand feeding formula is made from scratch according to their own recipe, and is fed from a syringe.

Lee and Roland have been as active in avicultural organizations as they have on the breeding front. Lee was one of the founding members of the American Federation of Aviculture, its first first-vice-president, and its second president, serving two years in each position. Lee also was responsible for organizing AFA's first three annual conventions. Roland served for a number of years as the first Avy Awards committee chairman and gave the award its name.

In 1977, Lee and Roland founded the African Lovebird Society and Roland is still editor of its magazine, *Agapornis World*.

Both Lee and Roland also belong to the Avicultural Society of America, Hookbill Hobbyists, San Diego Bird Breeders, Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors, and the National Cockatiel Society. Lee is a panel judge for cockatiels (NCS), lovebirds (ALBS) (SPBE) and Roland is a panel judge for lovebirds (ALBS)(SPBE).

Roland believes that specialization in a group or family of birds is essential to success. They maintain at least three pairs of each species in the collection, which ensures they will have no need to go outside their collection for new genetic material for some time. He says, "If you are going to be cheap, and not invest any money, get out of birds." They believe in sparing no expense to guarantee healthy birds, and all babies are cultured at least three times to ensure health. Lee says, "You shouldn't sell any of your offspring until you have plenty of birds to sustain your program. First breedings are not as important as raising a species through several generations."

Lee received the Gold Avy Award from the AFA, the highest honor AFA has to bestow. If AFA gave an award for a quality facility, Lee and Roland would certainly win that, as well.

Lee and Roland's contributions to aviculture over the years have earned them the recognition of their peers, and they have made the fancy a better place for everyone. •



TABLE 2
Hand Feeding Formula

- 1 quart ground Monkey Chow (Hill's Primate Diet)
- 3 tablespoons peanut butter (Laura Scudder's creamy)
- 1 jar Gerber's creamed corn
- 1 jar Gerber's creamed beans (green)
- 1 jar Gerber's creamed carrots
- 1/2 jar Gerber's creamed spinach
- 1 jar Gerber's creamed oatmeal
- 1 teaspoon D-CA-Fos
- 1 tablespoon Super Preen
- 6 grams Myco 20 (anti-fungal)

NOTE: 1 jar Gerber's creamed apricots is added for Eclectus babies

The above ingredients are mixed together in a blender with one quart boiling water.

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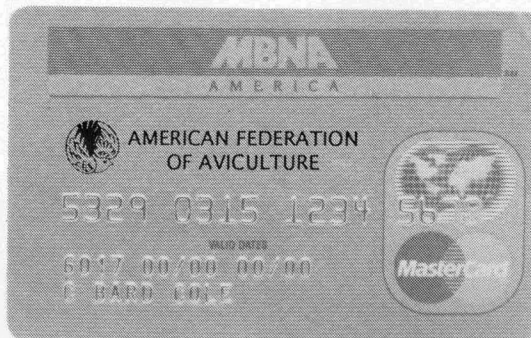
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