

The National Finch and Softbill Society

by Brenda Geesey, president and editor
York, Pennsylvania

Eight years ago, in Connecticut, Bill Parlee, Russ Armitage, Roger O'Connell, Chris Voronovitch and a flock of other finch enthusiasts dreamed of a national society that would "encourage breeding programs, enhance the knowledge of our members in the keeping and care of these birds, cooperate with organizations for the preservation of aviculture in this country and introduce the enjoyment of keeping and breeding finches and softbills to all interested parties."

Thanks to the dedication of the founders and the national publicity the fledgling organization received from Dr. Val Clear, the *AFA Watchbird* magazine and other supportive publications, the dream flourished. Today the National Finch and Softbill Society is known world-wide and has a cooperative relationship with many similar societies in many other countries. NFSS is a Class A AFA affiliate and has contributed financially to AFA's Red Siskin Project. We annually send two delegates to AFA conventions and set up a booth there with displays of educational materials.

Among the specialized services NFSS provides to members is a bi-monthly Bulletin full of informative articles dealing with the care and management of finches and very specific articles detailing the care of individual species. The Bulletin keeps NFSS members in touch with each other and with conservation and legislative issues that affect aviculture. The Bulletin also offers members tips and hints about finch keeping, classified ads listing finches for sale, supplies for their care and display ads featuring products and services that are beneficial to the finches and the finch-keepers.

NFSS has been selling closed bands to members since inception. In 1991, our band secretary reported sales of 24,500 NFSS bands! NFSS has always stressed the benefits of banding and record keeping. In 1991, NFSS was pleased to publish a complete and easy-to-use set of aviary records for

its members. These record keeping forms are available to anyone from the NFSS FINCHSHOP, c/o Jerry McCawley, 400 Charles Street, Luzerne, PA 18709 for \$3.50 shipping and handling. We believe that with the curtailment of importation, banding and keeping accurate records will be more important than ever before and we urge all aviculturists to purchase and use bands and to set up and maintain careful and complete records on their flocks.

The National Finch and Softbill Society's most ambitious project began in 1988 with the establishment of the FINCHSAVE PROGRAM. The purpose of the program is to establish and maintain all species of finches and softbills in American aviculture, ensuring their availability for future generations. This is especially critical now, while the birds are still available. These ambitious goals are carried out by individual NFSS members across the country, with the advice and assistance of the FINCHSAVE director and the FINCHSAVE committee. Species and groups are coordinated by volunteer advisors. Each individual has elected to concentrate on one or more species; to obtain the birds at their own expense; to propagate them in a careful, controlled manner to assure unadulterated bloodlines; and to submit yearly reports to the FINCHSAVE director. All species of finches and softbills are included except those most commonly bred, (Zebras, Gouldians, Shafttails, Societies, Java Rice Birds and hybrids are *not* included). All NFSS members are encouraged to participate.

In 1991, operation of the FINCHSAVE Program was placed in the capable hands of the new NFSS third vice-president, Linda Oja of Newport News, Virginia. Linda has a group of dedicated individuals assisting her who have committed themselves to implementing the program. They have experience in operating a similar program in their Finch Forum in the Bird Clubs of Virginia. Revisions

to the rules make entry into and compliance with this important program easier for prospective participants. For more information about FINCHSAVE, write to Linda Oja, Director, 268 Exeter Road, Newport News, Virginia 23602. Another vitally important program, and one that is very closely tied to the FINCHSAVE program, is the NFSS Annual Census of finches and softbills. Each year an increasing number of our members participate and utilize this resource. NFSS never publishes or releases addresses of participants. Only phone numbers are printed to link breeders with others who may want to exchange chicks, adults or information on care and management. This is another valuable tool that will assist in keeping aviculture strong. A copy may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to: The National Finch and Softbill Society, 125 West Jackson Street, York, PA 17403-2265.

The National Finch and Softbill Society now has more than 1,450 members and, in 1991, in our National Show, 347 finches and softbills were exhibited, a record number of entries. Finches and their exhibitors can earn championship points, if the bird is wearing a closed, traceable band. Shows provide an important forum for comparison of the results of breeding programs and important social gatherings for the bird keepers to exchange ideas.

The club affiliation program that began with the inception of NFSS in 1984 now boasts over 80 affiliates, receiving copies of the Bulletin for their library, plaques and rosettes for awards at exhibitions and offering a network of delegates across the country who can refer interested finch keepers to others who are working with the same or similar species. In fact, this concept of a network (or a "finch family" if you prefer) is perhaps the most important and may be the most visible aspect of the National Finch and Softbill Society. We warmly invite you to join with us and share our enthusiasm about the finches! The annual dues are \$15.00 (single), \$20.00 (dual), \$7.50 (junior, under 16 yrs.). Dues should be sent to: Russell Armitage, Jr., NFS membership services, 345 Boston Road, Middletown, CT 06457. For more information, write to The National Finch and Softbill Society, 125 West Jackson Street, York, PA 17403-2265. ●

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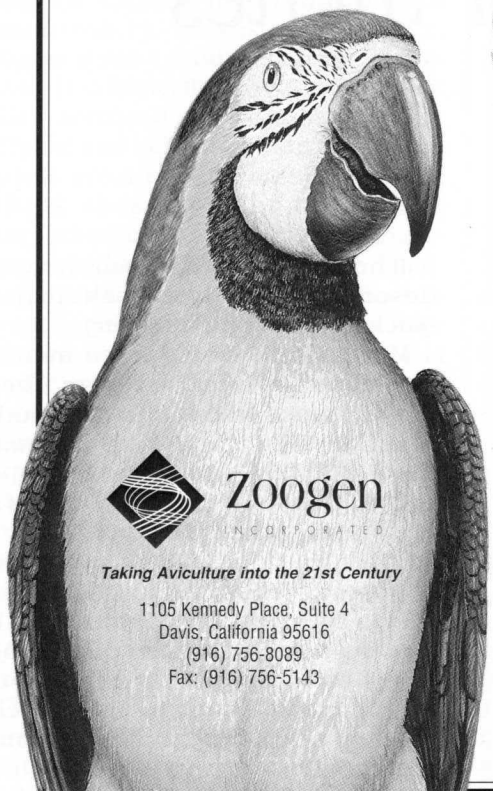
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